

SOISSONS

In Soissons we were billeted in a former French cavalry installation which was not too bad. The barracks were clean and the barns, which were made of stone and covered with plaster, served as storage space and as our theater. The movies were shown as we sat on plain wooden benches. The officers must have had a separate area; at least I cannot remember a reserved section or any officers in our theater. Of course there was horseplay which went on before the movie to fill in the time because you had to get there early to get a seat. While waiting for the movie to start we played a game called "Ack-ack" which was played in this manner. Someone would blow up a condom, tie it and toss it into the air for others to throw lit cigarettes at. The object was to burst the condom and bring it down. If it floated down or near you, you bounced it up again to get it out of your vicinity. As time went on the "aircraft" became more sophisticated as different ingredients were put inside the condom, such as pepper, foot powder or tooth powder, so when hit the contents would rain down on those sitting under it.

While in Soissons I drew a very unusual guard duty assignment. I was posted outside of a whore house to be sure that only 517th men entered.

During December I was deep into chess and by combining my pieces with those of Jim Andersen, since we had both lost parts of our sets, we at least had one complete set.

I actually had a pass in my hand for a few days in Liege, Belgium but never did get a chance to use it. The Germans had started an offensive through Belgium and on December 21st, the day I was to go to Liege, all passes were canceled and orders were issued to move out to Belgium.

