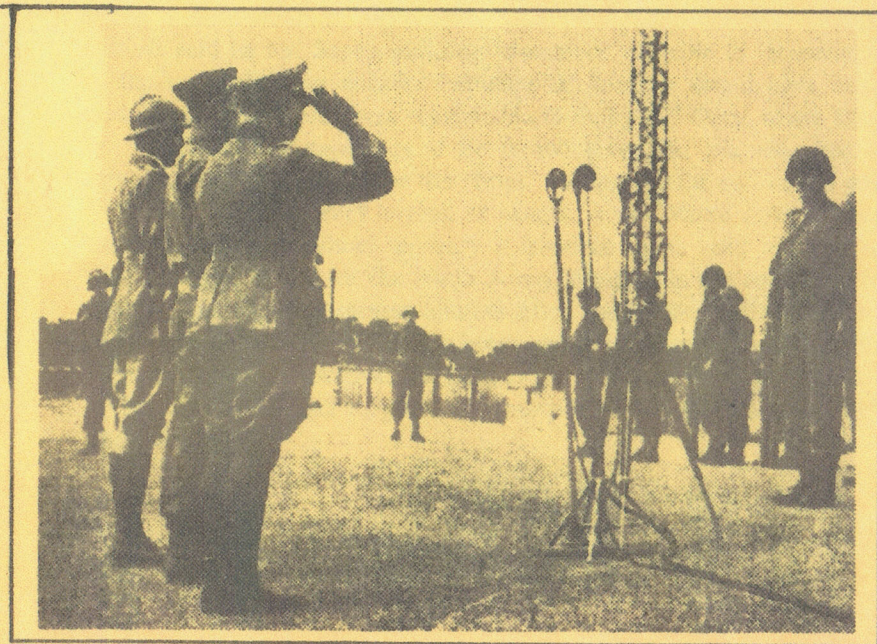


*The Story of Lt. Sam Magill
Recon Officer of the 329th Infantry
83rd Division*

The Nervy Exploit of SAM MAGILL



Reproduced From
“NEVER A SHOT IN ANGER”
by

Col. Barney Oldfield

Dedicated to the Men
of the 83rd Division

U.S. ARMY

Europe - World War II

*Reprinted by: Frank Bellino
329th Infantry Regiment*

... TAKE 9

The Nervy Exploit of Sam Magill

When Maj. Gen. Leven C. Allen predicted that the French Second Armored Division would go in on one side of Paris, but have a hard time getting out on the other, he could have enlarged his prophecy to include the press. The war left Paris behind, but the war correspondents hadn't the heart to do likewise. The Scribe Hotel, from the very first day, became a fanciful place, its lobby filled with aimless human tides, everyone afraid to leave it for fear of missing something, everyone afraid also that anything he could find there would fail to measure up under the eyes of his editor or program director. Being born among us was the journalist mendicant, who would pluck at the sleeves of soldiers on leave in Paris to get stories.

If the war correspondents were disinclined to chase off after the Armies now going full-tilt through old, hallowed battlefields such as the Marne, Soissons, Château-Thierry, nothing was deadlier for them than the Brittany peninsula. Yet hundreds of men in three American divisions—the Eighth, Twenty-ninth and Second—were at Brest alone, where scar-faced, sinister Lt. Gen. Herman Bernhard Ramcke, the veteran paratroop leader of the battle of Crete, was denying the Biscay ports of Brest, Lorient and St. Nazaire to Allied use. He had more than 45,000 garrison troops and remnants of five divisions. Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton, commanding the VIII Corps, had already been in contact with Ramcke by radio, the latter seeking rules on the exchange of wounded. After this, he sought audience with General Middleton, coming out of Brest under a flag of truce. A forbidding

enough figure when alone, he was formidable indeed when he stood beside Middleton's command trailer. His feet were planted firmly, wide apart, and two Doberman pinschers were at leash from each of his hands. Middleton was short with him, said there was nothing for them to talk about except the terms of Ramcke's surrender, adding that it would be wise for him to give up soon. Middleton assured him American pressure would be increased. Ramcke departed and took his Dobermans, nervously licking their chops, with him.

Colonel F. V. Fitzgerald, General Bradley's P&PW chief and one-time secretary to a governor of Nevada, had sent me to determine a likely capitulation time for Brest. His hope was to interest some of the war correspondents who had taken up sentry duty in the Scribe. Middleton's impression was that Ramcke was a stubborn fanatic, who would see the campaign through to the bitterest end. Optimistically, he guessed at the fourth to the sixth of September, but he warned this could be in error by as much as ten days. When Shep and I spun back to Versailles, where Twelfth Army Group was located, we were not the only ones with news. Colonel Fitzgerald accepted ours, then told us that we were being transferred to a new "trouble-shooting" assignment.

"The Ninth Army is just coming on the Continent," he said. "It's back at Périers—fresh from the U. S. and San Antonio, Texas. They have no experience in the field, and particularly with what it will take to handle war correspondents. You'll have to organize that from scratch for them." Shades of Grosvenor Square, almost a year ago! But this time there was experience to draw upon, and the flaws of the first, troubled paper planning in London had shown themselves.

General Bradley described Ninth Army as "green but ambitious." Led by lanky, tall and completely bald Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson, described later by Frank Coniff of INS as having "the finest head of skin in the Army," the Ninth Headquarters staff at first looked like an aggregation of National Guardsmen on their annual summer encampment.

The Périers stop was to be short, and after the round of introductions and talks with key people, I sat on a folding cot, typewriter on my knees, and wrote out the memorandum giving birth to a Ninth Army press camp. To it was attached a summary table of equipment and manpower needed, including signals and general communications, motor pool and messing facility. When this was shown to the staff officers they looked at me incredulously. A mobile radio link capable

of transmitting voice to London, a press teletype circuit to the main switch at Twelfth Army Group, half a hundred vehicles, dozens of men of peculiar talents, an establishment large enough to take care of fifty war correspondents—it was unbelievable! "When we were in San Antonio," one colonel said, "I never saw two newspapermen in a week, and only then if we called 'em up."

Word came that the Ninth Army was going to put feet under itself by taking over the Brittany segment of Third Army, the VIII Corps and its five divisions. The fact that Ninth was actually being spring-boarded into operations gave urgency to my requests, so I took a copy of my proposal to General Simpson's aide, Major Johnny Horn, of Greenwich, Conn. "Show it to General [Brig. Gen. James E.] Moore," he said. "He has a grasp of these things. If he okays it, that'll stop the rest of the staff debating over it."

The quickness with which General Moore pondered the recommendations, and the questions he asked, which were both penetrating and reasonable, gave me great respect for him from the beginning.

"You've had the background in it. If you say so, I'll take your recommendations," said he. Not only did he take them, he had each of the requisition forms signed by General Simpson himself! No supply dump would ever argue with that signature, and the personnel section stirred itself to get the men and talents specified.

On the third of September, as capitulation around Brest seemed more remote than ever, the Eighty-third Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Robert C. Macon, of California, Maryland, was stretched 185 miles along the Loire from the Bay of Biscay to a point east of Orléans. Its job was to guard the north bank of that slow-moving stream and provide a flank protection to the wild-running Third Army. The thinness of this line had perturbed Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy, whose XII Corps was open on that side of Patton's thrust.

"Doesn't that flank worry you?" Eddy asked Patton one day as they were scanning the map.

"Not me," said Patton blithely. "It just depends on how nervous you are by nature."

With the German Armies now clearing out of France very rapidly and falling back on the prepared positions in the Siegfried Line, Hitler had sent a direct order to *Generalmajor* Erich Elster to round up all German forces in the south of France, from Bordeaux to Marseilles, and

ring them back in column to Germany. Even though Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, with his Seventh Army, was rolling up from the Riviera, on Hitler's map it looked easy for Elster to skin between Patton and Patch through the Belfort Gap. None of this was known to Colonel E. B. Crabill, of Palm Beach Shores, Florida, whose 329th Infantry Regiment of the Eighty-third had surveillance from seventy miles west of Blois to the vicinity of Orléans. He summoned his Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon leader, First Lieutenant Samuel J. Magill, of Ashtabula, Ohio. Magill's area extended from Blois to Orléans, about forty-five miles along the eastern edge. His unit had been beefed up by a platoon of quadruple .50-caliber-mounted half-tracks, a platoon of 105-mm. howitzers, and a hundred Frenchmen of the FFI. In using the latter, it was necessary to teach them scouting and patrolling and reporting.

The colonel was disturbed for an unusual reason. "Sam," he said, "what's happened to all those Germans who were shooting at us from the other side of the river?" Sam indicated his own worries about it, too. Both of them knew they had orders not to cross the Loire, but between Magill and Crabill there was an understanding. The colonel did not tell Sam to violate any orders, he just told him he wanted him to know what was going on. He had never been in the habit of spelling out method for Sam.

Magill went back to his I&R platoon and talked over his problem with his driver, Corporal Christopher Vane of Baltimore, Maryland. Leaving the major portion of his unit in charge of Sergeant Herbert Berner of St. Louis, he told his Belgian interpreter, Felix van de Walle and his radio operator, Robert A. Alvey of San Diego, California, to get aboard. At Mer-sur-Loire, Magill crossed in a rowboat. Muides, a small village where the French were so happy to see the American they built him a raft to bring the jeep and his crew over well. Contact was established almost at once with a member of the Free French, who said the Germans had all withdrawn farther to the south. He had heard a rumor that there was a German element of unknown strength willing to surrender to the Americans, but not to the French. Magill sent a message back to Berner telling him of his plan to move deeper into German-held territory and instructing Berner to get other members of the twenty-four-man platoon across the river and placed at intervals to insure a radio relay.

Magill found his forward movement suddenly restricted when his

small patrol ran into the flank guard of the Eleventh Panzer Division, a tough tank battalion. Thousands of German troops, in columns and in every kind of conveyance, were filtering past it on all sides. Alvey cranked up his radio and fed back dozens of messages to the 329th, giving locations, march objectives, strength and state of equipment. One of these radio messages brought an air strike which destroyed two thirds of a ten-mile-long German column on the Route Nationale east of Chateauroux. The Magill patrol took frequent cover, once spending five hours in the woods. Eventually the main body of the Germans, behind the formidable Eleventh Panzer, flowed by.

With the XIX TAC, commanded by Brig. Gen. O. P. Weyland, strafing a column miles further to the south, Magill now thought seriously of the possibilities of prisoners from whom he could get the more detailed information which Colonel Crabill wanted. With his mind on Germans who might surrender, Magill ran up a white flag of truce and Vane drove the jeep ahead toward Issoudun. There was occasional, desultory fire from the roadsides, as much from surprised French as from the disorganized Germans.

The bridge leading into Issoudun was alive with German guards, who held their guns on the approaching jeep, but let it come up to the bridge. Van de Walle, in German, asked to talk to the commander, and they settled back to await some major or, at most, lieutenant colonel. "Look," said Van de Walle suddenly, "that officer coming up on the other side of the bridge. See the red stripes on his pants leg. That's a major general." Hastily Magill got out of the jeep with Van de Walle and they moved forward to meet the German, who asked what they wanted and how they came to be there.

Sam's mouth was dry, but through the Belgian, he said: "I came here to see you because your cause is hopeless. I know you're trying to get back to Germany, but thousands of troops are in your way now waiting for you to come in range. I thought if I came to talk to you, you would see that you could surrender with honor—and save the lives of your men who will otherwise die unnecessarily." Because of the shambles he had noted in his 100-mile penetration, Sam was of the opinion that the General's strength at most, would be around two battalions.

The German consulted a moment with his staff. "How much strength do you represent?" he asked.

Sam was thinking only of his platoon, rather than the division. "I've got my platoon. . . ."

The German turned apoplectic. "What?" he spluttered. "Surrender twenty thousand men to a platoon? *Phantastisch!*"

When Van de Walle translated twenty thousand he choked a little and Magill almost fell off the Issoudun bridge. In carrying out Colonel Crabill's simple order to find out what had happened to the Germans, he had stumbled right into the main column. Stunned as he was, Magill, who had once thought he wanted to be a minister, turned his seriously honest face to the German general, and repeated that it was not the platoon which was important, but the inevitable clash of arms which awaited the column up ahead. General Elster quieted somewhat. The lieutenant was not so wrong, after all. The column had been sniped at constantly by the Free French and the Communist FTPF (Force Tireur Partisan Français), while the planes of XIX TAC came out of the sky at all daylight hours to harass him. His losses had already been great. A surrender, he said, might be negotiated if certain terms could be met—terms which would insure surrender with honor.

"What are the terms?" asked Magill.

"A show of force," said Elster.

"How big?"

The German studied a moment, looked at his tired but determined men. "If you can confront me with two battalions," he decided, "it could be a surrender with honor." He might as well have asked Magill for the moon, but Sam told him he would be back the next day with word from the division commander.

Night was fast falling, and on the way back, Sam changed drivers to give Vane a rest. Big, burly Ralph Anderson of Lancaster, Ohio, took the wheel and pointed it toward Beaugency. The road was blocked from time to time by logs which had been thrown across it by snipers. The rules demanded that headlights be blacked out, but as long as Magill was way out of the rule book already, he told Anderson to turn on the lights for quick flashes to see if the road was clear, then run for it to the next turn. By using this harrowing method, they avoided roadblocks. By the time Sam got back across the Loire and reported to Colonel Crabill in his bed, it was past midnight. Crabill thought enough of the proposal to get into his clothes and drive to Château Renault, where General Macon was awakened and informed,

Macon shook his head. "We're stretched paper-thin now," he said. "We've got 185 miles covered by a bare 16,000 troops as it is. I don't know where I'd get two battalions. Besides, we might get over the river and get caught in the wringer and lose a lot of men." Sam talked earnestly of his belief that the German wanted to give up, not fight, and he pointed out that if the German column came on, it was eventually sure to clash with some elements of the Eighty-third in a fire fight anyway. Macon still said no, but did send the news forward to Ninth Army headquarters in Mi Forêt, six kilometers from Rennes itself. Crabill and Magill walked away from the General's quarters unhappily, but Crabill was not through backing up his lieutenant. "You go back down to the General at Issoudun," he said, "and talk to him some more. Let me know if you have any ideas of anything else I can do."

Still with no sleep and, worse yet, with no solution, Magill again put the Loire behind him. His brain was numb and he dozed in his seat, while Anderson watched him out of the corner of his eye and pulled him back each time he began to slump precariously to the outside of the jeep. Van de Walle was better off, having caught some snatches while Magill had been with Crabill and Macon. Suddenly an idea struck Anderson. "Remember when we were talking to Elster," he said to Sam, "and he brought up the damage by American planes?" Dull as his senses were at that moment, Magill immediately woke up. Maybe Elster would accept a show of force in the air! Magill had never asked for air support before, since his mission was to find out things, but wherever possible to avoid getting entangled in a scrap. The lonely party in the jeep took on considerably more elation than they were entitled to and, by the time they met with Elster on the Issoudun bridge again, they were eager.

Meantime, the field telephone on my tent pole rang. It was Capt. Tom Roberts, PRO of the Eighty-third, to give me a brief rundown. The Ninth Army's reaction to the news of a possible 20,000-prisoner bag was contrary to expectations. Brest and the other ports looked like an elusive prize, and Ninth Army, characterized by General Bradley as "green and ambitious" was now showing its ambition. They wanted those 20,000 prisoners. My tipster didn't have to spell out the chance Lieutenant Sam Magill had to dwarf the famous Sergeant York exploit of World War I when he picked up 132 Germans single-handed. By the phone circuits available, it was finally possible to get Twelfth

Army Group at Versailles and Lt. Col. Bert Kalisch came on. By yelling as loudly as we could, I described for him the situation below the Loire and the possibilities for story and pictures. Asking him to send any interested war correspondents first to Beaugency for a check-in with Colonel Crabill, I told him of my plan to leave on September 8 and the hope that I could join Magill among the Germans to get a running account of his adventure to fill in the later arriving press.

The Ashtabula lieutenant, at the time I was phoning, was again talking to General Elster. "My general has asked me if you will accept a show of force in the air," he said. Elster was mystified. "I will radio to my division," explained Sam, "asking them to send a group of planes. They will be instructed to look for a flare we will place on this crossroads. After they come over, they are to return and look for a cloth panel on the ground. If I put out a white one, it means you are satisfied and will negotiate. If I put out a red one, they are to wait twenty minutes, then strafe and bomb your column." The General was not convinced that Magill was not running a colossal bluff, and that went double for Magill. But Magill had that honest face. General Elster agreed and Alvey cranked up the radio. Back over the relay went the message to Colonel Crabill. The time for the show of force was set for 2 P.M., September 8. In a few moments, a return message came through from Crabill: "Have made request through Ninth Army. Am also going myself to XIX TAC to get everything I can."

Magill set up shop in the small lobby of the Hotel d'Angleterre in Romorantin. It was a soldier's dream come true. The FFI gave them six German PW's to do the cooking, washing and other chores. It was as if they were installed for good.

At 1:30 on the afternoon of the eighth, Magill and the Germans reported to the Issoudun bridge, and the flares were installed at the intersection letting their smoky trails go upward on the still day. As the two o'clock deadline neared, Magill and the Germans looked speculatively up at the sky. The deadline came and went. It was 2:15 and the Germans began to mutter. Then, 2:30 and the sky was still blank overhead. Magill told Van de Walle to request patience, but the Germans were fast running out of it. What's more, they felt they had been bluffed—and almost successfully. Then, at 2:47 P.M., sixteen Thunderbolt fighter-bombers came over in formation. Sam had no way of knowing whether they were the ones, but he had to chance it.

"Van," he said, "ask him, quick! Which'll it be, white or red panel?" Van de Walle put the question.

Elster looked at the planes, making a graceful bank, so pretty yet so lethal and ominous. "Make it white," he said, and the panel was immediately spread in the field. The planes had come so low, some of the German soldiers hit the dirt. Now they looked on in wonder and relief as the sixteen Thunderbolts returned, waggled their wings, then flew off to the north to do battle elsewhere.

This was the crucial time for Magill. Had *he* now been bluffed? Had he sent his only chance of salvation flying off, and would General Elster now refuse to negotiate? But General Elster kept his bargain. "Will you send an officer with full power to discuss terms?" he asked tiredly. "I will send one of mine to act as liaison with you." Sam agreed, took on a non-communicative German colonel in the already crowded jeep, and headed back to Romorantin with the tidings. When the word came through to Beaugency, Crabill designated Lt. Col. Jules French, of Merrifield, Virginia, as exchange representative with the Germans, while Macon himself went down to talk with Elster.

"I could hardly stir up any interest in Paris for this story," Kalisch said, "and I don't know if anyone is coming. I told 'em any tip from you was good enough for me, but it's tough to buck the Folies Bergères these days."

We crossed the Loire on separate ferries late on the eighth and Kalisch, to make plans for his photographers, went straight to Romorantin to join Magill. Shep and I went by easy stages down Magill's primitive trap line of communications—a radio link here in a house, there in a corner of an inn, and over there in an attic. Gathering background materials on each man, I had a story on them all.¹

¹ The members of the platoon south of the Loire included: Sgt. Edward Hatcher, of Beckley, W. Va.; Corporal Lemuel Sistler, Batavia, Ill.; Albert Biro, Cleveland, Ohio; Robert F. Glasgow, Wheeling, W. Va.; Michael J. Marino, Willoughby, Ohio; Edward J. Monk, Lawrence, Mass.; Michael J. Demeter, Cleveland, Ohio; Donald E. Wilkinson, Wellsville, Ohio; William Reeves, Cincinnati, Ohio; Sgt. Robert W. Roller, Clover, Va.; Corporal David Alcala, La Verne, Calif.; William Longmire, Elizabethtown, Tenn.; Corporal Arnold Goodson, Wolf Creek, Tenn.; James H. Reilly, Thomaston, Conn.; James E. Townsend, Petoskey, Mich.; Robert H. Housenecht, Muncy Valley, Pa.; Arnold J. Marcum, Marlinton, W. Va.; Robert J. Burns, Watertown, Mass.; Stanley Pope, Caledonia, Minn.; Sgt. William L. Adams, Baltimore, Md.; Corporal Morris Weisburd, New York City, N. Y.; John W. Baird, Jr., Embarrass, Wisc.; and Sgt. John North, Bryan, Ohio.

Immediately upon our arrival at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, new logistics obstacles began to appear because it had become clear that the final act of taking the 20,000 troops was not going to come off quickly. We informed Twelfth Army Group that the surrender was on, but at least ten days away. Three correspondents, however, were on the way: Collie Small, UP; Charles Haacker, Acme Newspictures; and Fred MacKenzie, *Buffalo Evening News*. They were charging by jeep down the Paris-Orléans road, and Collie had come away so fast he was still wearing his pajamas under his clothes. Highly upset to find they were so early, they nevertheless came down to Romorantin. Shortly afterward, Hal Boyle, AP, and Ivan H. "Cy" Peterman, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, arrived.

Kalisch's negotiations with Lt. Col. French and Generalmajor Elster were going along famously, it being Kalisch's plot to be sure every phase of this spectacular achievement would be on film record. To start the movie, he needed a day with his cameramen in the German assembly areas, and a guarantee that General Elster would not at the last minute demand the film. General Elster agreed to talk it out. Driven to the headquarters by Private First Class James B. "Sandy" Sandeen, Kalisch was presented to Elster, who found that Kalisch's mother had come from Württemberg, birthplace also of both Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and Elster himself. After a chat, as always, Kalisch was in, this time because of his German-born mother. So friendly was their relationship that Kalisch suggested a public surrender, like that of Cornwallis. Certainly it would be with honor, but this could only be proved if he had pictures to show, and outdoor pictures at that. Kalisch needed this condition badly, because he had no lights for indoor shooting. "Agreed," said General Elster, after fifteen minutes of Kalisch's oratory, "I will make a public surrender, but it must be with an honor platoon and a proper military ceremony."

Kalisch promised to deliver his end, and suggested that the token of capitulation be a Luger rather than a sword which would look as out of place as cameras would have at the time of Cornwallis. This arrangement was approved by General Macon, who told Kalisch he could select the spot and time of the surrender.

Kalisch inspected the area from Orléans to Blois. He first thought of the main square in Orléans at the foot of the statue of Joan of Arc. Pictorially it was perfect, politically it was dynamite. The French authorities convinced him that massing 20,000 armed Germans in a

town full of armed Maquis might result in riot and massacre. Reluctantly Kalisch looked elsewhere and found another suitable spot—Beaugency. Two roads converged on the blasted bridge. At the junction stood a house which provided a perfect camera platform and press gallery. He spoke to the proprietor, M. Hertschap, and got him to clear the second floor. Carefully, Kalisch figured out the best time for shooting film and set the surrender hour at 3 P.M. Some of the staff wanted to change the time—but when General Macon agreed, the cameramen heaved a sigh of relief.

General Charles de Gaulle was extremely interested in the details of this surrender and asked for strong assurances that the weapons of the 20,000 Germans be placed under U. S. Army guard. De Gaulle already saw France's up-coming troubles with the lawless FTPF Communists who were raiding and pillaging the countryside and would submit to no orders. De Gaulle knew what might happen if the weapons of 20,000 men fell into Communist hands. He could order the FFI one day to give up their arms, and they would, but he was equally sure the FTPF would not.

This posed Magill and his platoon with another problem, and the problems were serious enough already. There was the need to provide hay and feed for a thousand horses in the German column, fuel for 2,000 commandeered vehicles, and bread for twenty thousand troops. The big risk, however, was that the Germans, having refused to surrender to the French, were being allowed to carry their arms, loaded, all the way to the Loire.

A secondary concern was the Château Valancey, home of the Duc de Talleyrand, grandnephew of Napoleon's foreign minister. A British agent got in touch with Lieutenant Magill and said it was absolutely necessary that all German columns be diverted from the Château, the reason being that, under the Château, 480 of the most priceless of the Louvre art treasures, including the Winged Victory and the enigmatic Mona Lisa, had been hidden for safekeeping. Immediately, a part of Sam's platoon had to spot hundreds of mines across the Château road in order to make it noticeably impassable and divert any stray detachments.

As we were first looking over the Château grounds with one of the household staff, it was early in the morning. We were all startled when a sparkling-eyed, black-haired girl in her late teens appeared suddenly at one of the spacious second-floor windows sans a stitch of clothing.

She held her arms wide in a gesture of welcome and greeting. "Ooo, la-la," she said blowing a kiss, "les Américains!" We all waved, then she seemed to sense for the first time her state of nakedness, crossed her hand over her breasts, and pulled back from the window. We saw her no more. "Who was that?" somebody wanted to know. The guide explained that she was a protégée of the duke's. A little later we met the duke, who was seventy-three.

The war correspondents were busily writing day-to-day developments of the Magill-Elster saga, but did not know that all their copy was being held up by the censor. The ruling was that not one line of the story would hit print until the last PW walked into the Beaugency cage. Although this news disturbed our Romorantin contingent, they were somewhat sobered to realize how delicate our situation really was, seventy-five-miles deep in German territory. Who really had who south of the Loire was something nobody knew for sure. The Germans were armed, the French were hostile, the custodial force was small, and some of the correspondents trying to join us were being nipped by Germans over whom General Elster seemed not to have control.

On September 12, the extreme fluidity of the situation was illustrated when a trio of correspondents departed the Third Army press camp to cover the surrender. In the jeep were six-foot-six and skinny Wright Bryan, *Atlanta Journal*, who had weathered two aerial D-Day runs with both paratrooper and glider-tug planes; Ed Beattie, UP; and John Mecklin, *Chicago Sun*. They were tooling down the road near General Pershing's old World War I headquarters town of Chaumont and found themselves less than a hundred yards from a German road-block before they recognized it as such. All three of them were captured, and Wright was wounded in the shinbone. He was carted off to a German hospital. Beattie was a major coup, the Germans thought. He had been based in Berlin before the war and was well known to the crowd around Dr. Josef Goebbels.

John Mecklin, who had fallen young and whole into the hands of the Germans, was waved off and sent back to the Third Army press camp, which got him a lot of needling. He was compared with the fish too short to cook which is thrown back in the lake, but his worst blow came from the traitorous conduct of his colleagues. When Mecklin returned to the Third Army press camp, he was loquacious about his experience. The rest of the correspondents fed him on

brandy, questioned him closely, and at intervals, left the tent where he was holding forth to file their stories. Mecklin got around to sending his own version a day later and got a blast from the *Chicago Sun*, which reminded him next time to file first, then talk, since he had been scooped on his own adventure by every paper in the states.

News flashed into Atlanta, Georgia, contained the statement that Wright had been "wounded in the fleshy part of the leg." An *Atlanta Journal* colfort, Sam Dull, called Mrs. Bryan in an attempt to be reassuring. "I wouldn't worry yet, Ellen," he said, "because we both know there ain't no fleshy part of Wright Bryan. They must have captured somebody else."

Kalisch had sent a message to his old roommate, Lt. Col. George Stevens, the celebrated Hollywood producer-director, asking him for a sound-on-film crew to be emplaced at the Beaugency bridge. George dispatched a unit bossed by Captain Joseph Biroc, whose professional Hollywood lensing had never presented anything to equal this genuine article, and backed him up by Lieutenant Bill Montague, late of Columbia Pictures in Hollywood, and First Lt. Joseph Zinni of Philadelphia, photo unit head with the Eighty-third. Midway in the march-up of the Germans, two more correspondents joined us, Robert Barr, BBC, and Alton W. Smalley, *St. Paul Dispatch-Pioneer*, nailing down a Minnesota angle. Smalley found it in Stanley L. Pope, one of Magill's platoon, and Pope had a good story in that, while he was completely courageous in the face of desperate odds, he had a horror of the day when he would actually be in a spot where he would have to kill. This package capture had uncommon appeal to Pope. By stretching his circulation field somewhat, Smalley included John W. Baird, Jr., who came from the town of Embarrass, Wisconsin.

The German columns, three of them, moved up toward the destinations of Orléans, Beaugency and Blois. They included Wehrmacht (Army), Kriegsmarine (Navy), and Luftwaffe (Air Force) troops, with the Navy admiral making the trek in a horse and buggy of ancient vintage. Magill's platoon had broken camp and parts of it were riding at the head of each column.

Colonel Crabill was still anxious about these armed columns and wanted nothing to excite them. Hal Boyle and Cy Peterman had almost been in an incident when they planted their jeep at an intersection where the column made its turn for the last miles. Peterman was standing in the jeep, taking pictures.

A German lieutenant worked himself into a lather. "Look pretty," he said to his men. "Look nice for the American photographer. Let him show the Americans what real German soldiers look like." Then he lashed himself with his riding crop and was getting a little frothy at the mouth. "Get the hell down from there with that camera," said Boyle to Peterman, "and let's get out of here. First thing you know, you'll be shooting pictures, and he'll start shooting pistols."

At this point Major Charles Madary of Baltimore, Maryland, Army manager of the Scribe, arrived from Paris with a coeducational group of correspondents, including Geoffrey Parsons, *New York Herald Tribune*; David Anderson, *New York Times*; Erika Mann, *Liberty*; Lady Margaret Stewart, Australian Consolidated Press; Betty Knox, *London Evening Standard*; and Lee Miller, *Vogue*.

Crabill did not want this new batch of sightseer correspondents to go across the river until the next day, so we made arrangements for them in an Orléans hotel and prepared to sweat out the next day, the seventeenth, when Generals Elster and Macon would perform the last rites.

The Paris correspondents were briefed the next morning on the complete plans, then Crabill authorized me to take them over. "Tell them to be careful," he said. "We haven't got the Germans in the cage yet, and their guns are loaded." One of the feminine war correspondents was Erika Mann, daughter of the famous Thomas Mann, who had suffered persecution and endured exile because of Hitler. As we came upon the leading elements of the column and passed alongside it down the road, Erika was emotionally moved, began to talk incoherently, then uttered profanity in the German tongue, and finally as the command car slowed, she got out. When I could get the jeep stopped and get back to her, she was less than a yard from the marching Germans, her hands on her hips, her tongue stuck out, rendering a juicy Bronx cheer right in their faces. That was the end of the ride, because she was bundled up and the retinue went back to the Beaugency bridge to await the rest of the affair. By then, no Germans would be armed, and it would be a lot safer for her to stick out her tongue.

At 3 P.M. Generalmajor Eric Elster came up to the bridge in his battered Citroën, got out, surveyed the scene: the battery of motion picture cameras, the microphone, and General Macon backed by division, corps, Air Force and Ninth Army staff representatives. He probably did not notice some hasty scurrying at the left of the receiving

group, where I hustled Lieutenant Sam Magill into position with the staff. He had been sitting on the fence, because nobody had seen fit to include him. As Magill came up, one of the Ninth Army colonels, fresh from the States, and seeing his first German soldier, looked about with some disgust, wondering at the discipline of the Eighty-third Infantry Division for having "gate-crashing" lieutenants at a time like this.

Lt. Col. Jules French placed himself on General Elster's left. "Shall we go, Herr General?" he asked, quietly.

Elster, pulling down on his tunic and straightening his cap, managed a smile. "Ja, mein Oberst," he said, and they moved out.

The whirl of the cameras was like a hive of bees, and *New York Times*man David Anderson wrote that this must have been "the best covered surrender of this, or any war." What no one knew then was that the story was being smothered by a trio of airborne divisions—the American Eighty-second, and 101st and the British First—being dropped in the Netherlands at Nijmegen, Eindhoven, and Arnhem.² The censor pulled the stop off both events at the same time, and relegated Magill's tremendous exploit to second-string position. But Paramount News made a special out of the movie film, labeling it unreservedly, "The Strangest Story of the War," and afterward, in the November 11, 1944, *Saturday Evening Post*, Collie Small, UP, wrote of the event and described the setting:

"News of the war south of the Loire drifted into the bar at the Scribe Hotel in Paris where correspondents gather nightly to plot new ways of poisoning the censors, who also drink at the Scribe bar, but from different stools—like big-league umpires and ballplayers. The inevitable happened almost immediately. Army public-relations officers, who never tire of devising new ways to torture weary correspondents, announced prematurely that 20,000 Germans were surrendering

² For months, Walter Cronkite, UP, and Bill Boni, AP, had been earmarked as post-Netherlands liberation bureau chiefs in Amsterdam for their respective agencies. Neither expected in his wildest dreams that they would become journalistic "firsts" by going to their jobs in gliders. Cronkite, with William Wade, INS; Gladwin Hill, AP; Homer Bigart, *New York Herald Tribune*; Bob Post, *New York Times* (who was lost in action); and Andy Rooney, *Stars and Stripes*, had been original members of the close coterie, "the Writing Sixty-ninth," or air correspondents who covered the first B-17 raids on Berlin. When Cronkite and Boni set forth with the 101st and Eighty-second Airborne Divisions on September 17, 1944, it was the thirteenth airborne mission for which Cronkite had been briefed—all the others having been scrubbed.

the following morning. Three hours later, they frantically announced it was all a mistake, and for everyone to stay as far away as possible, because the Germans might not surrender after all. Unfortunately, three of us left between announcements. . . ." "Unfortunately," Collie Small wrote, but this exploit of Sam Magill got Small a contract with the *Saturday Evening Post*, and tripled his salary, among other things.

Sam Magill, who crossed the English Channel a lieutenant, went home a lieutenant at war's end. This was partly because Colonel Crabill said he felt Sam's platoon "was more valuable to the security of the regiment than another battalion of infantry would have been, and I never considered him replaceable in that job." Once, much later, he was offered a captaincy if he would leave the platoon, but he refused, saying he would see the "boys" through to the end of the war, which he did. The nervy exploit of Magill, who violated orders, penetrated into German-held territory a hundred miles, and brought off the first big PW bag for the Ninth Army, finally was put on orders for the Legion of Merit eleven months after the incident. The war was over, and he was about to go home with the Ninety-ninth Infantry Division. They didn't give him the ribbon in the Scribe bar, or even in a ceremony. He had to go to a Ninety-ninth Division supply room and draw it.