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The item that appeared in the Morse Telegraph Club magazine "Dots and Dashes" was inaccurate in some details. The person who submitted this article to the magazine must have drawn on his imagination; I do not know who this was. The true story is as follows:

During WW-2 I served in the military attached to the OSS in North Africa and Italy as radio operator. Originally, I was a Morse telegraph operator on the railroads, Western Union and oil companies, with experience in handling routine Morse traffic. I had no difficulty switching over to International in my youth.

There were dozens of U.S. agents working behind the German lines; they were usually natives of those European countries, who had fled and sought out the OSS, or that agency enlisted their aid. These people received training in radiotelegraph code, in cryptography and the like. They were then either parachuted or landed by submarine behind the lines with little suitcase-type radio transmitters of about 30 to 35-watt power. During the time of their stay behind the German lines they would adopt a trade such as barber, dentist, teacher, etc. and then they would maintain daily radio schedules with OSS headquarters, sending back vital information regarding location, strength, types of units and so on, which the Germans had operating in certain zones. Our Air Force would then take over, armed with this information. Toward the end of the war in Italy, the demarcation line became narrowly drawn. In my own monitoring and scanning of the spectrum, I came across one particular German sergeant who was acting as radio operator for his regiment. The poor fellow was constantly lost, causing him to call back often (in plain German text). These calls were directed to his division commander for instructions.

The replies came back in plain German text. As I have spoken German since I was a small child, I learned to imitate the division German operator's fist which made it easy for me to slide in with the VFO on his frequency, and answer him. He thought it was his regular headquarters operator and he would ask for directions and instructions. I would reply in German text and direct him precisely into an area where I knew our heavy stuff was shelling.

This cat-and-mouse game went on for about six weeks. When the Germans were quite ready to throw in the towel in Italy, the German operator sought me out to tell me that they had finally realized what I had been doing; he told me that their supreme commander wished to surrender all of their approximately two million troops in Northern Italy. He therefore asked



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me to put this information in the hands of the proper U.S. generals who could finalize their request. I did this immediately. Within about four days the war was over in Italy.

You can see now that this was no great heroic act, that many other people were involved in it.... I simply happened to be in the right place at the right time—one of those things that might possibly happen once in a lifetime.

I wish to stress that I am not looking for glory because it required actions on the part of the whole organization. I am sending you a copy of the commendation letter I received later on. The document became very faded and would therefore not reproduce well. As a matter of fact I was going through a bunch of old papers a few years ago and ran across this old letter. I almost threw it away but, looking at it a second time I said: "By golly, I am going to keep this; some of my grandkids or great-grandkids might like to have it some day."

26 June, 1982

-- Buck M. Williford 2114-V  
2309 West 13th Street  
Odessa, Texas 79763 W5LKL

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HEADQUARTERS  
MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS,  
UNITED STATES ARMY  
APO 512

3 June 1945

AG 201-P-Williford, Buck M. (Enl.)

Subject: Commendation

To: Technician Third Grade Buck M. Williford, 38124431,  
2677th Regiment, OSS (Prov)

1. I wish to express my appreciation of your outstanding work in connection with the negotiations which resulted in the unconditional surrender of the German Army in Italy.
2. Your receiving via radio the basic rudiments of Message sending and receiving for the enemy radio operator in Milan, and later Bolzano, contributed materially to the success of the radio contact between Allied Force Headquarters and the Headquarters of the German Army.
3. This outstanding contribution reflects the greatest credit upon yourself and the Army of the United States,

(Sig)

Joseph T. McNarney,  
General, U.S. Army  
Commanding.