

A World War II Love Story by Tom Livingston

The following is a brief summary of Jake Strock's service in World War II. Much of the information comes from a publication called "The History of the 89th Infantry Division." Also included is a minimally edited translation of a letter he kept from his time in Europe. Other information was furnished to the Museum by Jake's brother, Gilford, and Jake's widow, Carrie Strock.

Jacob Chester Strock, Jr.

Jacob (Jake) (J.C.) Strock, Jr. was born on August 2, 1922 in Elloree, SC. - the son of Jacob Chester Strock, Sr. and Frances Rebecca Strock. Jake had one brother and six sisters. He spent his entire life as a farmer in the Midway section except for the three years, from March 1943 until June 1946, which he spent in the US Army during World War II.



After graduating from Elloree High School in 1940 he worked on his father's farm until he joined the Army on March 30, 1943 at Fort Jackson, SC. After boot camp he was assigned to the 89th Infantry Division and did further training in Greensboro, NC and Ft. Myers, Fla. At some point in his service he became attached to the 89th Medical Corp. in which he remained throughout his service. As a combat medic, Private Strock landed in Le Havre, France in January 1945, six months after D-Day. The Allies controlled the coast and some of France, but the war into Germany was still to be fought. The 89th was attached to Patton's Third Army. After fighting their way through France and across the Rhine into Germany near the Frankfurt area, they fell in behind Patton's march to Berlin. Jake, along with many other medics, served with tremendous valor and he was awarded two Bronze Stars for his heroic actions.

The war in Europe ended in May 1945. After five months of constant action, the 89th was given orders to return to Le Havre for what they thought would be a trip to the Pacific. But in June they were given orders to stay in France and process all of the Allied units in Europe to their next duty station through Le Havre. This assignment took a full year. He received orders in June, 1946 to return to the USA and on June 24, 1946, as a PFC, he was discharged from the Army. According to his family, he never talked about the war.

On November 25, 1948 Jake married Carrie Creech in Barnwell, SC. They had one daughter, Dianne Strock Scott who is deceased. Jake, who was a member of the First Baptist Church of Elloree, died on August 31, 1998 at his home on Midway Road, Elloree, SC. In a recent interview (Nov. 2019) his widow and his brother (Gilbert) said that J.C. never talked about the war except for one story. He said that early in the campaign German soldiers shot at the medics as they attended the wounded. That stopped in most cases when the Germans realized that the medics were treating the wounded from both sides!

Jake kept two things from his experiences in Germany, the empty medic bag that he used in the war, and a letter and picture that he received in 1946 from his German girlfriend. When Mrs. Carrie was asked how she felt about the letter she replied that it happened a long time before she met J.C. and therefore she considered it "water over the dam" and she did not mind sharing it. The letter and medic bag are now in the possession of Jake's younger brother, Gilbert Strock, and he has generously allowed the museum to use them. The transcribed letter and picture follows.

Kreuzstein May 23, 1946

My dear Jak!

The letter I am going to write for you is a special one, you should keep it for ever and read it again and again, as many times as you think of me! As you are longing for me! Your thoughts should be always with me. Maybe you laugh at me today, but later on you won't. I am awfully sorry to loose you but it must be so. Again and again you ask me because of my dreariness, because of my tears in the eyes. I just must think of the time to come for me without you. The day will come, you will leave me, all the nice days will come to end. You must realize what it means to me to loose the man I love so much. During the five months we know and love one an other you have been all ways kind and good to me. I will never forget it and be thankful to you. Once alone, there will come dreary days for me. I should look at your photograph with tears in the eyes and in thoughts with you - with the man I love so sincerely. All the best wishes are with you, happiness should never leave you.

Be good and don't forget me. I hope to get a nice little letter from you some day. Let us enjoy the last few days or hours, let us be together as often as possible,

This to you with all my heart

Always thinking of you

Faithfully yours

Edith



[Note on the back of the picture below:]

KREUZSTEIN 23 May, 1946

Are you longing for me, turn this picture and you know I am with you.