

The combat stories of **AUSTIN CARUSO**



Dates in Service: 1943- 1946
Branch of Service: Army
Unit: 100th Infantry Division, 925th Field
Artillery Battalion, Company B
Location: France/Germany
Highest Rank: Captain

Austin Caruso recalls his time as the Captain of a group of forward observers moving through German towns and the many close calls he experienced.

These stories were compiled by an interviewer, who prefers to remain anonymous, and goes by the nickname 'Kilroy Was Here.' These stories are posted through a partnership between 'Kilroy Was Here' and the Witness to War Foundation. Permission to use any of these materials must be granted by 'Kilroy Was Here,' which can be obtained through the Witness to War Foundation.



After finishing my OCS training at Fort Seals, Oklahoma I joined up with the 100th outside of the Lebanon, Tennessee area where they were on the Tennessee maneuvers. It was here that I was able to meet the men who would serve under me in combat, and they turned out to be a great bunch of men. My first sergeant was a large guy by the name of Gibbs. Gibbs was from Ohio and older than the other men and weighed about 300 pounds. He was also someone I relied on.

After our training had finished there, we returned to Fort Bragg and it wasn't long after that we departed overseas. I was assigned to make the trip over on the USS General Gordon, and as an officer, I had it somewhat better than our enlisted men. I would bet three fourths of our boys were sick all the way over.

In the field, it was my duty to work with the forward observers post, and I had some of the best men any officer could have ever asked for, particularly Lieutenant Miles Phillips and the enlisted men under him. We weren't on the very front lines but were close enough that we got our share of shelling, as with the day Otis Jefferson was killed. I couldn't have been standing six feet away from him when the 88 round came screaming in, exploding behind us.

I recall the time the Germans were being pushed out of this small town that had a church with a tall steeple with windows. As the Germans fell back, the



radioman and I worked our way down the street to the church and after entering, made our way up the steps of the steeple. About half way up the steeple I noticed, out of one of the windows, a large number of German troops running past the church and into a building next to us. I tried to call in fire support but due to them being so close they couldn't, so we had to sit there until they could be driven out.

During the Battle of the Bulge, we were in what was called Operation Norwind and had to fall back to a position that was easier to defend. At first there was a little disorder in doing so, because as part of the observers unit, it was hard catching up with our battery. The worst sound I remember during that time was sitting there in the dark and hearing German tanks moving around and not being able to see them. The 399th guys to our north lines were spread thin during that time. At one point we had an anti aircraft battery for support which wasn't much against German armor, and when the time came that we needed them, they too had pulled out.

During the first week in January some colonel dropped by and as his jeep came to a stop, a plane flew over. As it did, he jumped to his feet firing at the plane with his 45. As he was firing, he yelled for us to shoot at the plane, which we all did. Needless to say, none of us hit the plane.

It was also during that week that we found some



powdered eggs, so we had the idea to make some eggnog. After adding some whiskey one of the boys had found, it wasn't bad at all.

We were outside of Heilbronn, Germany and it started raining, so we weatherproofed our jeep the best we could by putting its canvas top over it. That day there were three of us in the jeep going down the road. There was the driver, a boy in the back with our gear and me sitting in the passenger seat. As we made our way down the road, the Germans started shelling us and by the time the driver had gotten the jeep to a stop and before I could get a leg out, the boy in the back had climbed over me and was in the ditch. To this day I have no idea how he did it.