

This is a an experience of Fernando M. "Fred" Palacios , 409th Inf., Co. G.

It was either the winter of 1944 or the spring of 1945 and during this time we were fighting in the lower Alps, between Germany & France. Most of the time we never knew where we were. The unit was climbing up one mountain, advancing slowly, taking small portions of the terrain as we went. We had been firing at the enemy when and if we saw them. Throwing hand grenades as the need arose. We came to a small clearing and there was a German soldier lying on the ground with his head against a tree. When we examined him we saw that his injury was to his stomach. He was able to speak and with hand gestures and a mixture of a few German and English words we talked. As he laid there he said that he did not want to die. He took out his wallet and showed us a picture of his wife and two children. He said that he did not believe in the war but had had to fight anyway. He begged us to help him and asked us if he could get some kind of medical aid. We felt very sorry for him and somehow got a litter and started to crawl down the hill with him. There were five of us and each one took a turn, rotating as soon as our hands became so sore that we couldn't hold him any more. I just can't describe how our hands ached although we rotated so that we would change from the left to right side. He was a big man, blonde, and I never knew how much effort was required to carry a stretcher. The fifth man went ahead, clearing the brush, also taking his turn to carry. We kept doing this until we finally got down to the bottom and then to a first aid station. The German was still awake and telling us about his family as we carried him. We struggled back up our hill, rejoined our platoon, dug our fox holes and slept. The next morning one of us went down to see to see how the fellow was doing. He brought back the news: the German soldier had died during the night.

17 May 2000