

On July 7th, Sniper was killed. Sniper was a good soldier. He was born under fire in the shattered remains of the fortress town of Cassino, and spent the rest of his happy life flirting with death with Charlie Company.

One day, Captain Reardon, Charlie Company's commander, was making a reconnaissance in the town of Cassino when he heard muffled yelps coming from the rocks of what had once been a house on the outskirts of town. He crossed over and began to dig in the rubble and uncovered a litter of four brown and black mongrel puppies. He gathered them in his arms and brought them back to the company. They were just a few days old, and their eyes were still closed, but under the faithful care of Pfc. Jaggard, they were nursed until they could see. Then they were given out to each platoon as mascots. "Duke," the black sheep, went to Headquarters platoon. "Peachy" went to the 1st, "Sniper" went to the 2nd, and the other sister, "Berlin Bitch," went to the 3rd platoon. The men grew fond of the tumbling puppies and they began to grow like weeds as several men in each platoon took over the added responsibility of bringing their messkits full of food back to the platoon area after each meal. Then things began to happen. "Berlin Bitch" developed distemper and died at San Vittore. "Peachy" disappeared and was gone for a week before one of the men found her tied up with a rope in a barn. She looked as though she had been deliberately starved. The men tried to nurse her back to health again, but to no avail. She could not regain her former strength and died soon after. It was on the drive to Rome that "Duke" developed worms. The men consulted Captain Snyder, the Battalion Surgeon, and tried all sorts of home-made remedies. One man broke a cartridge of rifle ammunition and fed the dog gunpowder in response to pleas that it was the best medicine. For weeks the men struggled with the dog, but eventually, they had to get rid of him. "Sniper" was the sole survivor of the litter, but he, too, had his troubles. "Sniper" developed fits and the men took him to a veterinarian to get him medicine. Sniper hated the medicine and seemed to know with uncanny instinct when it was medicine time. He would make himself very scarce around the company area, but Sergeants Treloar and Robertson would hunt him down relentlessly, and force the medicine down his throat. After a few weeks of this treatment, Sniper was soon romping around the company area again.

The company was in the remains of San Vittore for some time, and the men of the company had developed a hungering thirst for vino, so it was only natural that Sniper should be addicted as were his buddies in Charlie Company. Sniper soon began to like the Italian wine, too, and the men would pour him a drink any time they took one themselves. For a while, Sniper could not comprehend his capacity, and after an evening with the boys, he could not quite place his paws where he wanted them when he walked. He felt very foolish and would collapse and grin at the men until someone took pity on him. Then the men would gather him in their arms and carry him to his bed. They would tuck the blankets under his chin, and pat him softly, but Sniper wasn't aware of this. He was already asleep.

But Sniper was a smart dog. He soon learned his capacity and he would always become a little unsteady, but he remained a gentleman about drinking.

Sniper was rated Master Sergeant by authority of the company commander on a special order for his "good work and faithfulness," but he was busted a few days later for going AWOL.

As the 48th moved, through Italy up to Rome, Sniper became less of a second platoon mascot. He would stay close to the orderly room or go out with the other platoons to work. He became a company mascot, for all of the men were fond of him.

When the 48th left for invasion training, the men were worried. They could find no directives about dogs in the water-proofing instructions, and it looked for a long while, as though Sniper would have to remain in Italy. But the men had a vino session with Sniper one night and found a plan to take him on the invasion.

A second echelon was coming in after the assault waves, and some of the 48th's heavy equipment would come in with the later wave. So Sniper was given to Pfc. Helgeson and Pfc. Pflaum to hide on the ship until they could get the equipment off.

Pflaum and Helgeson smuggled Sniper aboard ship and waited for the beach to be cleared and the second echelon to move in. Sniper was really worried. He wanted his old friends in Charlie Company who were out



on the beach, and he worried the entire voyage. He was a happy dog when he finally caught up to Charlie Company about ten days after the invasion.

Sniper liked the French countryside far better than his Italian environment at Cassino, and he grew fat and sleek as the 48th drove through France. At Baumes-les-Grottes he acquired a dislike for Sherman tanks, and after a five minute battle with one, he had to make a strategic withdrawal with a skinned leg. Corporal McAullife, a medic, took Sniper into his care for several days until Sniper was again placed on duty status.

With V-E day in Berchtesgaden came the point system and the men were wondering if Sniper had enough to be redeployed back to his home in Cassino. He had been in four major campaigns in four different countries, under fire for eighteen months, and had been wounded twice. The men figured out that Sniper had a total of 104 points.

The happy career of Sniper came to a sudden and tragic ending. Corporal Peck was holding Sniper in the front seat of a truck while a detail from Charlie Company was speeding along to work. Suddenly, Sniper saw something that excited him and he dove out of the window. He hit close in beside the truck, and the rear wheels passed over him.

Sniper will always be remembered in Charlie Company for the many times he made them laugh when they needed laughter more than anything else.