# The BULGE BUGLE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION • VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE, INC.

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 1 THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN FEBRUARY 2004


# MEDICS IN THE BULGE

**Important Questionnaire**
**(see Centerspread)**

*A battle casualty, sledded in on skis, is transferred to a jeep that has been rigged for carrying stretchers.*
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**MAY 25-30, 2004**
**Battle of the Bulge Reunion**
**and**
**WWII Memorial Dedication**
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**DEC. 10-20, 2004**
**60th Anniversary**
**Commemortion**
**Belgium & Luxembourg**
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CONTACT THE CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA. YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID.

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IF YOU FIND YOU HAVE A LITTLE TIME, WRITE TO VBOB AND WE'LL SEND YOU THE NECESSARY TOOLS TO GET OFF TO A GOOD START IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA. YOU'LL FIND THAT IT'S EASY TO DO AND THE REWARDS TO ALL OF THOSE YOU BRING TOGETHER CANNOT BE DUPLICATED.

# President's Message

As I sit down to write my first message as your new president, I want to lead off by thanking you for the privilege of serving you, and by thanking our outgoing president, Lou Cunningham, for his outstanding leadership over the past two eventful years. We are fortunate that we will benefit by Lou's continuing participation as a past president in the meetings of the Executive Committee.

**George Chekan**

I am grateful that the committee will continue to meet and offer their wisdom and advice for the good of our organization and of you, our members, I want you to know that I also want to hear from you with your suggestions and ideas because even though we may be separated by miles, we want your input for consideration in our meetings at Fort Meade, Maryland.

That is always a special setting for me since that was where I took my first steps as one of Uncle Sam's GIs in February of 1943. I have many memories of those first days but the best one is of my good friend "Jeep," who entered with me, and couldn't wait to get into his khakis so he could run out and salute officers. Needless to say, I never had that desire.

It has been seventeen years since I was elected for the first time to serve as president: that was way back in 1986. I felt honored then following the trail blazed by our first president, Clyde Boden, and his able successor, Bob VanHouten, and I am honored now to hold this position in such an important year for us as veterans of WWII.

We were a young organization then, and when compared to other veterans organizations we are young now, and we still have the enthusiasm and the "get-up and go" that has kept us growing and vibrant--determined that the Battle of the Bulge is not forgotten, and will remain a part of our country's enduring heritage.

Those are goals we set for ourselves, and with them we pledged to keep alive the memories of our comrades who made the supreme sacrifice in the snows of the Ardennes Forest of Belgium and Luxembourg.

I want to congratulate each of you because you are doing that virtually every day as you visit schools and community organizations to remind new generations of those sacrifices in what is still the largest land battle ever fought by the U.S. Army.

Our ranks may be thinning, but the fire is still there.

That is evident in the record turnout we are expecting for our annual reunion, moved up this year to May 25-30, in Washington, D.C., to coincide with the long-awaited dedication of the World War II Memorial on May 29th on the National Mall.

In preparation for this historic event, John Bowen, his wife, Mary Ann, and Dorothy Davis have worked tirelessly to obtain hotel rooms throughout the area to accommodate all of you who have signed up for the reunion and the dedication.

They have worked out a program of special events that you should look over in their report in the following pages of *The Bugle*. As they point out, there really is something for everyone.

I hope that you can be there for what will be a major event not only for the veterans of WWII, but also for your families, indeed for all Americans and for those throughout the world who cherish freedom from tyranny and oppression.

I know from frequent contact with our friends in Belgium and Luxembourg that many are hopeful of being with us, and adding their presence to this auspicious occasion.

They are also preparing to join with us later in the year as we observe the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Many of you have been asking what we, as veterans of the battle, will be doing to mark the anniversary. Earle Hart (87th Infantry Division) is heading the committee to work on it from our end, and you will read the latest information on plans for that important milestone in the following pages.

As a former newspaperman, I want to stress how important the 60th Anniversary can be to obtain not only newspaper, but also radio and television, coverage for the programs you are preparing for your chapters.

It is also an opportunity to increase your visits to schools and community organizations. I would, therefore, suggest that now is a good time to start planning some special events that would draw media coverage. Maybe a plaque dedication in a central location, a series in your community papers highlighting stories from your members, and proclamations from your state, community and national government representatives. Time seems to fly for us, so start laying the groundwork now.

Be sure to let us know what you are doing. I will continue to wear my other hat, and remain editor of *The Bulge Bugle*, ably assisted by Nancy Monson, and want to add your stories to the newsletter so we can let others know of your activities. Remember, the newsletter is for you, and if you have a story to tell, we want to tell it.

Perhaps with the increased publicity, we can continue to enlist veterans out there who either aren't aware of our organization, or have been too busy to join in the past.

And while we are remembering the battle in the snowy Ardennes 60 years ago, let us also think of the present, and the American men and women, most of them as young as we were, who are defending freedom in Iraq, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and other places we never heard of. They are fighting what we fought for but in a new century, and in other countries, but they face the same danger and uncertainty we did. Their families worry about them as ours did. They deserve our prayers. They deserve our thanks.□

## IN THIS ISSUE

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THANKS TO KILROY

Since I wrote to *The Bugle*, I have received several answers to my call for information on securing a copy of *Lili Marlene* and I wish to thank all--I have received a copy on CD. So thanks again. You all have different names but you are still "Kilroy" to me.

**Robert I. Denney**
**9 ENGR CMBT BN C**

### MISPRINT OF NAME

*[In the last issue we printed an article by Seamer Knoll--well, not really. The article was from* ***Seymour Kroll****--we goofed. We're sorry, Seymour.]*

### A VERY WORTHWHILE PROJECT

For the last six years, Rich Marowitz, Al Cohen and myself have attended many school, correction institutions, temples, and churches talking about the "Battle of the Bulge." We have tutored many college students for their papers on this subject. I served with the 6th Armored Division. Al served with the 90th Infantry Division was later a guard over Rudolph Hess. Rich was with the 42nd Infantry Division helping to liberate Dachau and possesses Hitler's top hat from his apartment in Munich. We have been kept very busy with this project, and have enjoyed every moment of it. We received many accolades from all these organizations. We hope to keep this program as long as our health holds out.

**Douglas Vink**
**6 ARMDD 678 TK BN**

### SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

On December 28, 1944, Company B of the 87th Chemical Mortar Battalion was overrun by a Panzer unit at Sadzot, Belgium, and a man named Jesse McGowan was killed.

His family first got a telegram that he was missing. Then, another telegram advising that he had been killed. Needless to say, his family had many unanswered questions regarding his demise.

It was decided to have a battalion reunion so that his survivors could talk with some of the other guys who were there that day. The reunion took place September 30th and October 1st and 2nd in South Carolina. Several of his brothers and his sister were there and were very impressed with what they learned. My wife, Mary, was responsible for getting the reunion together.

**R. K. Ostrom**
**87 CHEM MTR BN B**

### IT AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN

I can well understand that some people would like to be immortal, but it is my opinion that this just "ain't gonna happen." The Battle of the Bulge may or may not have a prominent place in history and there is little or nothing we can do to change that. Any battle I was in is a very important battle--in my opinion--but I haven't written very many history books. Talk to some WWI vets and listen to complaints about forgotten battles. How about Korea, where a whole war is forgotten? In addition, our schools teach very little history of any kind these days and what is taught is suspiciously PC.

I belong to VBOB, not to the sons of VBOB, the nephews of VBOB or great-granddaughters of VBOB. When we are all dead, VBOB will no longer be alive even if someone is using left-over stationery.

**Thor Ronningen**
**99 INFD 395 INF I**

### ACQUIRING A GERMAN JEEP (VOLKSWAGON)

In late December of 1944, during the BoB, my battalion commander ordered the battalion S-1 (Capt. Smith) to relocated our CP (command post) to a forward position.

After checking our situation map with the battalion S-2 (intelligence officer), we (Capt. Smith, myself, as the battalion sergeant major, and a driver) proceeded forward to the town chosen by the S-2 officer.

We arrived and dismounted from our jeep and while walking along a muddy road, we received incoming rifle fire (the popping corks sound) which luckily went over our heads. We paused but could not locate the sniper and I thought to myself, evidently he never received any marksman medals for weapons firing. Thank God!

As we proceeded through the heavily damaged town, I spotted an old barn which looked suitable for our battalion CP because it was situated behind a small hill which afforded some security from the usual enemy artillery fire.

I opened the large barn door and lo and behld, parked inside the barn was a German jeep (Volkswagen with rear engine). I often wondered if it belonged to the sniper.

Because of the usual shortage of vehicles in our battalion, I decided to take this jeep as my own. Only in war could this be done legally.

After the maintenance section checked it out for booby traps, they painted the American logo "star" on the hood so that our air corps could identify it as American. I also requested they paint the name of my wife, "Dotty" on the front bumper as a good luck charm.

Of course, after the war, Germany became our ally and flooded the U.S. with civilian Volkswagons.

I often wonder if I was the first American to own a Volkswagon.

**Philip Leibrock**
**36 INFD 104 INF**

### BULGE INTELLIGENCE

I think I may be able to add a little more mystery to the "Mind Blower," referred to by Seymour Kroll in the most recent issue of *The Bulge Bugle*. An an author and researcher of my unit's history (299th Engineer Combat Battalion), I came across something that has bothered me for years.

Although we were D-Day H-Hour participants, our records of this event were sorely lacking. Through research via the National Archives Record Association, I was able to find a complete story of our Bulge experience. Along with this information and starting some time in November, 1944, I also noted several plans for defense of the area where we were operating as it applied to our battalion. The information was supplied by our battalion S-2 officer, a Captain West.

The plans identified several roads and bridges that we were to mine and load with explosives should we be attacked. The plan changed slightly as our unit moved around but just prior to December 16, 1944, the plan almost matched the area that we wound up defending, north of Arlon, Belgium, and stretching westward almost identical to the German advance to the south branch of the Orthenville River.

In discussing this with a friend who had met Captain West after the war in the course of business dealings, I learned that the captain had told my friend that he had been privy to some inside intelligence data which allowed him to sketch positions so accurately. His source was a lieutenant that he knew from college days.

Could his contact have been Lt. Thomas R. Dole? We will never know as all my sources have since deceased.

**James H. Burke**
**299 ENGR CMBT BN**

# COMBAT MEDICS BADGE

*[The information on the availability of the Combat Medics Badge was submitted by* ***LAWRENCE T. PAGE, 148TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, COMPANY C, MEDIC****.]*

The Combat Medics Badge was finally introduced March 3, 1945, for medical personnel who served with Medical Detachments during WWII. If you served in a medical unit, please follow the instructions in the "St. Louis Fire" story to see if you are eligible for this badge.

Thanks, Lawrence, for the information.□

**Check your label--are your dues due?**

# VBOB CONVENTION 2004 & WWII MEMORIAL UPDATE

*We Celebrate Our Lives & Our Legacy*

At the present time the VBOB Annual Convention to be held from 25 – 30 May 2004 in conjunction with the WWII Memorial Dedication in the Washington Metropolitan area is full. Over 1,000 Bulge veterans and guests have signed up already for the dedication on Saturday, 29 May, an indication of how much everyone is looking forward to this great event.

The Memorial construction is on schedule and is expected to be completed in March 2004, well in advance of the May 29th Dedication. The Memorial should be open to visitors in April 2004. We are planning a week of camaraderie for our Bulge and WWII veterans.

We have exceeded the number of seats (800) in the main Banquet Room for Friday night but the hotel has been gracious enough to let us use the small banquet room on the lower level which will hold an additional 90 seats. We are presently working on arrangements to see if we will be able to provide live video of the Main Banquet room speeches and activities. Those who requested banquet seating after the main banquet room reached its capacity will be offered seating in this auxilary banquet room rather than be told that there are no more banquet seats.

If you have requested reservations for rooms you should have received a confirmation # from the VBOB Secretary, John Bowen, with a 800-telephone number to call to give them your credit card information to hold the room. If you have not heard from John Bowen then you should call him immediately on 301-384-6533 or johndbowen@earthlink.net. There are a few reservations that we have with no addresses or telephone numbers and we have been unable to locate the individuals.

We are looking for Hospitality volunteers. We are especially looking for sons & daughters of Bulge vets that would be willing to give of their time to make this a pleasant reunion for the veterans! We are also in need of bus captains. Qualifications for this position are that you must be able to sit in the front seat of the bus and count the number of people assigned to your bus leaving no one behind. It also requires a congenial personality, one not easily rattled and not easily swayed by hard luck stories and requests for a loan.

On the form that you get in the mail please put your VBOB Membership number on the Registration application, if you are a member. You will find that number on the back cover of the Bulge Bugle that you receive.

You should have called the Reservation number to give them your credit card #. Please do that immediately. All rooms without a credit card to secure the room by 1 March will be cancelled and reassigned to folks on the waiting list.

We have received many inquiries about the Memorial Service. Due to limited seating at the Washington National Cathedral, (where the Memorial Service will be held) the WWII Memorial Committee has said that only specifically invited World War II-era individuals and officials will be able to attend the service. Accordingly, arrangements have been made by the Commission to allow all others wishing to experience the Memorial Service to view it in real-time on large outdoor screens on the Mall or at the MCI Center and possibly on network or cable television. More details regarding this will be made available by the Memorial Commission in the coming months. It does not appear that we will have tickets for the Memorial Service at the Cathedral.

This may be just as well because the logistics of getting everyone to the Memorial Dedication site may require that we begin to move people as early as 10 AM for the 11 AM gate opening. We must go to a designated pick-up point or Subway stop. Only their vehicles can transport people to the Memorial because of security concerns. Be sure that each person brings a photo-ID with him or her. Though you must have tickets to get in, the **seating is not reserve seating**. It is open seating. With the large crowds expected it will take some time for everyone to get through the security entrances.

Unfortunately we are not able to provide exact costs at this time. AS this goes to press we are still negotiating with the bus companies to determine transportation services and best price. Because they recognize that this Memorial Day weekend coupled with the WWII event will place a large demand on their services, and VBOB will require a large number of buses, they desire to build a healthy profit for services. We desire to attain the best price for our veterans. As soon as we have these costs established we will mail costs information to all that have reservations.

Our trip to Fort Meade for lunch with visits to the Battle of the Bulge Conference Room and Ft Meade Museum is full and we have established a waiting list. Those not going to Ft Meade will be able to visit the Smithsonian's Reunion on the Mall or enjoy our Hospitality Room at the Fairview Park Marriott. On Friday afternoon, at 2PM, we will enjoy the Salute to Veterans at the MCI Center. On Saturday Evening, after the Memorial Dedication, we will attend a musical "The Road To Victory" which is being sponsored by our SC Chapter of VBOB. This two-hour event will start at 8PM.

We are looking for any **Corporate Sponsors** for our Hospitality Room and event. If you own a company or have contacts within a company that would like to help support our Hospitality Room and WWII veterans either in kind or in a monetary contribution please contact John Bowen (301-384-6533.

At the Memorial Dedication and other activities, it is appropriate to wear your medals and overseas cap. If you cannot find your overseas cap or it no longer fits you may want to order one of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge caps from the Keystone Uniform Cap Company (see details on other page). It would be nice to be able to look out and recognize our Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge members.

Ralph Bozrath, Associate Member, is putting together a video that we will run continuously in the Hospitality room. We would appreciate your sending us a WWII photo of yourself that we can incorporate it into the video. Please put your name and unit (with rank, serial number and current address) with the picture. We cannot return the photos so if you wish to retain the photo be certain send us a copy. Copies can be made at Walmart on the Kodak Photo Copier machine in their photo department. Send them to John D. Bowen, VBOB Secretary, 613 Chichester Lane, Silver Spring MD 20904-3331. All photos will then be sent to our VBOB records depository maintained by the US Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks PA.

# The birthplace of Veterans Day

**Fifty years ago, Emporia, Kansas, gave us a day for all who served.**

*[The following article appeared in the November, 2003, "The American Legion Magazine," and was written by Jeff Stoffer]*

Too young for World War I and too old for World War II, Alvin King never served in the U.S. Armed Forces. He was a cobbler. But he was a cobbler in Emporia, Kansas, in the patriotic heart of America, where honor for those who've served runs deep in the roots of the oaks and sycamores that line the city streets.

King knew just about everyone in Lyon County. He paid especially close attention to those with Blue Star Banners in their windows. "He was just a small-town businessman who had a deep interest in the guys going in," said Lee Stolfus, adjutant of Emporia's American Legion Post 5. "He knew them all personally, and their parents."

King fixed shoes free of charge for those lacking the money to pay, including war orphans and widows. He played Santa Clause for schoolchildren, assembled care packages for troops overseas and served actively in the American War Dads.

But his community spirit ultimately reached far beyond Emporia. He is credited with giving us Veterans Day, 50 years ago this month [November, 2003].

**Roots of "All Veterans Day."**

World War II and the Korean War had claimed the lives of more than 100 sons of Lyon County by 1953. Among them was Medal-of-Honor recipient Marine Sgt. Grant Timmerman, a tank commander who gave his life shielding his men from a live grenade. And there was King's nephew, Pvt. John Cooper--killed instantly in Germany, from a Nazi artillery shell, just before Christmas 1944. *[Could this have been in the Battle of the Bulge?!*

Armistice Day--established in 1938 to recognize the end of World War I--did not sufficiently honor all who fought afterward, according to King and his fellow Emporians. So, for November 11, 1953, they decided to overhaul the observance into an "All Veterans Day." King would be chairman.

A parade was the central feature. Marching along Commercial Street were a Marine Corps color guard, an American Legion bugle corps, troops from the 137th Infantry, a Naval Reserve unit, recruiters, high school bands, Army mothers, Navy mothers, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, baton twirlers and veterans from all 20th century wars thus far. Marine fighter planes swooped and soared. Whistles and sirens howled until 11 a.m. when a moment of prayer was observed for the peace that came in 1918. then it was off to the civic auditorium for a free meal, served in GI chow-line style, followed by a wheelchair basketball game, a free movie, a smoker and a dance.

Kansas Governor Edward F. Arn attended and said, "This is a wonderful thing. It should be done in every city of the nation."

And so, the following spring, U.S. Representative Ed Rees, of Emporia, introduced legislation on Congress to change Armistice Day to Veterans Day for all of America.

On October 8, 1954, President Eisenhower signed a proclamation that stated: On that day, let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom.◘

# 2003 VBOB COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONIES

**By Marty Sheeron**
**53rd Field Hospital**

On a beautiful, clear morning, December 16, 2003, DVC members and friends traveled by chartered bus to Arlington National Cemetery (in Virginia) to attend and participate in the Commemorative Ceremonies of the 59th anniversary of the commencement of the Battle of the Bulge.

At 1100 hours the ceremonies began with the formal Changing of the Guards at the Tomb of the Unknowns. DVC was privileged to witness the impressive military display par excellence of the U.S. Army Guard ("The Old Guard"--3rd Infantry Regiment), guarding and protecting the tomb. The personal appearance, dress uniform, and rifles were meticulous. The Guard was a work of precision: cadence, shouldering rifle, and changing of position of rifle were done in a flawless manner. The audience was requested to remain silent during the ceremonies out of respect to the sanctity of this hallowed memorial. The Tomb of the Unknowns bears the inscription: HERE REST IN HONOR GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD. Escorted by the Sergeant of the Guard, VBOB National President Lou Cunningham (106th Infantry Division), laid a wreath at the head of the tomb. A bugler from the U.S. Army Band rendered *Taps*.

After this ceremony, DVC members and friends, joined by other members from other VBOB chapters, walked a short distance to the National VBOB marker. Stan Wojtusik, VBOB Vice President for Military Affairs, called members and friends to order. Stan led the "Pledge of Allegiance. VBOB Chaplain Monsignor William F. O'Donnell recited prayers. A wreath was laid at the VBOB Monument followed by a rendering of *Taps* by a bugler from the U.S. Army Band.

After the VBOB ceremony, members and friends boarded bus for the Fairview Park-Marriott, Falls Church, Virginia, for luncheon. After chow, Col. Tom Sweeney (Ret.), U.S. Army War College, spoke about the Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The Military History Institute Facility now under construction will open in the summer of 2004. Other buildings are in various stages of design. The Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle will compliment the Army Museum at Fort Belvoir, Virginia (scheduled to open in 2009). These two facilities are the major components of the National Museum of the United States Army.

VBOB Recording Secretary, John Bowen, gave a report of the VBOB National Reunion May 25th through May 28th, 2004, and the dedication of the WWII Memorial on May 29th, 2004. John stated that all VBOB reservations are booked. He will keep a waiting list for those late-comers looking for rooms.

Earle Hart, 87th Infantry Division, gave a briefing on the tentative arrangements being made for the official VBOB 60th Anniversary celebration in Luxembourg and Belgium.

National President Lou Cunningham made a farewell speech and introduced George Chekan (9th Infantry Division) as the new National VBOB President. Lou then introduced and swore in the 2003-04 National Officers.◘

# BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG

## 60th Anniversary Commemorations

The plans for commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Bulge are progressing well. The Belgium and Luxembourg parties are well coordinated, greatly facilitating the planning and decision-making process.

The tentative trip dates are: departure--Friday evening, December 10th with a rest day on Saturday; return will be on Monday, December 20th.

Four days will be spent in Luxembourg--including a special ceremony at Luxembourg City (Hamm) Cemetery and visits to Clervaux, Wiltz, the Diekirch Museum, etc. Four days will also be spent in Belgium including special events at Bastogne on December 16th and visits to St. Vith, Malmedy, Houffalize, etc.

A "Trip Participation Questionnaire" will be mailed to all dues paying VBOB members shortly. Those wishing to take the trip should return the questionnaire promptly. Based on questionnaire returns, final decisions will be made regarding travel arrangements, participant criteria, costs, etc.

Special arrangements, with reduced costs, are being made for VBOB veterans--which will be finally determined based on the number of (veteran) participants. Coordinated arrangements will be made for non-veterans who wish to accompany VBOB veterans--based on a different cost basis.

In the event that trip facilities are over-subscribed, VBOB veterans will have first priority. Participants will be accepted on a first-come basis.

The numerous, extraordinary events bode for a memorable "last hurrah."

More finalized information will be published in the next *Bulge Bugle.*

**Earle Hart (A-345-87INFD)**
**Chairman**
**VBOB 60th Anniversary Committee**□

*T/4 Robert L. Hegg, 166th Engineer Combat Battalion, of New Rockford, North Dakota, draws water from portable reservoir fed by stream located between Junglinster, Luxembourg City and Echternach, Germany, between December 23, 1944, to about January 15, 1945.*

# DECEMBER 15, 2003 MEMORIAL BANQUET

## Speech delivered by Msgr. Wm. O'Donnell 87th Infantry Division

Almighty God, we ask your blessing on this assembly, gathered in your name and presence to memorialize events which began 59 years ago in Belgium and Luxembourg--"The Battle of the Bulge."

We acknowledge your protection which brought us home safely, and now, after 59 years, has given us the health, opportunity and initiative to gather here today.

Though our endeavors were blessed with success 59 years ago, let us not forget the sacrifices of so many of our comrades during those dark and tragic days--certainly not the least of whom were the brave and gallant people of Belgium and Luxembourg--they shared their food, shelter and support with us, often at the risk of their lives.

Let us remember also those who planned this happy occasion; with special appreciation for those who prepared and will serve this excellent repast.

In asking your blessing this evening, Almighty God, we pledge our continued thoughts and prayers for those who died in the battle 59 years ago, as well as those who have died since the battle.

Amen□


# *Medics in the Bulge*

*[The following excerpts are taken from the CRIBA website. It is entitled "Medics in the Bulge," and was written by* ***RALPH STORM****.]*

[Excerpted and altered for space] The average American soldier in WWII first encountered Army medics at Army induction centers where inductees were given physical examinations. These men had earlier been examined by hometown doctors, but Army officials became aware that many local physicians tended to overlook certain ailments among the prospective inductees which might have precluded them from becoming healthy soldiers.

Some GIs never went on sick call and were never injured. For those soldiers in the European Theater who became ill or injured, there was a huge medical complex in place by D-Day, 1944. There was no exact way of knowing how many hospital beds would be needed, but ETO's Chief Surgeon, Colonel Paul Hawley was insistent on building the latest and most elaborate hospital complex seen in any army in WWII. There were the mobile hospitals either in tents or in suitable buildings that had been taken over by the Army. These facilities were near the front and provided only patch-up work for the wounded. The goal was to keep patients alive and sent on to the next hospital where more sophisticated procedures could be used. The general hospitals where the patients could be reconstructed and rehabilitated, were located in areas more distant from the front in such continental cities such as Liege, Paris, Dijon, and many cities and towns in England.

One issue concerning seriously wounded soldiers was whether some should be sent back to the States on hospital ships. General George Patton had a somewhat unsympathetic answer to this question: *"if you have two wounded soldiers, one with a gunshot wound of the lung, and another with an arm or leg blown off, you save the son-of-a-bitch with the lung wound and let the god damned son-of-the-bitch with an amputated arm or leg go to hell. He is no god damned use to us any more."* The ETO medical policy on such cases was that if a patient needed six months (180 days) or more of hospitalization, he would be sent to the States. Later, during the Bulge, when beds were scarce, the policy was shortened to four months.

Keith Winston, 100th Infantry Division, wrote how it was done under ideal conditions. *"A boy gets hurt on the line. Within a minute or less a telephone message is sent back to our forward aid station, a distance of 300 to 1,000 yards from the front, where a sergeant and four litter bearers are always on hand. They rush right up to the line with a litter.*

*"During this time, the company aid man is administering first aid on the spot, usually consisting of stopping the bleeding with sulfanilamide powder externally, bandaging and giving wound pills internally. By that time, another litter team is there and carries the casualty to the nearest point where a jeep can travel, anywhere from 25 to 3,000 yards, depending on conditions. He is then rushed to the aid station--one to three miles behind the line. Here the physician removes the first aid bandage, makes a proper diagnosis, applies a more permanent bandage, administers blood plasma if needed, and in severe cases, gives morphine. Next the patient is rushed by ambulance to a clearing station further to the rear. Here he may be given an emergency operation. Then he is taken to an evacuation hospital further back for first class attention."* Aid stations had no beds and were equipped only with bare essentials. After patients were diagnosed and treated, information was jotted down on a card, which was attached to a buttonhole on the patient's coat.

Litter carrying was hard, exhausting work and often only two bearers were on hand. Glen Ghrist, Jr., a medic with the 32nd Battalion, 3rd Armored Division, recalled carrying wounded GIs near Sart, Belgium: *"It was cold as hell--some survived the cold. Captain Duffy and I volunteered to get some wounded soldiers from a field which was under artillery fire. We had to wade a small stream to get the two soldiers and bring them back to the jeep. We carried them on our shoulders, sometimes crawling, sometimes running, to get the hell out of there."*

It was not unusual for battalion surgeons to occasionally act as litter bearers. Keith Winston wrote of his unit being short of litter bearers in emergencies: *"If an emergency arises your position means nothing. If it calls for five litter teams immediately, Doc and I will go up and haul. He and I were doing it one day with no facilities at all."*

During medical training, army medics received training in the use of the carbine and .45 pistol since some medics went to the Pacific where the Japanese had not signed the Geneva Convention. Some also carried weapons in the ETO on certain occasions. Donald Ratliff, 7th Infantry Division medics, once captured a German in Vielsalm, Belgium. *"One night in Vielsalm, Belgium, we went into a house to set up a battalion aid station. One of the men opened a closet door and a German soldier was sitting on the floor. He quickly surrendered when one of the men showed a .45 pistol."* Although medics in the ETO were not armed, many medics carried pistols for self-protection.

For the most part the Germans respected the rules of land warfare and did not shoot at combat medics while they did their first aid work and litter bearing. Medic Philip Hahn, of the Medical Detachment, 13th Field Artillery Observation Battalion, recalled an extraordinary situation in which his German cousin in a German field artillery position observed an American army aid station near Walheim, Germany: *"The last towns we were in before the Bulge were small towns near Aachen. One was Walheim. After the war, I visited my cousin who was a lieutenant in the German field artillery. In looking over his records, I saw the name of Walheim. He said that he had the crossroads zeroed in--he knew exactly what farm house we had for an aid station because of the red cross hanging from a window and that there were probably German civilians living there."*

There were many exceptions to this. Peter Couvillion, 9th Armored Division, served as an evacuation jeep driver in Luxembourg and recalled one exception: *"On the second day of the Bulge after all our line companies had been surrounded, we attempted to contact "C" Company. Enroute, we encountered a battle line of Germans. They did not shoot at us. On this mission we evacuated 16 wounded and left the slightly wounded behind.... Early that morning my assistant and I contacted our "B" Company. We found the company medic. Leading us to where he had some wounded, a sniper shot both the company medic and my assistant. Both died before I could get to them. Men from the platoon found the sniper and shot him."*

Two types of casualties occurred in the ETO that troop commanders were not well prepared for. In 1941, the army lacked a definition, a treatment system, or even a name for its psychiatric casualties. These casualties by the end of the war would amount to over 150,000, or an average for every three

*(Continued on Page 9)*

# Medics in the Bulge (Continued from Page 8)

men killed or wounded, one other soldier became a combat exhaustion case.

Medical writer Albert Cowdry described some of the symptoms of the soldiers with combat exhaustion: *"Intolerable weariness and baseless alarm. Some were in a stupor and withdrawn, some tense and violent, some suffered from Parkinson-like tremor or from delusions.... They were beyond self-control and orders and threats meant nothing. Weeping, shaking, curling up in the fetal position...they had ceased to be soldiers for a time."*

Veteran war correspondent Ernie Pyle was deeply touched when he met two GI psychiatric casualties: *"...two shock cases...staggering down the road. They were not wounded but were completely broken...the kind that stab into your heart. They were shaking all over, and had to hold on to each other like little girls when they walked. The doctor stopped them. They could barely talk, barely understand. He told them to wait down at the next corner until we came back, and then they could ride. When they turned away from the jeep, they turned slowly and unsteadily, a step at a time, like men who were awfully drunk. Their mouths hung open and their eyes stared, and they still held onto each other. They found more war than the human spirit can endure."*

Once during the Bulge, General Matthew Ridgeway encountered a dysfunctional sergeant: *"An hour later in the same spot, the tough airborne General Ridgeway came under enemy fire, and a sergeant nearby became almost hysterical. He threw himself into the ditch by the side of the road crying and raving. I walked over and tried to talk to him, trying to help him get hold of himself. But it had no effect. He was just crouched there in the ditch, cringing in utter terror. So I called my jeep driver, Sergeant Farmer, and told him to take his carbine and march this man back to the nearest MP and if he started to escape to shoot him without hesitation. He was an object of abject cowardice and the sight of him would have a terrible effect on any American soldier who might see him."*

At times some officers suspected that some soldiers were feigning their "combat fatigue." Paul Boesch, 28th Infantry Division platoon leader, alleged that his platoon sergeant had deserted under the guise of combat exhaustion: *"My platoon sergeant was missing. One sectional leader, a soft-spoken Georgian T/Sgt Arthur N. Clarke, explained his absence."* Lieutenant Clarke said slowly, *"Jim left. The first time that machine gun fired, he handed me his Tommy gun and said he couldn't take it any more. He took off."*

I listened...stunned. He said for me to take charge of the platoon Clarke continued. I could hardly believe it. The platoon sergeant was the same man who, less than a week before when I had first joined the platoon, had stepped forward, his eyes shifting a bit, and regaled the replacements who had arrived with me: *"Listen you guys," he had barked harshly, "I don't want any of you guys to turn yella, see! A yellow-belly sonofabitch is worse than a damned Jerry! If you see a man turn yella and run, shoot him in the back like a dirty dog!"*

This I thought was the man who was going to shoot the first "yellow-belly" in the back. To leave the platoon this way, was just plain desertion. *"Hey, Lieutenant,"* one of us shouted, *"is that the guy who was going to shoot us in the back?"*

Albert Cowdrey described the symptoms of shock in wounded soldiers: *"Shock made the anesthetist's job especially touchy. A young man in deep shock had the metabolic rate of an old man and repeated doses of morphine, given in the field to kill pain further depressed his respiration. One in every 40 to 50 wounded men were in shock when they reached the hospital and the condition seemed to begin a series of destructive changes through the body that often ended in death."*

Keeping morphine from freezing was another cold weather problem for company aid men. Once frozen, morphine had no value and medics had to store their syrettes under several layers of clothing to keep them warm. Cold injury which was so prevalent among line soldiers in the winter of 1944-45 was for the most part caused by the lack of warm winter clothing and boots. General Omar Bradley described how this had come about as a result of the euphoria that existed among the western allies in September 1944: *"When the rains first came in November with a blast of wintry air, our troops were ill prepared for winter time campaigning. This was traceable in part to the September crisis in supply for, during our race to the Rhine, I had deliberately by-passed shipment of winter clothing in favor of ammunition and gasoline. As a consequence, we now found ourselves caught short, particularly in bad weather footgear. We had gambled in our choice and were now paying for the bad guess."*

The winter of 1944-45 was the coldest, wettest winter period western Europe had experienced in 30 years. ...More than 45,000 soldiers were hospitalized as cold injury casualties between November, 1944, and April, 1945.

Winter warfare in the Ardennes placed a heavy burden on the hospital systems. As a result of bitter campaigning in the Hurtgen Forest and along the Moselle River, tens of thousands of men were already hospitalized in early December with trench foot. Hospitals also contained 14,000 German prisoners. Ordinarily these POWs would have been sent to the States on troopships, but because the War Department expected an early victory, the shipment of prisoners to the States was halted.

The 107th Evacuation Hospital had to be moved from Libin, Belgium, to Chateau Roumont. After the siege of Bastogne was lifted, some 1,200 patients were brought into the hospital and all told they handled some 2,700 patients. To relieve the strain on the Liege hospitals, a dozen hospital trains were running between Liege and Paris--carrying patients to already over crowded Paris hospitals.

Sulfa drugs and penicillin contributed remarkably to the saving of lives in the European Theater. Each GI in forward positions carried a first-aid packet, complete with bandage, sulfa pills and sulfa powder. Sulfa was used to stabilize the bacteria while penicillin kills organisms. In 1943, penicillin was in short supply. However, by D-Day the American and British drug companies produced the amounts needed for the Normandy invasion.

The ETO Army Medical Service program was both complex and successful. By March 31, 1945, the total number of medical personnel had increased to nearly 250,000. Casualties by that time had reached over 13,000, of whom 2,200 were killed. The majority of those killed, wounded, or captured in combat were battalion aid men and litter-bearers. It was not unusual for an infantry company to replace 100 percent of its aid men.

The system possessed mobility, and field medics had access to jeeps, trucks, half-tracks, and even Sherman tanks for evacuating patients from forward areas to rear area clearing stations. In contrast to the German Army which often lacked adequate transport and even such basic medical needs as bandages (not to mention penicillin), the U.S. Army Medical Corps in Europe was

(Continued on Page 10)

# A COMBAT NURSE IN THE BULGE

*[The following excerpts were taken from an article which appeared in the July 12, 2002, News-Chronicle of Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, titled "Do You Remember" and was written by John W. Fague.]*

**RUTH PURYEAR**
**107TH EVACUATION HOSPITAL**

*This is Ruth's story as taken from the tape that she sent to me.*

... In September we had a long move across France, Belgium and Luxembourg. We opened our hospital at Clevaux, Luxembourg, in October 1944. This was 12 miles from Bastogne. Our hospital staff was comprised of 40 doctors, 40 nurses, and 205 enlisted personnel. It was a 400 bed tent setup.

We thought we were getting near the end of the war but we were so wrong.

The rain and mud were terrific during October and November and then the snow came in December.

On the night of December 15, another nurse and I went to the latrine tent in a wooded area. We thought we heard German voices, but we didn't hang around to find out. My friend was so excited that she dropped her flashlight down the latrine hole. It was still lit.

Several weeks later some MPs came by our hospital. They said, "We came by an area where there had been a hospital set up. They must have been a peculiar outfit. They had lighted holes in the latrine."

The soldiers of the 107th Evacuation Hospital thought they were safely behind the forward edge of battle, snug in their tents in the small Belgian city of Bastogne. But the full fury of the Battle of the Bulge was about to sweep up the mobile hospital's hundreds of patients, nurses, doctors and ward men.

December the 16th we were awakened in the middle of the night and told to get dressed in our warm clothing; we were moving out. The last big offensive of the Germans had begun--the Battle of the Bulge. We could not take anything with us except what we had on. We could hear German tanks in the distance. We left everything except our patients. We loaded them on trucks--12 to 14 to a truck--and took them all with us. It was a race against the Germany army.

It was very cold and snowing, we had on long johns, fatigues and combat boots. You worked in them, you slept in them. You wore your boots to bed to keep warm. Little did we know that we would be in those cloths for two weeks.

Both sides of the road were mined, so the nurses went to the bathroom in the road, with soldiers holding up blankets around them.

We set up our hospital in an old castle near Libramont, Belgium. Other units shared supplies with us until we could get some of our own. We had moved back about 100 miles.

The ballroom in the castle was used for surgery. There was one room that had all sorts of animal heads on the wall; it was the Trophy Room. This is where I hung the plasma bottles--on the horns and heads of the animals. There were 380 surgeries done in 30 hours. We worked around the clock.

December the 20th we had to move again; the Germans were advancing. We moved to St. Joseph's School in Karlsburg, Belgium. We had very few cots, so many of the patients were lying on the floor. We were giving treatment on our knees.

Working 24 hours a day, the doctors, nurses and enlisted men were divided into two 12-hour shifts. But most of the time you worked 18 hours a day.

Once more we had to move further back, this time to Sedan, France. We set up the hospital in an old textile mill. We arrived there on Christmas Eve after a very, very tough trip. We were cold and hungry. The first night there, all the nurses slept in a stable. Later we were in an old house near the hospital.

There was a flagpole on the ground of the mill. The American flag was raised on Christmas morning. There were none of us complaining about feeling hungry or cold then; we were filled with pride. It gave us such a warm glow that we were not cold any longer.

I had seven patients in my ward with tracheotomies. They had bad chest wounds. The fluid had to be suctioned from their chests. We used a foot pedal suction machine because we had no electricity in the ward. I would sit on the floor and another nurse would suction; then we would switch.

Being a medical unit with red crosses on the roof did not mean a thing. We were strafed by German planes on New Years. Two of our medics were wounded.

In 259 days in combat areas, the 107th admitted 21,258 patients. I took on surgery on 9,564.

In February we started the advance toward Germany....◘

## NO POLITICS PLEASE!

Our non-profit tax status requires that we not get involved in politics. If you send us something that leans one way or the other with regard to politics, we can't and won't use it. So, please keep this in mind when preparing an article for our use.◘

## VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BURIAL BENEFITS

All veterans who received a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses, and dependent children are eligible for burial in a VA National Cemetery. The National Cemetery System operates 114 cemeteries within the United States and Puerto Rico. Those eligible for burial are also eligible for a government provided headstone or marker and Presidential Memorial Certificate. Veterans and/or their dependents may apply for all VA benefits by calling 1-800-827-1000.◘

## *Medics in the Bulge* *(Continued from Page 9)*

certainly the best equipped. The value of antibiotic was demonstrated by the smaller death rate from disease as compared to WWI. In WWI, pneumonia took the lives of 18,000 American soldiers. During WWII, even during the 1944-45 winter, the coldest and wettest in 30 years, only 70 GIs died of pneumonia in the European Theater of Operations.

The article on this page appeared in *The Washington Post* December 22, 2003.

It may, or may not, affect your area, but there are thousands and thousands of veterans who will be affected.

Your help is needed in curtailing these shut downs.

**Help your fellow veterans!**

**What you can do:**

You can read about the study (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) on e-mail: www.va.gov/CARES.

You can send your comments or questions about the proposal to: "Comments," Richard E. Larson, Executive Director; CARES Commission, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20420.

Telephone: 202-501-2000

E-mail: carescommission-@mail.va.gov.

**But, please do something.**

Undoubtedly, if these cuts are allowed they will lead to others. It may eventually affect your facility.

At the urging of Richard Brookins, 28th Infantry Division, 28th Signal Company, we asked in the last issue that you write to your Congressmen and Senators. If you haven't done so yet, please do so. Let them know that you're unhappy about the effect that these closings will have on you and your fellow veterans.

Recent indications are that proponents of these shutdowns aren't clear in their own minds the amount of savings these cut backs will have. In one instance, it was reported that $23 million would be saved by shutting down one facility, when questioned this amount was changed to probably $8 to $10 million. Does it sound like they really have a grip on this?

**So, take action now!!**

## Openings and Closings

*The Veterans Affairs Department has proposed an overhaul of its health care infrastructure.*

**VA facilities at a glance**

| | |
|---|---|
| 5,044 | buildings |
| 118.5 | million square feet |
| 162 | medical centers |
| 677 | community-based outpatient clinics |
| 137 | nursing home units |
| 43 | transitional housing facilities |
| 50.4 | average age of buildings, in years |


SOURCE: Veterans Affairs Department

THE WASHINGTON POST

# Report on VA Hospitals Delayed

*By* Brian Faler
*Special to The Washington Post*

A federal commission considering a plan to remake the Veterans Affairs health care system—a proposal that could shut down seven hospitals but also provide some new facilities—will delay announcing its recommendations until next year.

The group had originally planned to release its report Dec. 11. But Richard Larson, the executive director of the commission, said it is still reviewing the public comments and other information it has collected over the past several months on the plan—and won't release its findings until sometime in the next six weeks. He declined to set a firm deadline.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony J. Principi "wants a report, and the commission wants to make sure we give him the best possible report," Larson said. "We had a target schedule, a target date and, golly, it's going to take us a couple weeks longer than we had anticipated."

The plan, originally announced in August, would be the largest overhaul of the agency's sprawling health care system since the end of World War II. It is designed to tailor that system more closely to the nation's population of veterans, a group that, in recent decades, has increasingly moved to the South and West. The proposal is also intended to better reflect the health care industry's increased emphasis on outpatient care, while cutting costs at some aging facilities.

The seven hospitals that could be closed are in California, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Mississippi and Texas. Any closing is always a sensitive topic because it would likely inconvenience some veterans—a group with significant political clout—and cause economic dislocations in some communities.

The proposed plan also includes new medical centers in Orlando and Las Vegas, as well as new facilities for the blind and for treating spinal cord injuries. In Washington, Maryland and Virginia, the plan would expand existing outpatient clinics and build new ones.

"This is not about saving money," Larson said. "It is about enhancing services. It could well end up costing more money."

The commission will forward its recommendations to Principi, who will accept, reject or, possibly, send the package back to the group for further elaboration.

The delay is "a big deal . . . in communities where people are anxiously awaiting some resolution," said department spokesman Phil Budahn. "For us, we had never done anything like this before. The original timeline was just a little too optimistic."

The commission has held 38 hearings across the country, meeting with state and local elected officials, veterans groups, and representatives of unions and medical facilities. It has also made 68 visits to VA facilities and collected more than 200,000 comments from the public. Larson declined to generalize about the reactions the panel has received.

"In each community, we hear something different," he said. "It depends on what the proposal is in that community. And some communities were well-organized and, basically, had a lot of public support for what the community's position was. And other communities, it was less so. It really varies from place to place."

John McNeill, an official in the Washington office of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said, "Let's wait to see what the report is. It's not necessarily good to shoot the horse before it gets out of the starting gate."

# THERE IS A TANK ON YOUR DOORSTEP

## An M4A3 Defends the Chateau in Clerveaux, Luxembourg

By ROBERT PETERSON
27TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION
9TH ARMORED DIVISION

*[The following article was provided by Demetri "Dee" Paris, 14th Tank Battalion, 9th Armored Division, who provides the following insights:*

*"Here is a article about action correcting the identification of a tank on display at a castle in Clerveaux. Someone marked the tank as being from the 707th Tank Battalion. Research has proven this marking to be false.*

*"Not mentioned in the article--the opening in the castle wall had to be enlarged to get the tank inside. The event was covered by the press and the CEBA president found a magazine picture taken at the time that clearly showed the original and correct marking. He clinched the research findings.*

*"The combat action Peterson describes was by Combat Command R (CCR) of the 9th Armored Division in the Bastogne area who withstood several German attacks and held firm until the arrival of Combat Command B of the 10th Armored Division and the 101st Airborne Division. CCR suffered tremendous loses, all three battalion commanders were killed.*

*"When the 101st arrived, the surviving members of CCR joined them in the defense of Bastogne. They were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for this action."]*

Before daylight on the morning of 18 December 1944 at the chateau in Clerveaux (also called Clerf), Luxembourg was a M4A3 "Jumbo" Tank, 76mm, which fired on a German tank approaching the town from the east and was finally spotted by a Mark V Panther with a 75mm high velocity tank gun also recently equipped with the newest German night firing sights of the 2nd Panzer Division. The first hit of the tank ricocheted off the turret but the second shot hit between the turret and the gun mantel and blew off the gun and mantel.

The tank remains in the Chateau to this day, and is on display. It had been marked as part of the 5th Armored Division and the 707th Tank Battalion, 28th Division, but an investigation by the study group known as CEBA, found proof positive that the tank was from Company B, 2nd Tank Battalion, Combat Command Reserve, 9th Armored Division, bumper number 9Δ2Δ B2.

This tank arrived in Clerveaux with 15 other M4s under the command of Captain Robert L. Lybarger on or about 1030 hours 17 December. Captain Lybarger reported to Colonel Hurley E. Fuller, the CO of the 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, and given the following missions; 1st Platoon to support A Company, 110th, in Heinersheid, 2nd Platoon to support the 2nd Battalion, 110th, at Reuler in defense of the line Urspelt-Reuler, and the 3rd Platoon to clear German forces from the eastern part of the city.

Company A, of the 707th Tank Battalion, was in support of the 110th Infantry; however, I did not find out what its mission was nor its location. The Light Tank Company (D) of the 707th was pretty well shot up defending along the Skyline Drive, Highway 16, through the Towns of Heinerscheid, Marnach, Hosingen, Holazthum, and Wieler on the 16th of December.

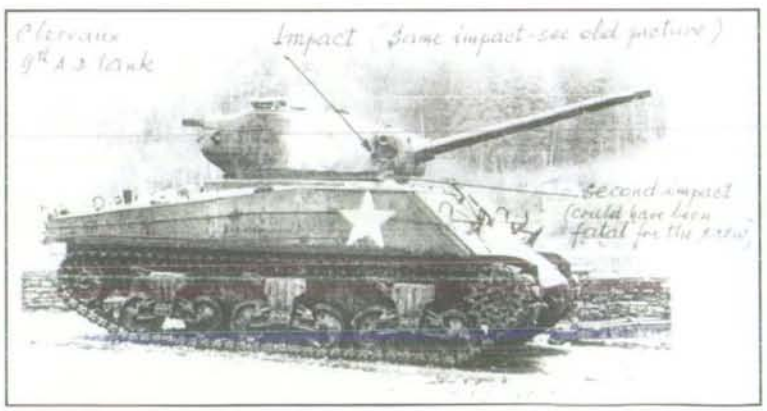
The 1st Platoon proceeded to Heinerscheid; the platoon leader was wounded and evacuated after losing two tanks to enemy fire. The battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, 110th Infantry, released the remaining three tanks and they moved south to join with the 2nd Platoon in Reuler.

Three tanks of the 3rd Platoon--the first was hit and set on fire. The crew dismounted, a second was hit and abandoned, while Don Fink (Toledo, Ohio) moved his tank to the protection of a building; the building was hit and collapsed on his tank and could not be moved so Don destroyed his tank. The procedure was to place a thermite grenade on the breech of the main gun and one on the transmission, the result was a burned out tank and the main gun and transmission would be welded together. The crews then dismounted to fight on foot. Don saw Bob Spinks (Cleveland, Ohio) dismount his tank and he later made his way back to Bastogne. Trooper Kyle, a bow gunner, was killed. Don Fink attempted to render the apparently usable tank unusable with thermite grenades, but he was unable to get to the tank by German small arms fire. The dismounted tankers fought as infantrymen for the next two days and on the 19th of December, Lt. Scully and the rest surrendered to a tank crew of a Panther tank. They were confined Stalag 9A and 9B near Frankfurt until repatriated in April 1945 by Third Army troops.

In Reuler, late in the afternoon of the 17th, the 2nd Battalion, 110th, was ordered to withdraw over the Clerf River and defend the north end of the Clerveaux. The remaining five tanks of the 1st and 2nd Platoons under the command of Everett S. Johnson (London, Ohio) were used to carry the heavy weapons of H Company and the men that would fit on the rear decks. During the night being forced to drive cross country because of German fire from Urselt. Two tanks had thrown their tanks and three became mired in the soft ground were all destroyed to prevent the Germans from using them. The final result was the loss of 15 tanks and about 85 men.

We, of the 9th Armored, have tried to identify the tank crew of B2 with no results. The CEBA Group is going to erect a bronze plaque later this year at the Chateau in honor of the sacrifice and efforts to stop the 2nd Panzer Division.

This record is the result of the "After Action Reports" of the 2nd Tank Battalion, excerpted information from *A Time for Trumpets* (McDonald), and *Phantom Nine* (Reichert), oral history from Donald Fink, Bob and Peg Johnson, children of Everett Johnson, Jean Milmeister, EBA, Abe Ugent, Dee paris, John C. Terral, and George Ruhlen, all of the 9th Armored Division■



# The Dog-Faced Soldier

### By Shirley Ricker Theis

*[Shirley is the daughter of Homer D. Ricker, Jr., 35th Infantry Division, Company H, who was killed in action in the Battle of the Bulge on December 31, 1944. She read this lovely tribute at the December 16, 2003, commemoration luncheon.]*

To be first, you've been taught, is a great honor. The reward for dedication and hard work. But there's a place on earth where lightening strikes, and your heart beats with the roar of thunder.

The Dog-Faced Soldier, first in line, first to bravely march forward, knows that when he hears the roar, when he sees the lightening, when that one bullet finds its mark, his life will be torn asunder.

These brave young men, in their cover of green and brown, carry more on their shoulders than the burden of a back pack and some metal. They tramp God's earth with feet tired and sore, praying for nightfall and silence once more.

How can he find a place to stay warm? The ground is frozen and covered with snow. His belly aches with emptiness, his bones are heavy, his heart is lonely. With luck, tonight's meal, a cracker, something of unknown origin in a tin, a stick of gum, and two crumpled cigarettes. Don't light it, boy! They wait for its red glow!

His mind seems to wander--lips crack a smile. He touches the picture carried in the pocket that covers his heart. A wife, a child, and a home. Their freedom the reason he'd give up his life.

Years have passed since that young man spent Christmas and New Year's Eve so far away. Now he gathers together, year after year, with comrades--no, brothers--to share stories and shake hands. As time goes on the reunions grow smaller, another brother has met the call.

I listen again to the tales of war. No boasts of his deeds, only pride in his unit and the "other guy's" needs. There is something so beautiful about words like "do you remember when...," or "I'll never forget the day that...."

So the next time you stand under a blue sky and a warm sun singing "the bombs bursting in air," say thanks and remember the Dog-Faced Soldier, strong, brave and true, who protected your Country--who led the Way--who went First--the place of Honor. The Infantry Man.

You have bee called "The Greatest Generation." I think that you are more than that. You are God's Blessing to America. Thank you.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays,
Shirley Ricker Theis◘

# OHIO VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

*[Excerpts (in italics) in the following article are from "The Daily Record" of Wooster, Ohio, were written by Linda Hall.]*

*Wooster--Newly inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame, 94-year-old Edward Conelly Arm, who was 33 years old when he enlisted in the Army infantry in 1942, "didn't think Uncle Sam would want me."*

*He began his military life as a somewhat reluctant warrior, but grew into the role with diligence and commitment earning him two Purple Hearts, two Silver Stars and a barrage of other medals and honors.*

*As a college graduate with a job that would have kept him out of the war, avoiding World War II didn't set well with him, particularly since many ikn his family were involved.*

*"I decided I had better do want I could," Arn said, adding he didnpt anticipate being sent into combat.*

*But "Old Man Arn," as he came to be known by his fellow soldiers, "went out to the range and came back a sharp shooter." Thirteen weeks of "vigorous basic infantry training" rendered him "barely (able) to crawl in and out of bed.*

After qualifying as a Volunteer Officer Candidate he ended up at Fort Benning going after commission as a second lieutenant.

*His estimation of his own abilities were extremely modest as well. He was convinced he began military service "very, very ill-equipped for the role I played. I had to work very, very hard."*

He was shipped to the ETO as platoon leader with F company, 119th Regiment, 30th Infantry Division in 1944. *"I was astounded," he said.*

*His entry into combat was anything but auspicious.*

*Sick from seeing his first casualty, he "dove into the captain's fox hole and dumped coffee all over his map," Arn Said.*

*The captain was killed just 10 days later in Normandy, he said.*

*In his assignment as fourth platoon leader, he said it was "difficult to adjust to combat...to become tough enough and hard enough.*

*"We pushed the Germans back at tremendous cost...finally (arriving at) the border of Holland in September of 1944," Arn said.*

*Moving onto Belgium, "we pulled up to the famous Ziegfried line," he said, describing it as a 150 miles of pill boxes (concrete structures) with apertures in the concrete out of which (the enemy) pointed weapons.* They were moving toward Berlin when they were diverted to the Bulge.

Arn was wounded twice in combat but, *I insisted I was going back to my guys. Were (they) glad to see me," Arn recalled. "The old man is back," they greeted him.*

*"I stayed with the (F Company, 119th Regiment, 30th Division) the rest of the war," Arn said, reaching the level of captain.*

*The award goes beyond his service record, said Arn's daughter Heidi Steiner. "It's about coming back and making a difference in his community (as well)."*

Heidi stated her father had taught his children about patriotism and the award *"is just like the icing on the cake for my dad."*◘

# WHAT DID THE GENERAL KNOW?

*[The following article was provided by **RUSSELL E. KUEHN, 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 110TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, COMPANY I.**]*

Over the years, there has been much speculation about prior knowledge of the great build-up of German forces prior to the December 16, 1944, attack that became known as "The Battle of the Bulge." As a participant, it is easy to forget much of what happened those many years ago. At the same time, there are events that are recalled with relatively good clarity. This is about a visit by Major General Norman "Dutch" Cota to my platoon approximately one week before the battle started.

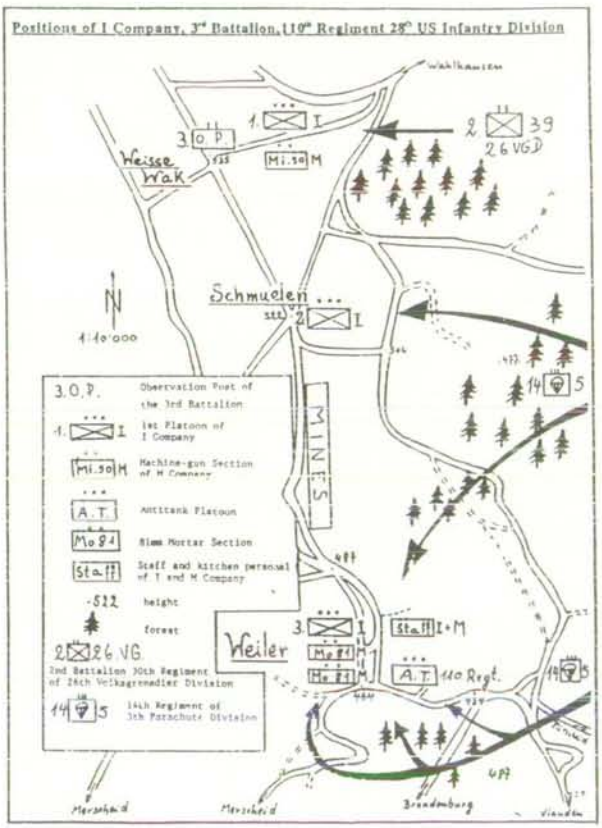
My two months of active duty with I Company, 110th Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, started in mid-October where I joined them as a PFC going through the repo-depo routine after crossing the Atlantic in September, 1944. In late October, my first combat experience took place in the dreaded Huertgen Forest. In about three weeks of bitter fighting, the 28th's combat casualties exceeded 6,000 men (compare this with the total casualties of Operation Iraqi Freedom where ten times as many troops were involved!). On a bitter, cold day in mid-November, the 28th was relieved and we headed to the "quiet front" overlooking Germany in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. About 15 bedraggled survivors were unceremoniously dumped off our deuce and a half truck after a harrowing all-day drive on very icy roads in sleet. Our position was a farmhouse very near the junction of several key roads that led into Germany, and also west to Bastogne, Belgium, and other villages/towns north and south in Luxembourg.

*Farm Schmuelen which was used by Russell's group.*

A few hundred yards to the northeast of our farm, lay the deserted village of Wahlhausen. About one mile to the east was the Our River, and on the far bank of the river in Germany was the Village of Gemund. Shortly after arriving, some replacements were added to our unit, which then had about 25 men. We were designated the 2nd Platoon even though a platoon would normally be 40-50 men. With all of the looies being lost in the Huertgen, our leader was a sergeant, who stayed in the house with a radio man and a medic. The rest of us stayed in the barn which had a cement floor and was open to the elements with a strict "no-fire" rule--the same as in the Huertgen. However, we didn't complain because this was close to luxury next to a fox-hole with a foot of snow all round it!

Our main tasks were maintaining outposts around the farm, occupying a house in Wahlhausen overlooking a valley that led to Germany and the Our River, and patrolling to the Our near Gemund. In late November, we were aware of increased activity on the part of the Germans. Tank engines were being tuned up, weapons were test-fired, and there was a bridge being built over the Our River.

All of these activities were duly reported to our Company HQ, located in Weiler, about two miles to our south. We assumed that these reports were passed along to the regiment and division.




Sometime in early December, while about a dozen of us were around the farmhouse, we had an unexpected visitor. Without advance notice, a command car flying the two star flags of a major general accompanied by two jeeps with well-armed GI's stopped at our position. Our sergeant gathered us together and there was General Cota, smoking a very large cigar. He stood up in his command car and obviously had something to tell us. The closest that I can recall what he said is as follows: "Men! There's going to be a great battle fought here. It's a great honor for any soldier to fight for his country, have his blood spilled on the battlefield, and be carried off."

As he talked a few of us surmised that he may have fortified himself with a little schnapps to ward off the cold in the open car. He was surely entitled to do that. After his short exhortation his group sped off to the north, and other positions similar to ours.

(Continued)

## WHAT DID THE GENERAL KNOW?

(Continuation)

Just a week or so after his visit, his forecast and opportunity for us to fight and shed our blood came true on December 16, 1944, when at 0600 hours a horde of Germans from the 5th Parachute Division came across the Our River in boats. We were able to hold them off all day until nightfall when they had finally completed the bridging and a panther tank came to our position firing 88's directly at our position. With more infantry also swarming all round our position, we were forced to surrender.

*It was only in the past few years that certain information has come to me that has enabled me to get a better picture of what actually happened and a clearer idea of the circumstances. First of all, in 1965 on a trip to Europe with my wife we rented a Volkswagen in Vienna and drove it to Amsterdam. Along the way, we went through Luxembourg and spent a night in the Heinz Hotel in a very quaint village by the name of Viandem, where Victor Hugo often visited. The farmhouse I had stayed in 1944 had a small grotto to the Virgin Mary across the road from the farm where there was a small stand of woods. Describing this to Mr. and Mrs. Heinz, who owned the hotel, they knew exactly where it was and gave me directions. I clocked 9 km. on our Volkswagen and there was the farm.*

*Regarding General Cota, I never knew that he was a very brave general! Reading "Citizen Soldier," by the late Steven Ambrose, as a brigadier general and assistant commander of the 29th Division, he was in the first wave to assault Omaha Beach on D-Day. He was with the first troops who got off the beach and personally led an assault on a fortified position.*

*Another great book about the Bulge is Robert Phillips' "To Save Bastogne." He was a participant with the 119th Regiment and did some thorough researching (Bastogne was about 30 miles to our rear westward). Additionally, a retired teacher and now an historian of the battle, Marcel Scheidweiler, of Weiler, Luxembourg, has given me some very valuable information including the pictures of Farm Schmuelen which, it turns out, was the name of our farm where we spent 30 days in 1944.*

*Is there anyone else that still remembers the general's trip?*

*[To inquire about the availability of Robert Phillips' book, "To Save Bastogne," write to Bob at: 5530 Beaconfield Court, Burke, Virginia 22015.]*□

# BOOKS YOU MAY ENJOY

The following books were donated for our archives. Some are for sale to the pulic and some are archival copies only.

*The Cow Spoke French--The Story of Sgt. William True, American Paratrooper in World War II*, by William True and Deryck Tufts True. The story emphasizes the day-to-day reality of a combat soldier, which has often and correctly been described as 'long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of stark terror.' There is no mask for the harsh fact of men killing one another. And while courageous actions are depicted at length, human failing are also a reality for men at war. This truth also is not avoided. Still the pathos, sentimentality, and even occasional humor of life for troopers in the field are very much a part of the chronicle. In the down times, tales of cathouse misadventure reveal the ribaldry of young men blowing off steam far from home. Not for the squeamish nor the prude. Bill landed in a pasture in Normandy next to a very placid and unconcerned Normandy cow. Grateful for having survived the jump, he spoke a friendly greeting to her, but received no response. Why not? Because the cow spoke French. Call Bill for ordering information: 805-488-5928.

*Sitting Duck Division*, by John W. Morse. Military intelligence, as applied to the prelude to the Battle of the Bulge, is the ultimate oxymoron. Every available sign was disregarded; leaving the onset of the greatest (at least largest) battle the U.S. Army ever fought to be reported by self-interested managers as a total surprise. Why? Either the allied command was stupid, or they considered their strategy a calculated risk worth taking. This is the story of one boy soldier and his fellow GI's from draft to disaster and back. This is not your ordinary tome, it's a short story about a swift and angry experience. It's also about a funny kid growing up in a more innocent age. Any book store can order this book for you. It was published by Writers Club Press.

**For the Archives only:** *The Wartime Memoirs of Combat Infantry Rifleman PFC Reginald L. Sawyer.* Reginald served in the 9th Armored Division, 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, CCA, First Rifle Squad, First Rifle Platoon, Company C.

## VBOB OVERSEAS CAPS

Many have asked again about getting VBOB Overseas Caps for the parade, Convention and WWII Memorial Dedication. They are available from the Keystone Uniform Cap Corp. The cap has olive drab sides, with a combination red, infantry blue and yellow top with red piping. The basic price includes the VBOB emblem on the left side and up to 21 letters on the right side for Chapter Name. If you do not have a Chapter you can have National Member put in there. You must tell them. Ask for the VBOB Overseas Cap.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cap basic price.. | $29.95 |
| Extra Lettering beyond 21 letters/per letter | .47 |
| Shipping & handling per order | 5.00 |
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Chapter Name_____

Hat Size_____ Phone #_____

Extra lettering can be added on either side of the cap @.45 per letter. Specify what extra lettering and on which side(s).
Send your name and address and check or Money Order to: Keystone Uniform Cap Corp, 801 N. Front Street, Philadelphia PA 19123, Telephone 215-922-5493. Allow 4 weeks

# THE BARN AT COBREVILLE

**By Victor C. Richardson**
**Third United States Army**
**92nd Medical Gas Treatment Battalion**
**Company A**

We were called from the Metz area in France to go to Bastogne in Belgium during the winter of 1944-45. There was a long, cold motor march from Metz to the corridor leading into Bastogne and we were on hillside having our Christmas dinner waiting for our turn to go through the corridor into Bastogne. Somehow the cooks and quartermasters had set up this big kitchen right on the side of the hill and served this delicious Christmas dinner--turkey, pie and all the trimmings--all you could eat right out in the open on the side of the hill. The thing I remember most is the mess sergeant saying, "Do you want more turkey? Do you want more pie? There's plenty more pie and lots of hot coffee." You hardly ever heard a mess sergeant saying things like that--ever.

Finally, it was our turn to go down the hillside and into the corridor which led to Bastogne. The corridor was only as wide as the infantrymen on each side of the road had under the control of their rifles. The first thing upon entering the forest, which was between us and the city, was to see this GI laying on top of the telephone wires, with no head, no arms, no legs--right where he landed after his vehicle struck a land mine.

We went into the city itself, set up a clearing station in a gymnasium but then had to disassemble it and take it to a little town called Cobreville outside of Bastogne, but still within the perimeter.

The operating room was set up in a barn with three of the big four pole ward tents outside in the field. The next thing was to set up a light trap which would hold the ambulance so that we could unload the patients without leaking any light for the enemy to see. The light trap was made of canvas and sealed off a small door leading to the barn. The main doors of the barn were kept shut at all times. Then we set the three operating stations, army litters set up on boxes at waist height, as well as a shock litter on saw horses, draped with blankets and two lanterns underneath to hold the heat for shock victims.

Next we had to find water, which became a problem because everything was frozen and we wanted clean water. The first thing we tried was melting the sow, but this used too much of the alcohol fuel needed for sterilizing instruments. We finally got well water in cleaned-out GI garbage cans, in which we put the standard gasoline-fueled heaters normally used for washing mess kits and this was used to provide a continuous supply of sterile water for the operating stations.

We were finished with our preparations and were standing around waiting to see what was going to happen next, when suddenly out of the dark of night, an ambulance backed into the light trap, the rear door opened and a maximum load of walking wounded just spilled out into the brilliantly lit clearing station. Their eyes were wide open in wonder and apprehension for they had no idea of what was going to happen next.

The plan was to set up a control post (CP) at the door so that we could record all of the information--name, rank, serial number and medical tag information--but that didn't work out at all. Our first attempt at this organized procedure was a failure, with patients milling all around the operating area and it ended up that their wounds were taken care of first and the paper work later. As time went on and we became more experienced, we were much better organized and the flow of the wounded was handled smoothly. We took in over 300 patients between dusk and dawn of our first day, and the reason for this was that the casualties had be accumulating for weeks in the besieged City of Bastogne. Ambulances backed in one after another with hardly a pause between, in what seemed like an endless parade. Patients were tended and moved into the ward tents until they were nearly filled to overflowing. At almost the last minute, ambulances began to arrive from field hospitals to evacuate the wounded. After several nights of the initial surge of patients, traffic began to taper off until finally we reached a steady flow.

We seemed to have an almost unlimited supply of plasma and blood and transfusions of whole blood brought about almost miraculous results in some of the patients.

Occasionally German prisoners were brought in and at first, probably because of the tremendous onslaught of wounded Americans, a fierce hatred for all Germans was developed, because of the damage they had done to the Americans. Later on, we developed a more professional attitude and thought first about treating the wounded, but the priority was always to aid first the American casualties and when all were attended down to the very last one, then attention was given to the Germans.

The German prisoners were left to huddle in a corner until all of the Americans had been taken care of, and finally the medical officer said, "Now we can take care of one of them." In one instance, when a wounded German prisoner stood up, his arms dropped and well over a pint of blood poured out of his overcoat sleeve. He had been sitting there quietly bleeding to death. He was attended and was sent still alive to a field hospital.

One busy night at the Bastogne clearing station, the ambulances came in with several paratroop litter patients and with them the German sniper who had killed their buddies. He (the German) had been badly beaten especially about the head and face, and had been brought in so the paratroopers would know he died. The paratroopers passed the word down that he was to die. The German's litter was placed just to the right of the operating table, which had a medical officer, a medical technician and two litter bearers (my job) to lift patients off and on the operating table. The enemy soldier lay there with his face beaten to a pulp and begged for water. "Vasser, vasser," he cried again and again. Slowly his voice grew weaker and weaker until after an hour or so he died. No one would give him water or spare the time to help him and the paratroopers who were so enraged prevented anyone from giving him any aid.

How thirsty he must have been and as long as I live, I'll remember how in the midst of 50 people, he died alone.

Again in one of the ward tents, there was a paratrooper who had just bayoneted a German trooper in a one-on-one fight to the death. He had been sent back from the front lines because he was so upset and a nervous wreck. He was drinking coffee and seemed compelled to tell the story of his battle with the German soldier, as though he had to have someone to share this terrible experience with him, perhaps because he could not face it by himself. I was almost embarrassed to hear him bear his soul and yet feared that if I didn't listen he would go berserk.

An American trooper was brought in, pale and in shock and just barely alive.

(Continued on next page)

## THE BARN AT COBREVILLE (Continuation)

We put him on the shock litter, the first litter station (one of four) in the barn, with blanket draped and lighted kerosine underneath. I remember the problem the medial officer had searching for a vein to administer blood or plasma. First he cut into the inside of his elbow to no avail, then cut into his ankle to no avail, then a stimulant directly into his heart and an injection into his back to stimulate breathing, but nothing he did seemed to help. I can still hear the papery scratching sound of the scalpel as he cut into the bloodless flesh looking for a vein. The medical officer took extreme care to be sure that the soldier was dead, listening for a heart beat, pulse, eye movement and finally resorted to what I have always thought to be an old wives' tale: he placed a shaving mirror to the soldier's mouth to see if there was any sign of fog to indicate breathing not otherwise noticeable. Reluctantly the medial tag attached by a string describing the patient as wounded, was changed to one reading "KIA--killed in action." (Books of tags containing an original and carbon copy was carried by all company aid men.)

On a happier note: One night a GI was brought in who looked like he wouldn't last five more minutes. He was pale and in severe shock. We had received an air shipment of whole blood from New York City which was only one day old. He was given a transfusion and the change in him within a very short time was like watching a miracle. He was soon sitting upright on the litter and every time we tried to lay him back down again, he sat back up like a Jack-in-the-box. I can see him now sitting on the edge of the operating litter, shivering and shaking and sloshing a cup of coffee all over the place. Somehow he managed to drink it and was as happy as could be. When I asked the medial officer about this recovery, he said that sometimes this happened after a transfusion with whole blood. Whenever I think of this incident, I remember the poem by Robert Service, "The Cremation of Sam Magee," for truly this soldier "wore a smile you could see a mile."

My sleeping quarters were in a hayloft in a stone barn next to the clearing station. I thought the haymow would be warm but it had only part of the roof intact and the cold kept me from having a sound sleep. Also the enemy artillery barrage at times seemed to be all around the clearing station although none of the shells came close to the medical station. The ground was frozen solid and you could hear the crunch of the enemy shells exploding and the sound of the American counter-battery fire, these "artillery duels" would sometimes last for an hour. I can remember a very distinct but short musical note that came from the America cannon as they fired back at the Germans. It happened every time a cannon fired and was most like a very short bell ring.

A non-standard operating procedure that turned out to be of great value was a coffee and snack station in the rear of the barn, where the less seriously injured GI's could get some relief from hunger and cold. One told about how he nearly died of thirst up on the front line. His canteen was full but the water in it was frozen.

The barn was built on a steep hillside with about 6 foot high stilts at the back to level it, and that's where the morgue was. The dead would accumulate there until graves registration people would come to identify and remove the bodies. Although the first trip to the morgue was a real shock, it was not too long before seeing dead soldiers was just another part of the day's work and it became just another long, cold trip to the morgue with another heavy load. Even the seemingly insensitive handling by the graves registration people as they heaved the dead up over the tailgate of the truck, swinging them by their arms and legs, in one-two-three fashion (when they thought no one was looking) became work-a-day business.

During all this time, the noise of the artillery barrages was constant both friendly and enemy, but although the shells landed close there never was any danger to the clearing station.

All things considered, everything worked--the operating tables, the shock litter, the plasma and blood, the light trap and the evacuation system, and probably most of all the training of the medical people at all levels and even the ever-boiling coffee pot for the wounded. The end result was that an effective and useful service was rendered.◘

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# THINGS GET BASIC IN BATTLE

**By William D. (Bill) Black**
**106th Signal Company**

It doesn't seem that long ago--the Christmas of 1944.

Our 106th Infantry Division, newly arrived from England, had replaced the 2nd Division along a 26 mile "quiet sector" in the Ardennes forest near the Belgian-German border. "Just old men and young boys facing us," we were told. I was a 20 year old radio operator with the Division's Signal Company, located at a road center called St. Vith.

On December 16th the light in the East, far from being the Star of Bethlehem, was, in fact, the light of artillery fire signaling the beginning of what became known as the "Battle of the Bulge."

It's amazing how fast attitudes change. I had always begrudged the big, heavy, bulky weight of my steel helmet. When enemy shells starting coming in, I wanted to get my entire body underneath that suddenly far too flimsy hunk of steel.

The next week was a jumbled mass of feelings, sights, sounds, and events. Cold, heavily overcast weather, with alternate freezing and thawing. No hot food. Ammunition shortages. Constant attempts to maintain radio contact between units in spite of heavy enemy jamming. Snow. Wondering how the "old men and young boys" suddenly turned into SS Panzer Divisions. The canvas-ripping sound of German "burp" guns. Marches and counter-marches. No sleep. Bloated carcasses of farm animals. We came here to attack--what were we doing retreating? Wounded men. Captured Germans. The death of our construction section Lieutenant--blasted out of a jeep by a German "88." Bad weather preventing any air drop of supplies. The loss and capture of two of our Division's three Regiments, including our radio teams, surrounded and cut off east of St. Vith. Bodies in the snow. A jeep arriving with hot food gets stuck. We rushed to help and its spinning wheels uncover a land mine--its detonating mechanism frozen in the snow.

For us Christmas came on December 23rd. The day dawned clear and cold with a beautiful blue sky. By mid-morning the entire sky was white, the result of vapor trials of over a thousand allied planes. German anti-aircraft batteries were firing away and silvery things were fluttering down. What we first feared were parts of planes, turned out to be small streamers of metal thrown out by the bombers to confuse the radar devices on the anti-aircraft weapons. The streamers looked much like the tinsel used for Christmas trees, and hey, what day was this anyway? In short order we collected some of the streamers and decorated a nearby pine tree.

Things get very basic in battle and that Christmas those of us there thanked God for the greatest gift of all--the gift of life itself.◘

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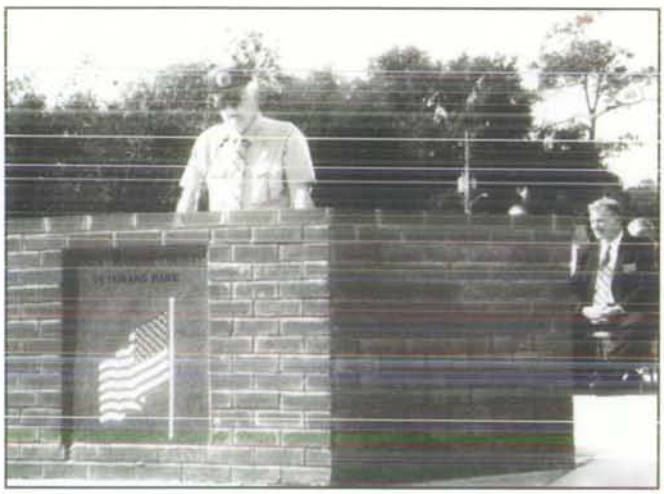
# FLORIDA GOLDEN TRIANGLE CHAPTER DEDICATES MONUMENT

On November 11, 2003, the Golden Triangle Chapter dedicated a Battle of the Bulge monument in the Ocala-Marion Veterans Memorial Park, in Ocala, Florida.

Chapter President Harry E. Kirby proposed the project over a year ago and, realizing that most of the chapter members didn't know about the Veterans Memorial Park, decided to acquaint them with a "Picnic in the Park." The park covers 3-1/2 acres and is dedicated exclusively to the memory of the veterans of all of America's wars. Chapter members (35 members strong) enthusiastically embraced the project and it was completed just in time to permit having an outstanding dedication ceremony on Veterans Day of 2003.

The dedication program was a combined program. The chapter worked with the Marion County Public School System Veterans' Day Program, entitled "The Heroes Among Us." The ceremonies included more than 350 school students, faculty and administrators, two high school bands, ROTC units, color guard, two elementary school choruses, sheriff's department bagpipe band, rifle squad, and even the "War Birds" (a local flying group) flyover! About 2,000 people attended the ceremonies.



*Golden Triangle Chapter President Harry Kirby addressing the crowd at monument dedication. Harry served with the 26th Infantry Division, 104th Infantry Regiment, Headquarters and I Companies.*

Speakers included Ocala Mayor, the Chairman of the Marion County Commission, the Superintendent of Schools and an Iraq returnee from a local MP reserve unit. Featured speaker was Bob Smith (Wooster, Ohio), a highly decorated VBOB member, who was company commander in the 80th Infantry Division. President Kirby also spoke about the monument planning and fund raising.

Past chapter presidents and the widow of a deceased chapter president, laid a wreath in memory of our deceased comrades. The father of a Medal of Honor recipient, Emmet Bowen, laid a second wreath at the park's Medal of Honor Monument.

The program ended with "Echo" Taps and a 21-gun salute.

To finance the project, the chapter sold engraved memorial bricks to Battle of the Bulge veterans. Many cash donations were received from other VBOB chapters and individuals. A native of Belgium, who was a teenager during the war and fought with the Belgium freedom fighters, also made a substantial contribution.

Great cooperation and assistance was received from the Veterans Park Advisory Board, the volunteers who staff the Ocala Veterans Memorial Park Office, and the local Veterans Services Office.

It was a labor of love with the chapter and a job well done.◘

# THE COMBAT INFANTRY BADGE

*[The following article appeared in the December, 2003, issue of the 11th Armored Division Association newsletter and was submitted to them by Joseph Wilkinson.]*

John W. Appel, an Army psychiatrist was assigned to the front lines in Italy in 1943 to investigate the causes of combat fatigue--neuropsychiatric breakdown--among infantry men in combat.

The infantry, a small portion of armed forces, was doing 70% of the fighting and dying. Of the 301 Medals of Honor awarded to "Army" men during World War II, 258 went to infantry men. They saw themselves as endangered but little appreciated.

The Army Ground Forces HQ had made a survey of the ground force. The infantry proved to be the least popular branch of service, even among infantry men.

Among Dr. Appel's several recommendations to Lt. Gen. Leslie McNair, commanding general of the Army Ground Forces, to raise infantry morale was a badge that would identify the infantry men who served in combat. The Army Heraldic Section set up a competition among its artists for the design of the badge. The winner was Trygve Royelstad. His design was a silver infantry musket on a panel of infantry blue enamel with a silver border imposed on a wreath of oak leaves. The Army publicized it as "The Mark of a Man." The badge was authorized in October, 1943, and made retroactive to December 7, 1941. It soon became one of the Army's most coveted awards. Many holders of the badge wear it as their only decoration. The Combat Infantry Badge tells their story. Men in the tank corps and artillery felt they deserved combat badges.

There were some unauthorized versions of the CIB made in Europe as the war came to a close. The Army rejected the idea, pointing out that anyone who wanted a combat badge could transfer to the infantry. Combat infantry men received not only the badge, but by an act of Congress received an extra $10 a month in pay for enlisted men. Officers didn't get the extra pay. For a buck private then, that amounted to a 20% raise. Officers above the rank of colonel could not receive the CIB.

In 1947 the Army awarded the Bronze Star medal to all soldiers who had received the CIB. The citation was "for meritorious service in ground combat against the armed enemy." A year later the Army stopped the $10 additional payments. The Combat Infantry Badge can be awarded more than once and a star is added between the ends of the oak leaf wreath for each additional war. Some 300 men have earned it three times serving in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. The badges have two stars linking the silver wreath. They've been called the Army's perfect attendance medals.◘

# MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

**AL BEINEAN, 83RD INFANTRY DIVISION, 331ST INFANTRY REGIMENT, 3RD BATTALION, HEADQUARTERS COMPANY,** is looking for the crests worn on the epaulets of the dress uniform. He needs two crests of the 83rd Division, 331st Infantry Regiment and four crests of the 94th Division, 301st Infantry Regiment. If you can help, write to Al at: 2405 North 25th Street, Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53083-4432.

We have a member way down in Bahia, Brazil: **WARREN G. DOUGLAS**, who served with the **703RD TANK DESTROYER BATTALION, COMPANY B.** Warren wants to hear from anyone who served with him or anyone who may be living in or visiting Brazil. Write to Warren at: Caixa Postal 82/CEP 45653, 970 Ilheus, Bahia, Brazil.

Loraine Koski is trying to locate anyone who may remember **PFC ELDEN GJERS, 4TH ARMORED DIVISION, 8TH TANK BATTALION, COMPANY B.** Elden was killed in action on December 26, 1944. Loraine would like also to hear from anyone who can provide information regarding his unit. Write to her at: 415 High Street, Marquette, Michigan 49855-3814.

Emile Engels is writing a revision of "Bastogne--Thirty Days Under Snow and Fire" and needs experiences of different BoB veterans, particularly air force men and women and nurses. He needs 25 lines of text and any available pictures. You can contact Emile c/o King Pound: 880 Park Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21201.

**BOB HAMMONS,** would like to hear from anyone who remembers a battle on December 18 in Stavelot, Belgium, at about 4:00 a.m. Four men set up a machine gun in a window of a house but were spotted and had to abandon it and went to the basement where they got into a potato bin. The Germans discovered them and placed a guard on them. When the guard was called upstairs they escaped. They crossed the Amblieve River and found their way to their lines where they were shot at by friendly fire and later recognized. They were taken in by the 119th Regiment of the 30th Division. They were given dry clothes and rations. Do you remember this? If so, contact Bob by phone: 336-945-5793.

Ronald Samp is looking for any information regarding his uncle, **SGT FRANK SAMP**, who was killed in the Battle of the Bulge in January, 1945. Frank was from Chicago. He would like information regarding his unit and would like to find out if he is buried in a military cemetery in Europe. Contact Ronald at: 1060 West Hollywood, Chicago, Illinois 60660.

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*I wouldn't give a bean.*
*To be a fancy pants Marine.*
*I'd rather be a dogfaced soldier like I am . . .*
*On every poster that I read it says the Army builds men*
*So they're tearing me down to build me over again.*

# REUNIONS

**4TH ARMORED DIVISION**, August 29-September 6, 2004, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Contact: 4th Armored Division Association, 6786 West Haskell Drive, Fairview, Pennsylvania 16415-2050.

**4TH INFANTRY DIVISION,** July 13-18, 2004, Branson, Missouri. Contact: Arlen Bliefernicht, PO Box 183, Poynette, Wisconsin 53955-0183.

**11TH ARMORED DIVISION,** August 15-22, 2004, Arlington, Virginia. Contact: 11th Armored Division, 2328 Admiral Street, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania 15001.

**76TH INFANTRY DIVISION**, September 16-29, 2004, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Contact: Bob Donahoe, 160 Sea Gull Lane, Eastham, Massachusetts. Telephone: 508-240-1201.

**86TH CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION,** April 21-25, 2004, Atlanta, Georgia. Write to the 86th at: 818 West 62nd Street, Anniston, Alabama 36206.

**150TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION**, May 12-14, 2004, Falmouth, Massachusetts. Contact: Curtis Shaw, 25 Sagamore Road, West Yarmouth, Massachusetts 02673. Telephone: 508-771-1270.

**370TH FIGHTER GROUP, 402ND SQUADRON**, October 3-7, 2004, Las Vegas, Nevada. Contact: Paul (Rosie) Rosenquist. Telephone: 541-563-5307.

**501ST PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT**, June 2-6, 2004, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Contact: Bill Sefton, 355 Plymouth SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. Telephone: 616-454-5688.

**773RD TANK DESTROYER BATTALION**, September 7-9, 2004, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Contact: Edward H. McClelland, 4384 West 182nd Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44135-3862. Telephone: 216-251-0445.

**UPCOMING EVENT:** June 17-24, 2004--U.S. Veterans Friends Luxembourg have extended an invitation to VBOB members to attend American/Luxembourg Week. For information contact Harry Meisel, 1329 Alfred Drive, Orlando, Florida 32810. Telephone: 407-647-4672 or E-mail: bluedolfins!msn.com.

The Wolf by Sansone


"I feel so much safer, sitting near a soldier!"

# FACTS:
# 1973 ST. LOUIS FIRE AND LOST RECORDS

*[While most of you have probably resolved whatever problems you have had in obtaining your military records and/or medals, we print this in the hope that it may be helpful. This article [excerpted] appeared in the November/December 2003 issue of "The Graybeards," the magazine of the Korean War Veterans Association.]*

**Fact Sheet:** The National Archives and Records Administration is the official depository for records of military personnel separated from the United States Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy. The records are housed in three locations: the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., the Washington National Records Center in Suitland, Maryland, and the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri.

The NPRC contains records relating to:

- U.S. Army officers separated after June 30, 1017, and enlisted Army personnel separated after October 31, 1912.
- U.S. Air Force officers and enlisted personnel separated after September 1947.

**The Fire:** A fire at the NPRC in St. Louis on July 12, 1973, destroyed about 80 percent of the records for Army personnel discharged between November 1, 1912, and January 1, 1960. About 75 percent of the records for Air Force personnel with surnames from "Hubbard" through "Z" discharged between September 15, 1947, and January 1, 1964, were also destroyed.

**What Was Lost:** It is hard to determine exactly what was lost in the fire because there were no indices to the blocks of records involved. The records were merely filed in alphabetical order for the following groups:

- World War I: Army September 7, 1939 to November 1, 1912.
- World War II: Army December 31, 1946 to September 8, 1939.
- Post World War: Army December 31, 1959 to January 1, 1947.
- World War II: Air Force December 31, 1963 to September 25, 1947.

Millions of records, especially medical records, had been withdrawn from all three groups and loaned to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) prior to the fire. The fact that one's records are not in NPRC files at a particular time does not mean the records were destroyed in the fire.

**Reconstruction of Lost Records:** If a veteran is advised that his or her records may have been lost in the fire, he or she may send photocopies of any documents they possess to the NPRC, particularly separation documents. The address is National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63132-5100. This enables the NPRC to re-establish files by adding those documents to the computerized index and filing them permanently.

**Alternate Sources of Military Service Data:** In the event a veteran does not have any records in his or her possession, the essential military service data may be available from a number of alternate sources.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) maintains records of veterans whose military records were affected by the fire if the veteran or a beneficiary filed a claim prior to July, 1973.

Service information may also be found in various kinds of "organizational" records such as unit morning reports, payrolls, and military orders on file at the NPRC or other National Archives and Records Administration facilities.

There also is a great deal of information available in records of the State Adjutants General, and other state "veterans services" offices.

By using alternate sources, NPRC may often be able to reconstruct a veteran's beginning and ending dates of active service, the character of service, rank while in service, time lost while on active duty, and periods of hospitalization. NPRC is usually able to issue NA Form 13038, "Certification of Military Service," considered to be the equivalent of a Form DD-214, "Report of Separation from Active Duty," for the purpose of establishing eligibility for veterans benefits.

**Necessary Information for File Reconstruction:** The key to reconstructing miliary data is to give the NPRC enough specific information so the staff can properly search the various sources. The following information is normally required.

- Full name used during military service.
- Branch of service
- Approximate dates of service
- Service number
- Place of entry into service
- Last unit of assignment
- Place of discharge

***[Remember to send a copy of your discharge with any request you submit.]***□

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# *WHAT IS BRAVE...* TO BE REPRINTED

The Mississippi Chapter reports that response to their 200-page book has been so good they are reprinting.

*What is Brave: Reminiscences of Fear, Loneliness, Hope and Endurance* recounts the first-hand recollections of approximately 100 survivors of the Battle of the Bulge.

Many, many accolades have been received concerning the book's contents...several stating that the book is better than Stephen Ambrose's book.

The chapter isn't interested in realizing a big profit, but instead wants to get the book into the hands of libraries, schools, churches, etc. Preserving the history of the Battle of the Bulge is their mission.

To order your copy send $20.00 per book (including shipping and handling) to James Hunt, 2502 Magnolia Circle, Columbus, Mississippi 39705. Make your check or money order payable to: Mississippi Chapter VBOB.□

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# IT WASN'T JUST CUPID'S ARROW

*[The following excerpts are from an article which appeared in "The Madison Courier" on November 11, 2003. It concerns* ***JAMES E. PENDLETON, 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION****.]*

...Fast forward to December 16. Now a member of the 1st Army, 30th Infantry Division, Pendleton entered Stomont, Belgium, a tiny village...at about 2 a.m. with his unit. "It was foggy, cold, snowy," he said. "We just piled out of our vehicles and went into the buildings. We just laid down on the floor and went to sleep."

Pendleton, a driver and acting sergeant for the lieutenant of his company, was awakened later by that officer, who said, "You hear that noise out there, Jim?"

I said, "Yeah, why don't those so-and-sos be quiet and go to sleep?"....

"Those so-and-sos are Germans, putting chains on our vehicles," the lieutenant answered.

The company, being awakened by the lieutenant, got the 12 land mines they had on hand, sneaked out and placed them in strategic positions on the road where the Germans were starting to move, and managed to blow the treads off three of the enemy's tanks, disabling them.

Pendleton recalled that it was now turning daylight. German soldiers had swarmed into the small village. "They were in the lofts, under the beds, in the cellars, and most of them had on American uniforms" to try to fool the GIs, he said.

"We dashed into a storefront. A german tank commander stuck the barrel of the tank's .88 caliber gun into the window, and said in English, "You guys want to give up, or should I blast you?" I said, "We give up."

Pendleton said the tank started to back up. The GIs' jeep was parked in the alley beside the building, and he told the others, "Boy's we've got to get in the jeep fast." The Americans rushed out, jumped into the vehicle and sped away, with the German .88 cannon firing at their wake.

But they weren't out of danger. Up ahead, a German half-track was sitting in the middle of the road. Its armament: twin 20-millimeter anti-aircraft guns, which could bring down a plane. The Germans in the half-track began firing furiously, trying to stop the American vehicle.

"I was shifting gears on the jeep, trying to get a little more speed out of it, and leaning so far out to the left that just my right arm and right foot were still in it--and one of the antiaircraft rounds went through my right forearm," Pendleton recalled.

The explosion turned the jeep bottom-side-up. The others in the jeep managed to escape. "It threw me out, but I lit on my feet and just started running," he said. "I never did lose my balance. I went into this house--and if there was one German in there, there was 20."

A big red-haired German stuck a "grease gun"--a submachine gun--directly into Pendleton's face.

"I shoved it out of my face with my left hand, and it either misfired or he fired it empty," Pendleton said. Between the rounds fired at the Americans back in the jeep, and those the grease gun spat at him, Pendleton later found nine bullet holes in his shirt. One round mutilating a small copy of the New Testament, with steel covers, that he was carrying in his shirt pocket.

"I backed out of the door right quick, and kept standing there," he said. The frantic activity he had been engaged in had kept him going--that plus about a dozen Army pills, issued to give the GIs a boost when they needed it. He took them all at one time, figuring a man with that type of wound needed them. But loss of blood from the horrendous arm wound was weakening him.

"A wireman I knew ran by--Joe Durvall, a Hoosier. He cut my sleeve off and put a tourniquet on me to stop the bleeding. Then he ran on," Pendleton said.

The street seemed to be moving with tracer bullets, which leave a visible trace of fire in their wake as a guide to the gunner, he recalled.

"An American tank came up the street, firing tracers (from the tank's machine gun). He would shoot and back up, shoot and back up. I got to timing him--when he was gunning his engine one time. I took off my helmet and waved," he said. Recognized as an American, Pendleton was told by the tank commander that there wasn't room for him inside, but he could ride on the barrel of the cannon. The commander maneuvered the barrel around toward Jim, and he climbed on, riding for a distance before the tank arrived at its destination and he had to walk on, searching for medical attention.

"I'd walk a little way, then I'd get weak. Other guys (Americans) that were going the same way would make a pack saddle and carry me a piece. Then I'd get down and walk again," he said.

When Pendleton finally arrived at an aid station, the medical personnel there took one look at his ghastly arm wound and gave him a shot, apparently as a sedative preparatory to amputation the arm.

But he was "all hopped up" from the overdose of pep pills he had taken, and jumped back up again. However, within minutes he wilted....

*[Jim went through many medical procedures where they wanted to remove his arm, but he would have no part of it--each time insisting that something other than amputation be done.]*

Finally, he arrived at Newton D. Baker Hospital in West Virginia, where he met a young ward nurse named Edith.

One day, fed up with what he saw as a runaround. Pendleton asked to see the commander of the hospital. He told him, "I want you to fix this arm."

Surgeons finally operated on it, using steel plates and a bone graft from Pendleton's shin. When he had recuperated, he could use his army again.

It bears a huge scar, though, that is not just a jagged line on the surface, but a deep indentation into the flesh of the forearm. "I don't have a whole lot of use of it--but I've learned to compensate for it. It's there," he said.

*[Jim and Edith were married on September 7, 1946, while both were still in the army.]*

"My captain told me I wasn't supposed to go out with an enlisted man, but I did anyway," Edith said, grinning.

Jim added modestly: "I saw a lot of action and went through a lot of stuff, and did what I had to do. But I was scared to death most of the time. I never saw myself as any kind of hero."◘

# MEMORIES OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

**By W. C. "Bill" Armstrong**
**263rd Field Artillery Battalion**
**Service Battery**

I wish to preface my stories with the statement that as an ammunition truck driver in the Artillery, I was never exposed to the horrors of war that the infantry experienced except on a few rare occasions. I was not subjected to the day in and day out living like an animal in a hole, poorly fed and clothed, in constant fear of death or maiming. I have the highest regard for the members of the "Queen of Battle." I admire beyond description the service and sacrifice of you men, including the airborne and armored. We were in the same war but mine was different.

There is nothing humorous about war. It is a bloody and horrible business but funny things do happen. Also, there is stupidity in war and my story includes both.

My division, the 26th "Yankee" Division, part of General George Patton's 3rd Army, had been pulled out of the line and ordered into Metz for a rest and re-fit. Bob Zelmer and I turned our ammunition truck in to Battalion Maintenance for an overhaul and started to clean up our personal gear. The next morning I went over to Battalion Maintenance to see what was happening to our truck and found all the wheels off and the bearings being packed. It was in that condition when all hell broke lose up north. We got the call to throw everything together and be prepared to move out. The Krauts had broke through in the Ardennes, whatever that was. Our CO wasn't any wiser than we were as to what was going on, except that we were to head out and stop the enemy. The mechanics were working at a fever pitch to get the vehicles back together and as soon as our truck was ready, Bob and I reloaded the 2-1/2 tons of 105 ammo and formed up wit the Battery. We moved out that afternoon.

We had driven about ten or twelve miles from Metz when Bob realized that something was wrong with the truck and looking in the mirror, saw the rear duals projecting about a foot out from where they should have been, thereby rendering the brakes useless. Apparently the mechanic in his haste had failed to assemble the wheels and axle properly. We were starting up a hill so Bob using the hand brake, coasted to a stop and waved for the trucks behind to go on around. Our CO was at the tail end of our Battery convoy and stopped to ask what was wrong. He promised to send the mechanics back as soon as possible, which proved to be three days later. There was nothing Bob or I could do without tools. When the road was clear, Bob eased the truck back to the bottom of the grade where we found ourselves parked next to a large pile of German Teller mines, not the nicest of neighbors! Should a Kraut pilot spot the lone truck and strafe us there was going to be a mighty big hole in the road for the engineers to fill!

After a night spent in the cold cab wrapped in our two blankets and shelter half, we heated a couple of C rations on our little squad stove along with hot water for what was said to be "coffee." We cleaned up in the trickle of water that ran in the ditch behind the mines, lit up our smokes and surveyed our surroundings.

Across the road was a cart track that disappeared over a rise and we set out to see where it went. Walking abreast in the two tracks we noted some burned out American tanks off to our left along with various pieces of German equipment. Neither of us considered that the tracks blown off the tanks were a sure indication that mines were in the area. This is where stupidity took over. Still strolling along we crested a rise and found ourselves looking out over an area where they had dug in at the top of a long slope, some partially covered by dirt thrown up by artillery burst, some slumped behind their machine guns, some just partial bodies. On the down slope to our right were the bodies of our troops, sprawled where they had fallen, mowed down as they charged the enemy. It must have been a night battle, I doubt they would have tried the assault in the light of day. We could only stand in awe of the carnage! The bodies had been there long enough for them to partially decompose, that is, all but the Germans. Whether it was due to diet or what, those whose faces we could see looked like they were merely asleep!

We spotted the body of a German officer and walked over to see if his pistol was on him. We thought we saw the butt of it under his body and having heard stores of how the Germans often booby-trapped their own men, I suggested to Bob we get a length of wire from a nearby fence and roll the body over from a distance.

Bob had taken but a few steps when I yelled, "Stop, mines!" I had looked down and not six inches from my right foot were the partially exposed fins of an anti-personnel mine. We had wandered into a mine field!

I have never been so frightened in my life, then or since. I was actually sick in my stomach. My legs trembling so that I thought I'd collapse. I wanted to sit down but where? Bob was as pale as a ghost and shaking just as hard as I. And there we stood, frozen in our tracks, staring at each other. What a hell of a fix our stupidity had got us into! We'd eventually have to try to get out of there and the thought of that made me sicker. I wanted to throw up. I longed to be back in the safety of my home-away-from-home, our truck! I promised the Good Lord that if I got out of this mess I'd never go souvenir hunting again.

I have no idea how long we stood there like statues, staring at each other, when we heard voices and then saw three GI's coming over the rise. The one in front had a mine detector that he swept from side-to-side as he slowly stepped into the safe places, the other two concentrating on stepping exactly where he stepped. They were so intent on watching where they stepped that they hadn't seen us but looked up when I called out in a very hoarse voice, "Hey, help."

They stared at us for a moment then the one in front asked "What in hell are you idiots doing here? Don't you know this area is mined?"

I replied that we had found that out some time ago and could he please get us out of there? I added in defence that there were no signs posted warning of the mines.

He went over to Bob first and the two of them came to me, the mine sweeper very carefully finding the safe places and Bob noting exactly where he stepped, as did I after falling in behind. We then all marched in lock-step as we followed him out to the highway. Along the way the detector operator showed us the location of a number of mines in the two tracks that Bob and I had by the Grace of God missed stepping on.

*(Continued on next page)*

## MEMORIES *(Continued from Page 22)*

Our saviors turned out to be a Graves Registration Team. They would first have the engineers come clear the mines before an attempt was made to recover the bodies.

Sadly, stupidity hadn't left the scene. The next day two Air Force pilots from a nearby base rode up on bikes and asked if there were any 'souvenirs' around. We told them what we had seen and the danger of mines in the area. Disregarding our warnings the two turned and peddled up the cart path! They hadn't gone far when there was a terrific explosion and one of them was hurled into the air bike and all. The survivor came crying to us to help his buddy but we declined. When a team from the air base recovered the body later that day, we saw the bike frame had apparently split him nearly in half.

The following day our mechanics arrived in a weapons carrier to repair the truck and we followed them back to our unit, somewhere in Luxembourg.

The battery had occupied a stone built farmhouse along a country road. Snow lay a foot or so deep and it was cold. While the Captain and his staff occupied the farm house, we lesser ranks had the luxury of bedding down in the barn. Sleeping in hay is a real pleasure, much better than in the chilly farm house.

The humorous event occurred the night Porky Kennedy and I were detailed to the midnight to four a.m., guard duty. We were to halt all traffic and insure that it was American and not Krauts driving our vehicles and wearing American uniforms. We'd been told that many of the German spoke excellent English and I wondered just how in the devil I was going to determine who was who, especially in the dark. No one knew the password for that day, if there was one. I asked the first sergeant, what should I do if it was my ill-fortune to have a Kraut show up and he said to think of something. Very reassuring advise!

It was a dark, overcast night but the snow seemed to gleam with a hidden light. Porky was just a dark object next to me as we stood in the road tamping our feet and swinging our arms to keep the circulation moving. I had everything I owned on and I was still freezing. Suddenly the sound of a jeep crawling along in low gear could be heard. Someone was coming and from the east, where the Germans were! Porky decided it would be a good idea if he covered me from the corner of the barn and disappeared. He would have been just as able to see and cover me from inside the barn with his head in a sack!

I brought my carbine to port arms and as the tiny "cats eyes" blackout lights appeared I yelled, "Halt. Who goes there." No answer but the jeep kept coming.

There is a trick blackout drivers use to guide a vehicle in the dark. A mess kit shines in even the darkest of nights and I had brought mine on guard duty the handle hooked into my web belt. I began waving it as the jeep approached and it stopped along side me. I could make out three forms, the driver with a passenger beside him and a large body on the back seat. It was the guy in the back seat I was worried about because if trouble started, he'd be the one to fire first.

Our conversation went like this;

"Give me the pass word," I demanded.

There was whispering between the guy in front and the back seat passenger.

The body next to the driver says, "I don't know the pass word, do you?"

"No," I replied without thinking of the possible consequence.

Now what do I do? I remembered that sports questions, especially baseball facts, served to identify friend from foe.

"Who won the 1940 World Series," I asked.

Again whispering, the "Hell, I don't know. Do you?"

"No," I replied again. This was beginning to look serious. And I was certainly appearing to be an idiot. Maybe they were Americans and were getting suspicious that I was a German.

Finally in desperation I asked, "Where are you from?"

"Oakland, California," he says.

Quick as a flash I ask, "Where's the best place to get a hot dog in Oakland?"

"Casper's on Telegraph Avenue across from the roller rink. Across from Oakland Tech High on Broadway, down by Lake Merit and out on East 14th. Where are you from?" When I replied Berkeley the adjacent city, we were both so relieved we began reminiscing until the guy in the back growled something in a low voice.

It was after they left that I realized the driver had not said a word. Just sat looking straight ahead. To this day I'm not sure that they were Americans.

Once my friends had left, I called to Porky to come on out and he rejoined me in the road. We talked of this and that, stamped our feet and swung our arms. Suddenly Porky says, "What is that out in the field?"

"Where?" I asked. "There, past the barn!" I looked and saw a dark object standing erect in the snow. I thought it was a fence post but Porky said it had moved and was getting closer. I looked away for a moment then looked back and by golly it HAD moved, or so I thought. By this time Porky is getting excited and had moved around behind me, urging me to shoot. Again I looked away and then back. Now I was sure the object was coming our way so I hollered, "Halt or I'll shoot!" I called out three times and still the black figure came closer. I raised my carbine and fired, 5 three times. The thing just stood there.

At the sound of the shots, the Captain and others came rushing out the little stone house, the Captain in his long underwear was brandishing his .45.

"What's all this damn shooting about?", he demanded. When I pointed out my target and said Porky thought it was the enemy, the captain said, "That's a fence post you idiot! I don't want to hear anymore shooting!", and they all went back in.

I got a lot of kidding about "killing" an enemy fence post but when I showed them I'd hit it all three shots, and in the dark, they shut up.□

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## GOSSIP

"As I grow older and older
And totter towards the tomb
I find that I care less and less
Who goes to bed with whom."

*— Dorothy L. Sayers, English mystery writer (1893-1957)*

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## ARE YOUR DUES DUE?

# THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE KRINKELT - ROCHERATH DECEMBER 17, 18, and 19, 1944

**By Arnold B. Parish**
**2nd Infantry Division**
**38th Infantry Regiment**
**3rd Battalion, Company K**

We were moving up to relieve part of the Ninth Infantry Regiment. The ground was covered with ice and snow as we moved toward Wehlerscheid. The Ninth had been successful but had lost a big number of their men and were in bad need of replacements. We would relieve them so they could pull back to build up their troops. They had a rough time taking these pillboxes. They named it Heart Break Crossroads.

As we moved through the snow everyone was quiet as we all knew that in a short time we would be engaged with the enemy. The column stopped and we wanted to move on. Lieutenant Lahner, our Platoon Leader, was called to meet with the Company Commander and the other Platoon leaders. We had hopes that, maybe something better was being planned for us. We began to talk among ourselves guessing what our next move may be. After 20 minutes Lieutenant Lahner returned. He talked briefly to Sergeant Ward, our Platoon Sergeant. I wasn't close enough to hear the conversation. Immediately our Company turned and started moving in almost the opposite direction. We took the road that ran from Wehlerscheid to Rocherath and Krinkelt.

We had been very tense when we thought we were going into a dangerous battle but now we relaxed since it seemed we were moving away from the front. "What is the hurry; why are we running?" We came out of the woods in a few minutes and immediately the shells started. We threw ourselves down on the ground which was our custom but were told to keep moving. The shells were close and we were scared but we kept moving. We thought at first our own artillery was off target, but we knew they were enemy 88's by the sound. The German planes started strafing and bombing. We continued to move as fast as possible.

Looking to our left about 100 yards we saw some American artillery pieces abandoned, still facing toward where we thought the enemy should be, but we weren't sure. I think we ran about six miles before we arrived at Rocherath and Krinkelt. Our Platoon had no casualties on the road. We were moved east of Krinkelt and took up positions there. The 2nd platoon was on the extreme left of the company and I was the last man on the left of the platoon. A tank destroyer was about ten feet to my left. The enemy artillery would later try for the TD.

I began digging a hole and another man in my squad came over and asked if he could dig in with me. It was normal to pair off so I said "alright." We would dig a little then fall to the ground as the shells came in. We dug the hole for about two hours without a let up. It was raining shells and they were exploding all around our hole. The air was full of shrapnel and spent pieces were hitting us as we laid on our back with our helmets over our face. The noise was unbearable and the ground shaking and we were shaking from fright and cold. We didn't raise our head. It would have been impossible to survive outside of the hole. We had casualties but I don't know how many. Then the shells stopped coming in. We laid there shaken and stunned. We knew nothing of any activity outside our holes. I was afraid everyone else had been killed but because of the TD, we were getting most of the shells.

One of our sergeants came to our hole and squatted down beside it, saying "We can't stand this. I'm going to the company commander and get him to move us out of here; we'll all be killed if I don't." I didn't know what to say to him. His eyes looked wild and I guess mine did too. Then he started toward the company C.P. I asked my partner if he thought the sergeant was all right. He said, "I don't know but he acted strange to me." We both knew the sergeant didn't have the authority to go to the company commander. I think he had a case of battle fatigue. He didn't come back and I haven't seen or heard of him since.

About fifteen minutes after the sergeant left, the shelling started again. It was just as bad or worse than before and didn't let up until dark. We were expecting a direct hit on our hole any time. There was a fear that we were helpless and all alone and there was nothing we could do, so I prayed to God. I had attended a Community Church at Heads Prairie, nine miles east of Kosse, Texas, and had attended a meeting. Malcolm Smith, preacher from Groesbeck, Texas, preached. He stood on the back porch of John Kidd's Store and we sat in chairs and on benches out in the open. I listened to him but did not become a Christian. So I was afraid my prayers would not be answered. Then I made some commitments and since then I have tried to keep them.

Lt. Lahner sent for me and told me to report to the first sergeant at the company CP. The company CP was in a building about 75 yards to our rear. I went to the building and found the first sergeant, telling him I was sent from the Second Platoon. He said; "Come with me." I followed him through the building going into a back room and out the back door that was facing east, toward where I had just left my platoon. He walked to each corner of the building then said, "You will be guarding the back of this building. I don't want you to let anyone in this door and don't let anyone pass you that you don't know. You will stay here until we relieve you."

I took control of my post and the first sergeant went inside. I began walking from corner to corner looking toward the front each time I came to the corners. I was alone and it was very dark. The only lights were the flashes from the shells that were coming in but not as intense as they were earlier.

The time went by very slow as I tried to keep warm but that wasn't possible as I just couldn't move around enough. I thought about my mother and hoped she didn't know where I was or what I was doing. I tried to write letters to her that would make her think I was safe, but one of my uncles (her brother), was telling her where I was and what we were doing. Thinking about my sisters, Bobbie and Frances, and brothers, Eugene, Frank and Harvey, I was glad I was there instead of my brothers. I also thought a lot about my girlfriend, Ann Nanny, who was writing letters to me regularly. She was in nursing school in San Antonio, Texas. We had met in Kerrville, Texas. She was only sixteen when we met--a senior in high school. I was sure I had found the girl of my dreams. It would be about five years after when we were married--we still are.

Then suddenly my thoughts were interrupted as it seemed hell had broken loose. Tiger tanks appeared at our front lines along with enemy foot soldiers. (Continued)

## KRINKELT-ROCHERATH

(Continuation)

The attack we had been expecting had come. To start the attack a tank came rolling up to our lines with turret open and someone sitting exposed and smoking a cigarette. As soon as they were challenged the turret closed and opened fire. At the same time enemy infantry and other tanks attacked all along our front. All I could do was lay on the ground, guard my post and hope they didn't break through. They didn't break through Company K lines but tanks and infantry broke through on the south of our lines circling around and coming into the villages from our rear. Using floodlights against the clouds, the enemy tanks moved into the villages pouring incendiary shells into the buildings and strafing the area with machine guns. From where I was, at the back of the K Company CP, I could see the battle on both sides. The flood lights were reflecting from the clouds lighting the villages. We were surrounded by the tanks and infantry. I could see the incendiary shells landing and exploding in the buildings setting them afire. The screams of the wounded were very upsetting. I wanted to do something but there was nothing I could do; just look and grieve. "Maybe this was the end of the world," I thought. The fighting was moving toward me from the direction of the villages. There was a foot bridge about 100 feet in front of the company CP. I could see men firing across the ditch it crossed and could see the return fire from the enemy across on the other side. I wasn't worrying too much about the enemy breaking throughout lines in front as the big threat was coming from the villages. The villages were covered with burning buildings and tanks. Cries for help were coming from the burning buildings; they must have been wounded and trapped."

I was told later that two squads from my company (K) had cleaned out the enemy from some houses across the foot bridge killing eight and capturing fifteen.

The following was taken from Page 101, 2nd Infantry Division, World War II.

[During the night a heavy force of enemy infantry and tanks began assembling south of Krinkelt. Heavy artillery and mortar fire broke up an impending attack and set two tanks afire. In the village tanks that had broken through and infiltrated behind the front lines were systematically hunted down and destroyed and the groups of infantry in the town reduced." Also on page 105 "Three tanks assisted Service Company, 38th Regiment, in repelling a German tank assault on Rocherath on the night of December 17. They destroyed one Tiger tank but were themselves destroyed in bitter close infighting. Command tanks of Battalion Headquarters and Company A scored in knocking out five Mark V an Mark VI enemy tanks in Rocherath on the morning of December 18 without suffering a single loss themselves.] The enemy continued to attack our Company lines and the fighting continued in the villages. Bullets were hitting the building and all around me. I was cold and scared and very lonely. I was laying at the west corner of the building so I could see in all directions. It seemed this battle would last forever.

As morning of the 18th approached, the enemy was gradually pushed from the villages and were not attacking our lines any more. The shelling slowed and I again had some time to think. I thought of what Baxter had told me. "Tex," he would say, "you and I have been here too long. When we get it, we'll get it good." I think he meant bad. (Sergeant Baxter was wounded somewhere in Germany after we crossed the Rhine).

Daylight came and the first sergeant came through the back door and told me I could return to my platoon. I reported to Lt. Lehner and he said, "We're moving out." During the time we had been there we had added about forty men to our Platoon, mostly from the 395th Infantry Regiment that had withdrawn north of us on the 17th and about 2,000 of their men were attached to the elements of the Second Division. A platoon had been formed from those to take up the positions we held. We were ordered to report to Regimental Headquarters in the villages to reinforce the elements there. We were attached to the Anti-tank Company.

When we were close to a hundred yards from the Regimental Headquarters we were attacked by a Tiger tank. We scattered and ran for cover. The tank was firing machine guns. We were fortunate no one was hit as there were bullets popping all around us.

Since I had watched all that was happening in the villages I was partly prepared for what we saw as we moved along a road and into the villages.

Within the hundred yards of where I was guarding the company CP. In the grader ditch on the right side of the road there were dead bodies of Americans lying head to toe. Evidently they had been killed lying as they were. The open space beyond the ditch was also covered with dead Americans. Another fifty yards on the same side a Tiger Tank was still smoldering with a German soldier's body hanging halfway over the open turret. There were also bodies of German infantry lying in the snow. As we entered the villages we found disabled tanks of both German and American. Some of the buildings were still burning. We went through the villages to the north side and reported to the outfit we were to be attached to. I think we must have been taking orders from Regimental Headquarters.

The Germans with ten or more tanks attempted a breakthrough. We were sent to the places that were threatened and were constantly on the move and hopefully were having a lot of effect on the enemy.

About mid-morning as we were going through Rocherath, we stopped and went into a basement for protection from a barrage of enemy shells. The basement was under a commercial type building. The entrance was a stairway leading directly from the sidewalk. There were two American soldiers in the basement. One of them I had known when I was in F Company when we were stationed in Fort Sam Houston. We talked and I asked him where F Company was. He said he didn't know and wasn't trying to find them. That he was going to stay where he was. He told me that the enemy had overrun them and some of them had gone into the basement. (I don't know if it was the same basement or not.) A tank had pointed the 88 down into the basement and ordered them out. They came out and were taken prisoner but were released as the enemy was driven out. That was the last he'd seen of his company. When the Germans left them the went back into the basement and stayed. When we were getting ready to leave, he said, "Why don't you stay with us? If you go out there, you'll be killed." I said, "That is a chance I'll have to take. I can't leave my platoon." I thought it would be nice just to hide. The barrage had let up and we left.

As we approached the edge of town we could hear the machine guns, the burst of the shells and the engines of the armored vehicles. I saw a German tank sitting about a hundred yards from the edge of the

(Continued)

## KRINKELT-ROCHERATH

(Continuation)

last buildings, out in the open with the machine gun blasting bullets at us. He was facing directly toward us. We spread into attack formation and began advancing toward the tank. Another tank appeared, then infantry. When we had covered about half of the distance to the tanks; firing as we advanced, they started withdrawing along with the infantry. Maybe our help was all that was needed to drive them out.

Our wounded were being sent to the rear. Even though we were surrounded, a road had been kept open for supplies and reinforcements and for evacuation of the wounded. The dead were left as the weather was freezing and there was no decay.

The afternoon of the 18th we were sent to the outer edge of Rocherath to an old barn that was sitting on a hill. We took up positions inside the barn facing southwest. From this position we had a good view. One of the men and I took a position in the hayloft. We could see over the hedge rows through the holes torn in the roof by artillery shells. We soon found out why we were there. About ten minutes after we took our positions tanks started firing incendiary shells into the barn. The shells were hitting the other end of the barn where there was no hay. If they had hit our end where the hay was we would have had a fire and probably would have been hit by fragments.

The attack came with tanks and infantry. The tanks were two hundred yards out and were partially hid by the hedgerows. They fired 88s covering the infantry attack. They came at us in large numbers. When they were twenty feet from the barn our artillery started falling on them. We were firing as fast as we could and our artillery was falling ten feet from the building and was deafening. (I learned later we had an artillery observer in the barn with us.) The shells were coming in just over the roof where we were lying in the loft. I suppose he would have called them down on us if the attack had not been stopped. Some of the enemy wounded and dead were within ten feet of the barn when the attack was stopped. One of the tanks raised a white flag and came to pick up the wounded. We didn't fire on it, while they loaded them and drove off. We were thankful for our artillery, as we would have been in hand-to-hand combat and the enemy probably would have overrun us.

A tank in the crossroad in front of us was firing into the barn and also at other targets around us. Another tank at a right angle to us was causing a lot of damage to our lines. Three American soldiers (one carrying a bazooka) moved by the side of the barn and bending low went down the hedgerow directly in front of my position. They and the tanks could be seen from the loft so we watched them as they slowly moved along the hedgerow. They approached the corner of the hedgerow without being detected by the tank putting them about twenty feet from it. The man carrying the bazooka stood up and aimed the weapon and fired. It was a miss and the machine gun which was firing in another direction, probably toward our positions began turning toward them. I held my breath thinking that was the end for them but the man with the bazooka fired another rocket and the tank was out. The Germans came out of the tank and were cut down by our rifle fire.

We were ordered to move again and assembled in the breezeway of the barn. I was the first to leave the barn and raced to the left trail and down the hill. I had forgotten the tank that was sitting to our right aiming his guns over a hedgerow. I ran into the open directly in front of its machine gun and immediately came under fire. I raced down the hill. The bullets were all around me. I knew I would be hit if I kept running and was going to drop to the ground which wouldn't have been safe because there was nothing to hide me from them. The weather had warmed and the ground was thawing causing muddy spots. I stepped in a muddy spot which was clay and my foot slipped. I slid six feet on my left foot with my right leg extended straight out in front of me losing my balance at the end of the slide and falling backward. I had thrown up my arms as I slid and fell so I think the tank gunner thought he had hit me and stopped firing. I had lost my helmet when the slide started. I laid there for a moment to get my breath knowing the gunner would fire again if I moved. I turned my head slowly to see where my helmet was then looked to see the best way to escape. Down the hill and to my left was open all the way and a clear field for the tank gunner. I slowly wormed my way up to the helmet knowing the only route of escape was to my right and it would be approximately 40 or 50 feet before I had the barn between me and the tank. I watched the machinegunner and when he was firing in another direction I jammed my helmet on my head and ran. I didn't draw another shot. The rest of the Platoon followed me down the hill with the barn between us and the tank.

We spent the night of the 18th in a building in Rocherath and we had some sleep for the first time since the night of the 16th. The shells were falling all over the towns and the battles raging as the enemy tanks and troops kept attacking us--but I slept. They probably could have carried me off asleep.

Early on the 19th found us still under siege although we were better fortified and more confident because of the constant supply of ammunition, food, communication and tank and artillery support. The enemy hadn't given up but had decided if they were going to get anywhere they would have to bypass us. The attacks were still being made on us and they shelled us all day but we seemed to be holding.

Our commanding general and the commanders from the 1st and Ninth Infantry Divisions decided on a plan of coordinated defense of the Elsenborn Plateau, so we were to lose the twin villages that we had fought so hard for. (I was told that Colonel Francis H. Boos, our Commanding Officer, told them we didn't want to pull back because we had whipped the Germans.) Although, orders are orders.

Our platoon continued to move from place to place doing whatever we were told. We had managed to have few casualties and most of them were hit on the 17th.

Night found us in a basement and the enemy had stepped up their shelling. We were told about the order to withdraw. Lt. Lahner, our platoon leader, said we would be the last ones to leave the villages. We began to wait for orders to move out and we could hear vehicles and troop movement for hours. Also the Germans had probably become aware of the movement and shells were pouring in. Excitement in our platoon was bad and getting worse so by the time we left the building our men were almost frantic. (There is something about withdrawing that causes panic that I saw at no other time.) Baxter and myself, (both privates first class First Class), started moving among the men trying to calm them down. (I'm sure I did it to calm myself down.) We were successful to an extent; however, when the orders came to leave the building, the excitement started again and as we came out of the building and into the sunken road behind the last

(Continued)

## KRINKELT-ROCHERATH

(Continued)

platoon of the Second Battalion, there seemed to be no control. The men crowded together and against the platoon ahead that was stopped. We could hear the fighting of the tanks that were our rear guard and the sound seemed to make matters worse. Baxter and I began walking up and down the column talking to the men and asking them to spread out. Without authority we could do very little. One soldier who outranked me told me to mind my own business.

The column began to move slow. There was gunfire above the road to the left and an American soldier running along the bank was hit by machine gun fire and tumbled down the bank into the road. He was alive. As the column ahead of us moved slowly forward, our men kept crowding toward them. It seemed like we were pushing them or trying to. Baxter and I had given up on getting them to disperse. A phosphorus shell hit in the midst of the platoon directly in front of us. We dived to the ground but there were no other shells close. Evidently the Germans weren't zeroed in on this road. There were wounded in the other platoon. One of the men took his wounded friend into a building beside the road and evidently stayed with him. An American jeep came up behind us at a high rate of speed, slowed down and went around us through a field on our right side. There was a dead American soldier in the seat beside the driver and another soldier sitting in the back.

We began moving faster, although the tanks fighting in back of us were or sounded closer. We seemed to have lost most of the excitement though. Activity always seems to have a calming effect.

Finally after what seemed such a long time we were going through American defense lines on the Elsenborn Ridge. These defenses had been established while we engaged the enemy at the Twin Villages. We continued on to a location about a half mile behind the lines and went through a wide gap into a field that had been designated as our assembly area. As we went through the gap, Captain Divan Rogers, our Company Commander, was directing us to our platoon assembly area. As I walked by him he said; "Parish" are you still here? You and I are too tall and ugly to get killed." (Captain Rogers was fatally injured January 30, 1945, the night we captured the Twin Villages of Krinkelt and Rocherath.) I had served as squad leader under Rogers when he was Second Lieutenant in F Company at Ft. Sam Houston Texas. He had only been with K Company a short time.

We had only been in our assembly area a few minutes when the Germans began shelling us with 88s and Nebelwerfer rockets. These rockets were shot high in the air, about one dozen from each gun at the same time. The noise was a screaming weird musical sound and became louder as they approached. We couldn't tell where they would land until they landed. They were nerve wracking. We called them Screaming Meemies.

We began digging in and as we were digging, a few minutes later a shell landed in our midst and Lieutenant William Lahner was wounded in his leg. The wound was bad and he was in great pain. Baxter, Harkless and I finished his hole and worked with him to stop the bleeding and to keep him from going into shock. (I learned later he lost the leg just below the hip.) Our medic had been wounded the evening of the 17th and hadn't been replaced. (I didn't see Lahner again until 1989. We were together on a tour to Europe and the 45th Anniversary of D-Day on Normandy Beach. He told everyone I saved his life.)

After Lieutenant Lahner was evacuated I crawled into my hole and went to sleep. I had only slept a short time when I was awakened by a large volley of Nebelwerfer rockets. I was cold and the weird noise scared me so bad I went to pieces and began shaking so bad I seemed to be helpless. I don't think I have ever shaken like that at any other time, however I have always shook after a dangerous mission was over. I thought the rockets would never land. After a time they hit the town Elsenborn about a thousand yards from us. I shook for a while and finally fell asleep again. It was almost morning then.

On the 20th we moved up to position on Elsenborn Ridge. The positions we had passed through the night before. We relieved some elements of the 9th Infantry Regiment and we held these positions until the drive was stopped and our army was ready to move forward again. The holes we moved into were small in diameter and deep. They were carefully designed for tank attacks. We would be in these positions until January 30, 1945, the night we recaptured the Twin Villages of Rocherath and Krinkelt.

Not that this defensive position was easy at all. I was in a hole with another man in an open field and during the day when we would get out to go eat or anything snipers would harass us. We always ran weaving as we ran. During the night we were shelled by German artillery and tanks.

After we had been in this position a week I was sent to our regimental headquarters in Elsenborn for a shave, bath and clean clothes. They even had mirrors. It had been almost a month since I'd had a bath. I looked in the mirror and my face was black, my beard was long and in all directions. After the bath and shave I looked in the mirror. My face was pale. I didn't look like the same person.

As we were returning from regiment and the bath, artillery began falling on our lines. We were about 200 yards from our positions and the shells did not drop in our immediate area. We fell to the ground until the shelling stopped then we went on to our platoon. One of our fox holes with two men in it had a direct hit. One of the men was killed and the other didn't get hit. He said they were sitting side-by-side.

I went on one reconnaissance patrol. Twelve of us dressed in white snow suits. We went past enemy lines to put out listening posts. The moon was giving a little light but it was hard to keep contact because the white suits looked the same as the snow. We were out most of the night and returned to our lines without being spotted by the enemy. The front scout discovered a German outpost and we all stopped and squatted down in the snow. Bringing up the rear I watched to see that no one could sneak up on us from that direction. After a good look I looked back to the front and could see no one. I almost panicked. I thought the patrol had gone and left me. As I sat there looking I finally saw a movement. The white suits were so good it was very hard to see them if the man was squatting in the snow. We accomplished our mission and returned to our unit before daylight.

One night about midnight a shell landed and exploded between my hole and the hole of a machinegunner who was dug in about six feet to my left. The next day the gunner went to the hospital with a concussion. His fox hole wasn't as deep as ours and he was sleeping with his head about twelve inches below the surface of the ground. We remained in these positions until our other forces stopped the enemy drive and successfully closed the bulge. Our 23rd regiment played a big factor in that drive.

(Continued)

## KRINKELT-ROCHERATH

(Continuation)

**Facts From the Records**

The German forces we had held off consisted of the 1st and 12th SS Panzer Divisions, the 12th and 277th VG (infantry) Division plus small packets of tanks that were with the two VG (infantry) Divisions they attached our units with 160 tanks plus small packets of tanks that were with the two VG divisions.

Our forces consisted of one regiment, a tank battalion, a TD Battalion and eight field artillery battalions.

During the 17th, 18th, and 19th, our combined forces were credited with destroying 69 tanks, 2 armored vehicles, 2 half tracks and two trucks and probably 11 more vehicles. All in and around Krinkelt and Rocherath.

A telegram from Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges to the commanding general of the 2nd Division reads: "What the 2nd Infantry Division has done in the last four days will live forever in the history of the United States Army."

Before the attack the division commander of the 12th SS Panzer units addressed the troops as follows: "I ask you and expect of you, not to take any prisoners with the possible exception of some officers who may be kept alive for the purpose of questioning." The British had called this unit "filthy beasts" when they fought them at Caen.

We had heard that the Germans had executed some American soldiers after they were captured. We were prepared to fight until death. I'm sure that had a bearing on our success.

General Von Manteuffel, Commander of the German 5th Panzer Army, paid one of the highest compliments to the 2nd Division when he said: "We failed because our right flank near Monschau ran its head against a wall." The wall was the 2nd Division.

The Battle of the Bulge was the biggest battle ever fought. It was the last big effort made by the German military and because they were not successful and lost so much armor, men and other equipment, our troops and allies were able to advance to victory in a very short time.◘

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*[The following was sent to us by E. E. Barnes, 303rd Engineer Combat Battalion.]*

## HEADQUARTERS 78TH INFANTRY DIVISION
## APO 78 - U.S. ARMY
## GENERAL ORDERS (Number 92)
## MAY 10, 1946

## BATTLE HONORS

**BATTLE HONORS**

Under the provisions of Section IV, War Department Circular 333, 22 December 1943 as amended, the 303rd Engineer Combat Battalion, 78th Infantry Division, is cited as follows:

The 303rd Engineer Combat Battalion of the 78th Infantry Division is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy. On 13 December 1944, the line companies of the 303rd Engineer Combat Battalion were placed in direct support of the assault infantry units whose mission it was to go through one of the most heavily defended sectors of the Siegfried Line. Despite the unceasing fire of direct, observed and previously zeroed artillery, mortars and small arms, and the adversities of snow and freezing weather, the men of the 303rd Engineer Combat Battalion cleared roads of mines, gapped anti-tank and anti-personnel mine fields, and neutralized enemy emplacements to assist the Infantry in gaining its initial objectives. Engineer casualties were high but the attack moved on.

The German Wehrmacht launched its mighty Ardennes counter offensive on 16 December just to the south of the Division zone. On order to prevent the German hords from turning North it was necessary to establish a complete barrier system around the Division zone in as short a time as possible. The 303rd Engineers worked mainly at night in No Man's Land between friendly and enemy lines. Braving atrocious weather conditions and suffering severe casualties from intense concentrations of enemy mortar fire, the men worked themselves to the point of exhaustion in order to complete the tasks of laying 15,000 anti-tank mines, 1,700 anti-personnel mines, 30 miles of barbed wire, countless abatis, and many prepared and executed road craters. As the installation of the barrier system progressed, demolition teams of the 303rd Engineer Combat Battalion arrested the infantry in limited objective attacks on numerous strategic pillboxes.

As the German Ardennes offensive was being strangled and the 303rd Engineers made plans with the Infantry for the forth-coming long and arduous drive which ultimately culminated in the capture of the Schwammenauel Dam.

On the clear moonlit night of 28 January 1945, men of the 303rd Engineer Combat Battalion, wearing white snow capes, moved 2,000 pounds of TNT into the town of Konzen well forward of the infantry outposts. Infiltration tactics had to be used as the enemy was situated on the high ground flanking the town. When Konzen and its surrounding towns were taken the drive aimed North. With complete disregard for personal safety and fearless determination, men of the 303 Engineer Combat Battalion, riding the lead tanks, cleared roads into such German strong points as Strauch and Schmidt.

With the capture of the mighty Dam a reconnaissance team of engineers displaying initiative and courage under heavy fire, fought their way into the bowels of the structure to prevent its demolition by the Germans. The drive for the Rhine could begin.

The 303 Engineer Combat Battalion fought gallantly and paid a great price in casualties to reflect the highest credit on itself and the armed forces of the United States.◘

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+ SUCCESS:

At age 4 success is . . . not peeing in your pants.
At age 12 success is . . . having friends.
At age 16 success is . . . having a drivers license.
At age 20 success is . . . going all the way.
At age 35 success is . . having money.
At age 50 success is . . having money.
At age 60 success is . . . going all the way.
At age 70 success is . . . having a drivers license.
At age 75 success is . . . having friends.
At age 80 success is . . . not peeing in your pants.

# LETTERS HOME

*[The following article appeared in a January, 2003, issue of "DeLand Sun News." The letters were written by* ***MORGAN WELCH, 40TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 12TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 2ND BATTALION.****]*

**January 2, 1945**

Dear Mother,

Today I received your letters of December 20 and 22, in which you expressed your anxiety over my welfare since the German counteroffensive began. You know by now that I wasn't swallowed up in it, but it came close enough to be highly uncomfortable for several days.

I had written you that we were situated on a quiet sector of the front where enemy activity was very slight and, as far as we were concerned, it amounted almost to a rest area. The chateau I was in and the modern conveniences found therein couldn't be excelled in the finest homes anywhere. The unit I relieved there informed me that there had not been a shelling in this area for two months, so we were a little surprise, I'll admit, at what started Saturday morning, December 16.

***Day 1: December 16***

At 6:30 that morning, I was awakened by what I though was a bombing because the explosions were so constant and rapid. The guard rushed in just after I awakened to inform me that we were getting a whale of a shellacking. His warning was unnecessary, however, because I was already groping around in the dark for my steel helmet and debating whether I should put on my pants or run to the cellar without them. I finally decided that I could do without the trousers, and made for the cellar in a uniform highly unbecoming an officer.

The combined rocket and artillery serenade lasted for about 10 minutes, several of the shells getting direct hits on the house. Fortunately the house was well constructed--with walls 5 feet thick, three stories with concrete floors and a sturdy roof--so we felt comparatively safe, as long as a shell didn't come in through the windows.

We were more or less inclined, at first, to believe that this was just heavy interdiction fire, but--just to be on the safe side--we mounted two 50-caliber machine guns and one 30-caliber machine gun in upstairs windows where we had a good field for fire and a commanding view of the road junction and highway we were protecting.

Generally speaking, a terrific artillery barrage means one of two things when fired by the Heinies: They are either covering a retreat, or they are softening you up for an attack. Since at this point there would be no point in firing such a barrage for a retreat, it seemed likely that it might mean they would attack.

We sent back for our breakfast that morning as usual, and since the shelling had ceased, we hadn't seen a German or heard any small arms fire, we were beginning to hope that our peace and quiet would not be disturbed again.

At 10 o'clock, the sergeant in command of the squad below me called and said he was being fired on by several Germans but he couldn't tell just how many there were. I telephoned this information back to battalion headquarters and alerted my men. Then I went back to the phone to get another report from the besieged squad.

When I got the squad leader on the wire, he reported he was unable to get out to his half track to man his machine guns, because he was surrounded by Heinies who were firing through all the windows. Since he couldn't get to his machine guns, his position did not look good at all.

He stated he thought he could hold off if they didn't attack from all sides at once. About this point, I lost my connection with him temporarily and, when he came on again, all he said was, "They're coming at me from all directions, I'm hanging up."

I yelled into the telephone and told him to hang on--we would come down in a half track and try to get them out.

I had some of the men mount one of the 50-caliber guns on the track. This operation took about 10 minutes, so just before we were to leave I decided to call once more for his latest situation. The phone rang several times with no answer. Then the switchboard operator cut in and gave me the following message: "Lt. Welch, one of the wiremen who was repairing the wire from company and working this way reported he was fired on by Germans and could not continue his checking of the wire. As he made his way back, he saw your squad down here lined up on the road with a lot of Germans. Neither of them had their hands behind their heads so he didn't know whose prisoner was whose."

I asked the operator, who was with a rifle company between us and the other squad, what his position was. He calmly reported that they were surrounded.

Since there was obviously nothing I could do for the other squad, I took a deep breath, gulped twice, crossed my fingers, gave a silent prayer and had the machine gun remounted in the upstairs window. By this time, we could hear firing going on down the road, so every man took his post at windows all around the house--and waited.

We weren't disappointed. Just about noon, as a few of us were in the kitchen preparing a light lunch, I heard the 50-caliber in the upstairs bathroom open up. I immediately lost my appetite, and rushed up to see what the score was.

The [Germans] came over the top right at our house, probably suspecting that we were few and poorly armed. We were few all-right, about 15, but we were more than well armed.

The gunners waited until they were all out in the open and in good range before they opened up. The troops that attacked us were either poorly trained or doped, because they initially made no effort to conceal themselves or take cover of any sort.

After quite a few of their comrades had given Hitler their full measure of devotion, the rest suddenly remembered their basic training and began to hide behind whatever cover was available.

We continued the fight all that Saturday afternoon and just about dark, we heard shooting to our rear. We were surrounded all the time, and didn't know it, but the enemy behind us was trying to get to an objective further back; the firing we heard was a company of our infantry pushing down to relieve my situation and the companies below me that had also been fighting all day.

They broke through about dark, and they had tanks with them, and I believe that

(Continued)

## LETTERS HOME

(Continuation)

was the most welcome sight I ever saw. They worked their way on down the highway to relieve the company below me.

The tanks fired on the enemy below us, and quickly drove them away as the Germans had no tanks with them. When the Germans ran away into the darkness, out jumped my lost squad from behind a stone wall where they had taken cover while the Heinies were fighting troops across the road from them. They had been captured by a hundred Germans they said who were all over the house before they knew what was happening. They reported that the Germans treated them very decently.

As captives, these men were marched up the highway towards the company just below me, the Heinies thinking the Americans wouldn't fire on them with my men walking in front. They were sadly mistaken, however. All the troops were instructed to wait until the Germans got directly opposite them before they fired, and to shoot straight to avoid hitting the prisoners. Since the Krauts were walking four abreast up the highway, many fell right on the spot and the rest scattered to take up firing positions behind the wall where my men were hiding, and in the buildings nearby where they stayed until the tanks arrived.

***Day 2, December 17***

The second day, which was Sunday, was certainly no day of rest. Troops on a hill nearby reported they counted 200 Germans crossing a ridge along our front, but that they were out of range.

We received artillery fire intermittently all day Sunday, and we could hear small arms firing in almost any direction in the distance. I hadn't received any orders to pull out, so we sandbagged the windows and prepared for a siege. By this time, our central heating system was all shot, our fires were out and every window in the house had been shot out or blown out by the shells. Our comfortable home was now a fort, and we were prepared to defend it.

***Day 3: December 18***

From Monday morning on we were completely cut off from the world except by tank. German infantrymen had succeeded in infiltrating behind us in small groups and they had the roads covered by fire, but since small arms fire doesn't bother a tank we got rations by this method.

We had long since been out of telephone communication with headquarters, and our radio was practically useless. It would not transmit and could only receive one company far below us.

The situation I thought had been relieved Saturday evening was getting worse every day. We had to be constantly alert, especially at night, and the pounding we took from artillery would have finished us in any situation other than behind those tons of stone.

***Day 4: December 19***

By Tuesday evening, we were all a bit jittery from the constant artillery fire and the threat of another attack. We also didn't know what had happened to those below us. I think we all did our share of praying during those days.

That evening, as I walked upstairs, a new man who was seeing his first combat came up to me and nervously asked, "Lieutenant, is it true we are out of communication with everyone?" "No," I said, "we still have communication with God."

***Day 5: December 20***

Wednesday passed with no change, except that I picked up a radio message from a company several kilometers down the highway from me that German tanks were in action there. That report began to make me see visions of tanks firing their 88s right through our windows. I knew if that happened, there was only one thing to do, and that was to fire as long as we could, then throw in the sponge.

Seeing that this situation might possibly come about that same day, I had every man dress as warmly as possible, and we sat around to wait for darkness.

It was a very tense afternoon and, just as I thought the day would end more or less peacefully, a battle began below me and a few shots came our way from across the highway.

*Lt. Welch aboard a 40-by-8 on his way home from WWII.*

It wouldn't have surprised me one bit to have seen a column of German tanks coming up the road. I sat in an upstairs window with field glasses the rest of the day watching for them, but luck was with us. Darkness settled without a tank attack, and I felt that perhaps we might be able to get back that night. The firing stopped below just at darkness and, a little later, three tanks of ours came grinding up the road with artillery and mortar fire falling all about them. They didn't stop, but they called my name, so I knew when the company commander below was using this means to let me know they were all pulling back.

The most silent movement of men I've ever witnessed was that company moving back. It was very dark, and one of my guards almost threw a hand grenade at several of them before he recognized their uniforms. After they had cleared my position, I felt it was time we took off, because now we were really out in front.

Since we had two noisy vehicles to travel in, it was with much misgiving that I opened the double doors to our fort's garage and told the first one to take off. The sound of his motor died away in the distance, and I got into the second half track and we moved out into the gloomiest night I've ever known.

We had about a mile and a half to go before reaching a road junction I had reason to believe was still in our hands. We had traveled just over a mile, when the driver suddenly stopped and someone jumped upon the vehicle and told us there was a roadblock ahead.

*(Continued on next page)*

# ACTIVITY REPORT

**George Fisher**
**Vice President for Chapters**
**(dated July 2003)**

Since I assumed this responsibility six months ago, it has been both hectic and rewarding. My first official act was to send a letter to every chapter introducing myself and also included the "Report of Meeting" form requesting that it be completed and returned to me.

Maintaining communication with our chapters is vital and essential for our continued success. When I received notice that a chapter elected a new president, I immediately sent a letter of congratulations.

I have received newsletters, correspondence, phone conversations, and/or Report of Meeting form from the following chapters: Central Indiana; Mississippi; Susquehanna; Indian River; Florida Citrus; Central Florida; Golden Triangle; Ohio North Coast; Mid-Hudson; Staten Island; Long Island; Northwest; Delaware Valley; Ft. Dix; San Diego; St. Petersburg; Ohio Buckeye; Central Massachusetts; Cumberland Valley, Lehigh Valley; South Jersey; Southern Arizona; Patton Alabama; Blanchard Valley; South Carolina; and Hawkeye State.

It should also be mentioned that E-mail contacts are made on a continual basis. Writing to chapter presidents like Milan Rolik, John McAuliffe, David Saltman, Harry Kirby, and many more, affords me the opportunity to learn about chapter activities. I had an extended conversation with Robert Schnell about methods to increase membership.

To maintain visibility and exhibit concern and support for our chapters, I was delighted to extend a meeting of the Mid-Hudson Chapter which included lunch and a tour of West Point. The following week, I attended the chapter meeting in Ft. Dix (Maguire Air Force Base). In both instances, I was most cordially received and my presence was appreciated.

Creating new chapters is always one of our primary goals. In March of this year, the new St. Petersburg Chapter was born. I attended their opening meeting along with Harry Meisel, Vice President for Membership. Hopefully there will soon be a new chapter in Las Vegas, Nevada. I am working diligently with one of our life members out there. The chapters which have erected and dedicated monuments must be highly commended. What other way can we memorialize our buddies? The story of the Bulge can never be forgotten.◘

# NEW YORK STATE DECLARES BASTOGNE DAY

Patrick J. Kearney, 11th Armored Division, 55th Armored Infantry Battalion, advises us that New York State Governor George Pataki declared December 16, 2003, as "Bastogne Day."◘

## LETTERS HOME

*(Continued from Page 30)*

The man was the sergeant who had gone with the first vehicle that had almost run into a tree felled across the road. A jeep was sitting astride this abatis, and off to one side was a burning half track. In the ditch was a man with a horrible leg injury. He reported that the half track he was in had hit a mine in this roadblock about an hour ago, and that Germans had fired on them with a bazooka and machine guns.

The most trying five minutes of my life were spent right there. The wounded man said the tanks overran the roadblock after the half track was hit. It was his opinion there were no more mines, and he didn't know whether the tanks had scared the Germans off or not.

Expecting any minute to be fired on by enemy machine guns, I had to decide in a hurry whether to abandon all our weapons and equipment and start off cross country into unknown territory, or take a chance on running the roadblock. Two of my men volunteered to take the first half track through.

The two men crawled into the half track, one driving and one manning the machine gun. I instructed them to drive on through to the road junction, that they would be followed by the other vehicle, which we put the wounded man on, and we would meet them there and load on for the final drive back.

I don't think I breathed from the time that vehicle started until it has successfully cleared the roadblock and disappeared in the night. The other vehicle quickly followed, and then we started "sweating out" the foot march to our rendezvous area.

We continued for two miles before running into friendly troops. When I sighted them, I could have cried with joy. I never had such a feeling of relief in my life. We hadn't realized what a strain it had been until we began to relax.

***Days 6-9: December 21-24***

Although we were out, we went back into position the next day, and the entire battalion kept fighting the Germans at this new line for four more days. We continued to catch plenty of artillery and rockets, and the front lines had several skirmishes before they were relieved.

***Christmas Eve***

December 14, we were told we were going to be passed through by a fresh unit that was to drive the Germans back. Things seemed to go awfully slow that day, because we were all anxious to get out of there before Christmas. The attack was bogged down for some reason, and it looked like we wouldn't get relieved. But late in the afternoon, these fresh groups did break through and started the drive that has since retaken all of the relatively small area we relinquished.

We became disengaged from the enemy just as the new moon was coming up over the snow-blanketed countryside. The men filed back from the front, and loaded into large trucks to be taken back for a deserved rest and a Christmas dinner. Far out numbered, and many times outmaneuvered, they had fought this great German counteroffensive to a standstill, and left them in a position for a knockout blow.

I don't know how others felt that night, but as my jeep rolled silently over the snow, carrying me back to warmth and safety, I felt a pride of accomplishment I had never experienced before. We hadn't lost a single man in my group, and I gave thanks to God for His watchful care over us.

The Star of Bethlehem had never shown brighter than on this Christmas Eve.◘

"Treasure all your happy moments: They make a fine cushion for old age."

*— Christopher Morley, American author*

# REMOVING THE BLANKET OF SECRECY

*[The following speech was given by Major General Joseph A. McChristian, US Army (Ret), at the 2002 10th Armored Division Reunion. It is reprinted from "The Marcher," the newsletter of the Maryland-DC Chapter of VBOB.]*

My name is Joe McChristian. During WWII, as a member of the 10th Armored Division, I served as commander of the 61st Armored Infantry Battalion, as division G-3 (Operations Officer) and as the Division Chief of Staff.

After 58 years, I welcome this opportunity to add my personal experiences to our effort in removing the blanket of secrecy, which rightfully was placed, on activities of the 10th Armored Division during the Battle of the Bulge. It is necessary to do so. Otherwise, incomplete history fails to recognize adequately the performance and sacrifices of the 10th Armored Division.

Early December, 1944, the 10th Armored Division, as part of General Patton's Third United States Army, was preparing to participate in the capture of the heavily fortified City of Metz. The 90th U.S. Infantry Division was to cross the Moselle River, construct a floating pontoon bridge, establish a bridgehead on the east bank and continue the attack to surround the city. The 10th was to follow the 90th through the bridgehead, destroy the enemy west of the Saar River, and prevent his escape. Planning for this operation, I directed LTC Bill Clapp, CO, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion, to obtain maps of all areas within one day's march in any direction. He advised me that he would not only need a warehouse to store them but it would be necessary to conduct reconnaissance as far east as Switzerland and as far north as the City of Bastogne. My reply was, "Do it."

LT Dick Stillwell, G-3, 90th Infantry Division, phoned me that his new commanding general wanted me to come to his headquarters to coordinate our plans. Upon arrival at the 90th, Dick (a close friend from cadet days) greeted me with a big smile as the new CG of the 90th, General James A. VanFleet, my father-in-law, appeared. He said, "Joe, let's visit the bridge site." The two of us, in a command car, drove through river water for almost a mile to the site. The Moselle River, instead of being several hundred feet wide, had overflowed its banks. At the bridge site, the swift water capsized the pontoons as they were moved into place and swept them down the river. From time to time, enemy mortar rounds landed nearby. The land on the far side was higher, not covered with water, but appeared muddy. After this important reconnaissance, Dick and I coordinated our plans.

We did not know the road lead out of the bridgehead. On the day of attack, we found only one road. It was a one lane, dirt causeway with deep mud on both sides. Our lead vehicles of the 90th Reconnaissance Squadron were destroyed by enemy 90 mm weapons. The thin skinned reconnaissance vehicles were sitting ducks. We had to push them off the causeway and commit the tanks. Several hours after the attack began, our mission to encircle Metz was modified and we were ordered to move north and east to the Saar River.

Metz was captured. The 90th Infantry Division had established a bridgehead across the Saar River. We were planning to follow the 90th. I reconnoitered their situation with General VanFleet. On December 15, I accompanied General Morris to his truck quarters. As we were saying good night, we heard rumbling in the vicinity of Trier. We both felt it was the movement of many tanks. General Morris immediately phoned our information to higher headquarters.

Early on 17 December, higher headquarters informed us of the German attack. We were ordered to remove identification markers from vehicles, to initiate radio silence, to cease press releases, and to move to Luxembourg without delay. General Morris was ordered to meet Generals Bradley and Patton at Bradley's 12th Army Group Headquarters in Luxembourg. Before he left, I informed him of the estimated time of arrival of our column at a crossroad near Bradley's headquarters and that, since we would be moving parallel to the enemy front, we would march in combat formation and that the 90th Reconnaissance Squadron would move as rapidly as possible to establish a counter-reconnaissance screen. He approved.

Our division was relieved by the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment; crossed the Moselle River in combat formation; marched 75 miles to Luxembourg; and arrived at the designated crossroad exactly on time, where Generals Bradley, Patton and Morris were anxiously waiting. CCB was ordered to continue the march to Bastogne. We attached our best communications equipment to CCB.

The division minus CCB, on the 17th, launched seven counterattacks against the enemy which was threatening 12th Army Group Headquarters, thereby removing the immediate threat. General Patton designated General Morris the acting commander of a Corps comprised of two infantry divisions and his 10th Armored Division. General Patton designated me as the acting G-3 of the Corps and ordered me to select attack positions for each infantry division and have them met and led to their positions. Since the initial German attack had captured the Army map depot, we shared our maps with those who needed them.

CCB entered Bastogne early on the 17th and was deployed just in time to repel the German attacks. Eight hours later, 101st Airborne Division reinforcements joined the battle. If it had not been for the defense of Bastogne by CCB on the 17th, the Germans would have captured that critical crossroads before the 101st arrived.

On the 17th, General Morris was informed to attend a meeting for "generals only" at General Bradley's headquarters the next morning. I knew that the 90th Reconnaissance Squadron would have information on the enemy, bridges, and terrain. I asked the 90th to meet me early the next morning with available information. During the night, my staff and I made map studies of the area and wrote a skeleton attack order for the Third Army. The next morning, I briefed General Morris on the information and staff studies we had. I suggested that I accompany him.

***(Continued on next page)***

## REMOVING THE BLANKET OF SECRECY

(Continuation)

He smiled and reminded me that the meeting was just for generals but thought my information would be helpful.

At Bradley's headquarters, the generals assembled in a small reception room. They were interested in my maps. After a few minutes they were told to go to a small chapel down the hall. I gathered up my maps and followed them down the hall. As I passed a tall soldier leaning against the wall, he called out, "McChristian." He was General Bradley. He asked where I was going. When I told him, he said, "Don't you know the meeting is for generals?" I said, "Yes, sir, but I have maps and information that might be helpful." He said, "Good luck." When I arrived at the door to the chapel, two MP officers held up their hands and told me the meeting was just for generals. I said, "I know that. I have maps for the meeting," and entered the small chapel, taking a seat in a rear pew.

General Patton, in a cheerful, optimistic and confident mood stated the enemy had left his defenses behind and was running out in the open where we will cut him off and destroy him. He then asked several generals about their available information. After he received negative responses, General Morris spoke up and said his G-3 was in the back of the room and had some information. General Patton looked at me and said "What are you doing here?! I replied, "Sir, I have maps of the area and information on the enemy and bridges." He told me to come forward. I put my map on the wall and reported the information I had. Brigadier General Maddox, General Patton's G-3, told me later that the attack order and map studies we had prepared was a great help to him and that he used the same and final and intermediate objectives and boundaries we had selected.

CCB was attached to the 101st for operational control. For 30 days, CCB provided the mobile, armored task forces that defended Bastogne. The secrecy restrictions remained on the 10th. Consequently, the 10th did not receive recognition for their critical efforts at Bastogne and in defense of 12th Army Group Headquarters. The 10th Armored Division, less CCB, returned to the vicinity of Metz to prepare for our next operation. CCB left Bastogne 18 January and rejoined the division. Every member of the "Tiger" Division was proud of our performance. The world would learn about us as we cleared the Saar-Moselle Triangle, as we breached the Siegfried Line, as we captured Trier, Heidelberg, Kaiserslautern, Crailshime and Garmish.

We want our fellow Americans to know our contribution to the Battle of the Bulge. It is time to remove the blanket of secrecy.◘

## CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL TO SEE OF YOUR DUES ARE DUE.

**The date your dues are due is above your last name on your mailing label used to mail this newsletter. This will help us save money by not having to send a dues reminder--it will contribute to our longevity and your reading enjoyment.**

**Thanks for your cooperation.**

## STAINED GLASS POST CARD WINDOW STILL AVAILABLE

As you may recall, VBOB dedicated a stained glass window at the U.S. Army War College, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, on September 11, 2001. We have been able to secure a full color, post card picture of this beautiful window.

During the dedication, Robert R. Ivany, Commandant of the War College, said: "This window will serve as a glowing inspiration for future generations and as a lasting reminder of the heroism of the American soldier. For this gift we are grateful, and for this 'Triumph of Courage' we are forever in your debt." Your dues made this gift and remembrance possible.

If you would like one, please send $1.00 (cash, check or money order) along with a self-addressed, stamped (37 cents) envelope to VBOB. (The post card is 6" x 4"--make sure your envelope is big enough to accommodate it.)

## TEXAS HONORS BULGE VETERANS

In the spring of 2003, the VBOB Headquarters Office received a request from the office of Texas Senator Leticia Van de Putte, for the names of BoB veterans in State of Texas. Senator Van de Putte is Chair of the Texas Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations.

The names were sent and Senator Van de Putte sends us a report of the results as follows:

> "This is to express my appreciation for the recent assistance provided by your association to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs and Military Installations. Your association's response to our committee's request for names and addresses of surviving Texas Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge was courteous and timely.
>
> "An invitation was mailed to the 250 Battle of the Bulge Association members living in Texas, inviting them to attend the reading of a Senate Resolution in the Texas Senate Chamber on April 30, 2003, honoring all veterans of the Battle of the Bulge. Some fifty of these veterans traveled from all parts of the state to attend the event. Although we had to limit the number of veterans we could bring on to the Senate floor, we recognized six veterans individually as representatives of the group. Senate Resolution No. 655 was read from the podium and the members of the Texas Senate and all attendees enthusiastically paid tribute to all Battle of the Bulge heroes present in the chamber and those who could not attend--many of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country during battle.
>
> "Each veteran present was given a "Battle of the bulge Hero" medal, a copy of Senate Resolution No. 655, and a poem entitled "Battle of the Bulge," written by my father. One of the "heroes" honored that day was my uncle...."

Many of the members who attended, reported that the ceremonies were heart-warming. One reported: It was a rare privilege to be given a long-standing ovation by the members of the Texas Senate.... Following the presentation of the resolution almost every member of the Senate gave a short expression of gratitude for the VBOB.◘

# GIVE ME THE JEEP!

**By George R. Kester**
**527th Engineer Light Pontoon Company**

I was twenty years old and had just finished junior college when my draft notice came to me. I was living in Albia, Iowa, where I had grown up and my family lived. Several of my contemporaries from the area joined up and we were off to Camp Swift, Texas, for basic training on February 1, 1943. I was then assigned to the 527th Army Engineers Company LP (light pontoon) and trained extensively in the U.S. to build Bailey Bridges. Probably because of my ability to type, I was subsequently assigned to work in supply as a clerk.

By September 1, 1944 our company was ready to go oversees. We were sent to Camp Shanks near New York City. Just prior to our departure, we were allowed leave and ventured into New York City to the USO in Timed Square. At the USO, we were offered tickets to a new play on Broadway called "Oklahoma" but declined because that didn't sound very interesting! From New York City, we sailed by ship past the Statue of Liberty to England. Two weeks later, we were sent to Normandy then sent to Dinant, Belgium, by truck convoy. At this time, the weather was beautiful fall days.

From Dinant we spent two months at Vielsalm, Belgium, doing routine engineering tasks such as road maintenance, building squad huts for the 2nd and 106th Infantry Divisions logging and building Bailey Bridges (temporary bridges to replace destroyed bridges). We lived in fear of buzz bombs--bombs filled with explosives that would drop to the earth and explode when they ran out of fuel. Hitler boasted of his "secret weapons:" buzz bombs were wreaking destruction on London, jet engine airplanes that out flew our planes, rockets that were unstoppable.

We had a not so "secret" weapon of our own. It was named the General Purpose Vehicle or GP for short which became "jeep" after a cartoon character. The jeep was liked by everyone who used it. If the Jerries (Germans) captured a jeep, they painted a black cross over the white star on the its side. It was useful as a point vehicle on a motorized march. You could use it as a command car. Throw two or three litters on and use it as an ambulance. It was used for a scout car and went ahead of a convoy where it left off road guides at key points. It was a great stand-up bar for eating a can of "C" rations or a box of "K" rations. Its motor could even warm up the can! Because it was an all-terrain vehicle, it simply went around traffic grid locks.

The jeep was soon to play a role in saving my life. On December 20, 1944, Colonel Hobart ordered Captain Anderson to "move every available man and establish a strong point a Vaux Les Rosieres. This ended my supply clerk duties. My engineer company was ordered to block a crossroad. Our weapons were one 50 caliber machine gun, M1 carbines and a couple of bazookas (rocket guns).

We were dug in on a hill at supper time on December 22, 1944. A unit of the German Fifth Parachute Infantry Division attacked. They were supported by two Tiger tanks. They were sporting 88mm high velocity cannons. My friends, George Dickerson, Guy Ware and I were manning the machine gun. Being an important weapon, the tanks went after our machine gun immediately and sprayed us from above by tree top bursts.

I was wounded in the forehead by one of the first explosions and was knocked out for several minutes. George Dickerson was knocked out and had ringing in his ears. When I awoke I couldn't see and panicked because I thought I had lost my sight. Dickerson calmed me down when he told me he had bandaged my head over my eyes! We were in a bad spot as there were no medics, snow had just poured down on us and it was very cold. To lay still was to freeze to death. I decided to make my way back one half mile to Rosiere where I thought the company CP was located.

Not finding anyone from the military, I knocked on a house door and was taken in by an old man. I slept the night on his floor. The next morning was clear and sunny. I went out to seek help. A constable, wearing a blue uniform and a kepi hat took me to another house, where I met a lady who spoke English. The lady took me into her kitchen and went out onto the highway. I heard the familiar sound of a jeep down shifting. I saw that the lady had stepped into the road to flag down the jeep traveling at highway speed.

The jeep carried four soldiers. They put me into the passenger seat and I was taken toward first aid. About 2 km down the road, we were blocked by an abatis (felled tree defense). After studying the problem, the other three passengers got out and walked under the trees. The driver folded down the wind shield flat on the hood and told me to get down. Forward we went with me scrunched in the seat, the driver laying horizontally out the left side just clearing the trees by inches. WOW! Five kilometers ahead was the first aid station and the beginning of my recovery and subsequent discharge from army life.

Hitler could have his secret weapons, give me the jeep!◘

# EIGHT EXTRA PAGES

This issue of *The Bulge Bugle* contains eight more pages than usual. This is because the stories are beginning to accumulate in a great big stack. Even after this issue, we have a stack of really great information approximately one foot high to bring to you.

So, if you've submitted a story, please be patient. We will get to it. In this issue we have tried to use some of the longer stories which have been put aside because space would not permit their use.

We hope to use all that we have, but it will take a while. Thanks for your great response. Without it, we would not have a newsletter.

You are the source of all the information that we bring to you and we're grateful.◘

**ARE YOUR DUES DUE?**

**Check your mailing label used to mail this issue of *The Bulge Bugle*--the date above your last name is the date your dues are (or were) due.**

**Annual dues are $15.00. Life membership is $75.00 for those over 60 and $125.00 for those under 60.◘**

# COMBAT RECORD of the

## 253rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion

*[Submitted by Boyd McNeil, Jr., 253rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Service Battery.]*

In the early evening of 19 December 1944 the 253rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion displaced from Obergalbach, France, and commenced movement to Robelmont, Belgium, near Virton, where it was attached to the III Corps and the 4th Armored Division. The march of 132 miles continued all night as the 4th Armored and the 80th Infantry Division moved north to halt the German break-through in Belgium. The route was through Sarre Union, St. Avold, and Metz, past three of the famous forts. In the vicinity of Longwy, Belgium, three men form "A" battery sustained injuries from which they later died, when an M-7 in which they were riding in rolled over a steep bank. Killed were Pvt James G. Barklie, S/Sgt Onnie Pinola and Pfc Arnold J. Heassly. Cpl Darold J. Bowers, T/5 Clarence B. Callahan, and Pvt Lewis I Hamilton were evacuated with injuries. The weather during this entire period was foggy and wet and the roads were jammed with traffic from half-a-dozen divisions.

Members of the battalion were overcome with hospitality at Rebelmont as American soldiers had never entered the town before. Troops were put up in homes for the night and the citizens served breakfast and lunch to many.

At 1300 hours on 21 December the battalion moved to Houdemont, Belgium, via Etalle, traveling nine miles. At Oudemont the battalion went into firing position and made elaborate preparations to defend the town in case of attack. This was the "rumor" stage of the German offensive. No one knew just where the advancing spearheads were, and reports of English-speaking, American-dressed spies dropped by parachute or driving captured "jeeps" had every man on edge. The closer the battalion moved to the fighting the more pitiful became the plight of the citizenry. Men of the battalion had reason to understand this fear as they later moved into the fury of a fanatical German lunge. Town after town was to be destroyed, atrocities, plunder, terror--all the traits of the 1940 blitz were back.

Leaving Houdemont in a snowstorm at 0400 hours on 22 December, the battalion joined Combat Command "A" of the 4th Armored at Habey-La-Neuve, Belgium, with the mission of reinforcing the fires of the 22d Armored Field Artillery Battalion. The column proceeded very slowly during the day being impeded by enemy infantry near Buron, and blown bridges.

All during the day men hovered around 506 radios tuned in to American news-analysts telling them for the first time the dire seriousness of the situation into which they were moving. Snow, cold, and fog added to the foreboding air of the now deadly job ahead.

At dusk Combat Command "B" halted at Favillers and the men went to bed, but at 2200 the column was ordered to resume this advance with the mission of pressing on to Bastogne to relieve the 101st Airborne Infantry Division which was encircled by armored German spearheads. The march was made on a cold, clear night on good roads, but the head of the column was able to advance only five miles before it was halted by German resistance. Long halts of two and three hours duration were made and officers and men suffered intensely from the cold, the temperature being about 20 degrees below zero. While halted along the road, the 253rd was subjected to mortar fire and S/Sgt Almo S. Braggs, Headquarters Battery (mess sergeant) was wounded and evacuated.

At 0800 hours on 23 December the battalion went into positions at Menufontaine as the enemy interdicted the town. About noon a German ME 109 strafed Menufontaine and was shot down by the accurate anti-aircraft fire of the 253rd.

From Menufontaine fire was laid on enemy concentrated at Grandrue and Chaumont. "B" and "C" Battery also fired on a ridge 2,000 yards northeast of Menufontaine where enemy movement had been seen. In return the enemy fired mortars, nebelwerfers and 105mm guns and the town wounding six men, Tec 4 John Pristach and Pfc Eugene W. Salyer of Headquarters Battery and Pfc Ralph Patton, Pfc Leon C. Sireck and Pvt George C. Himes, of "A" Battery, were evacuated. Prisoners from the German 14th Paratroop Regiment reported that artillery fire on Chaumont knocked out three self-propelled assault guns and killed 50 Germans.

On the night of 23 December 1st Lt Richard P. Grossman, the Battalion survey officer, adjusted fire in the moonlight from the door of the Command Post on a German position 2,000 yards to the rear of the battalion area.

During that day one of the bloodiest battles of the campaign took place in the Village of Chamount when 18 Tiger Tanks, hidden panzerfausts (bazookas) and Panzer grenadiers made a surprise counterattack on tank-riding infantry men of the 10th Armored Infantry, and forced their withdrawal at great loss to both sides. Eleven American tanks were left burning in the village.

At 0630 hours on the 24th December Lt Morphy directed fire from his "C" Battery position using Charge one on mortars firing from a woods nearby. No more fire came from the mortars. During the day the 8th Tank Battalion tried again unsuccessfully to assault Chamount under diversionary fire by the 253d and 22d Armored Field Artillery Battalions.

At 0100 hours the battalion received instructions to send one battery to join "Task Force Fickett" and "C" Battery was sent. Taking a circuitous route they arrived at Neufchateau, Belgium, at 0730 being placed in direct support of the 28th Cavalry Squadron.

As Christmas Day finally broke bright and clear, doughboys of the 2d Battalion, 318th Infantry Regiment, 80th Infantry Division, which was attached to the 4th Armored Division, moved through Menufontaine to Burnon to reinforce the 10th. The 253d assumed direct support of the 2d Battalion, 318th Infantry, which attacked abreast with the 10th at 1000 hours to seize Chaumont. Observers in battalion liaison planes fired missions in support of the attack as ground observers were hampered by poor visibility because of the wooded terrain. Hundreds of C-47 transport planes were seen flying low overhead to supply the defenders of Bastogne on this day.

By nightfall the 26 December, Chaumont, Clochmont and Hompre had been captured and Combat Command "B" was within two miles of the besieged forces of Bastogne. Using infantry wire, Liaison Officer Capt Stanley C. Raub assisted this attack by placing devastating fire on enemy leaving Chamount.

On 27 December elements of Combat Command Reserve, (the famous Lt Col Creighton Abrams' 37th Tank Battalion) entered Bastogne on the main road between Neufchateau and Bastogne and established a passage through which hundreds of German prisoners and American wounded were evacuated. This passage was further enlarged when Combat Command "B" reached Bastogne on 28 December. The 253d played its part in the relief of the 101st Airborne Infantry Division which had successfully withstood the onslaught of four Nazi Divisions approximating 50,000 men for seven days, thereby denying Marshal Von Runstedt an important railroad, road and communication center essential for the success of his venture.

At 1400 hours, 28 December, the battalion displaced to Chamount where it continued firing to the northeast. About 2130 a Junkers 88, shot down by a P-16 "Black Widow" night fighter roared over the battalion and crashed in flames 800 yards away. One enemy flyer parachuted into the area and was captured. Another was found dead near his plane.

At 2100 hours on 29 December, Service Battery at Habey le Veille was strafed by a Junker 88 and Mess Sgt Arvel J. Maples was killed and Lt William J. Powers and Tec 5 William H. Wilkin, Jr., were wounded.

On 31 December the Battalion was relieved of attachment to the 4th Armored Division attached to the 193d Field Artillery Group and placed in direct support of the

(Continued)

## COMBAT RECORD (Continuation)

69th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division was part of the Combat Command "A".

In order to better support the 69th Tank Battalion as it attacked east toward Neffe, the battalion displaced into the battered City of Bastogne, Belgium, on New Years Eve, where it remained until 15 January 1945. Although four different gun positions were occupied during this period the 253d was subject to frequent enemy counter-battery fire which killed two members of the battalion and wounded eleven others.

Tec 5 Joseph J. Moran, of "A" Battery, and Pfc James J. Eckrote, of "B" Battery, were killed, and Sgt Edigle R. Covey, Sgt Jack O. Buel, Pfc Archie Eregate, Pvt Wilford K. Nelson, and Pvt Richard T. Sinibaldi, of Battery "A", S/Sgt George J. Liegel, Pvt Evert L. Smith and, Tec 5 Eugene F. Odom, of Battery "B", and 2d Lt Bernard J. Lyons, of Headquarters Battery, were evacuated with wounds.

In this period the work of the wire crews wrote a spectacular page in this history of the battalion. Constant enemy shelling, drifting snow, hundreds of tracked vehicles, and bitter cold made the job of maintaining communications gigantic, yet time and again an observer in a front line fox-hole could call direct for the mass artillery General Patton assembled near Bastogne to repel Von Ronstedt.

The street in front of the Battalion Command Post was nicknamed "The Bowling Alley" because of the whistling shells coming in night after night, the armor piercing ones rattling down the cobblestones like bowling pins.

On January 1, "Tan Force Kennedy" (69th Tank Battalion with attachments) fought into Magaret, 5 miles east of Bastogne. By 1600 hours over 600 prisoners had been taken and the din was terrific, with both American and German artillery shelling separate parts of the town and P-47's bombing a hill 300 yards east of it. Until 5 January the Germans threw continuous counter-attacks at the tankers' lines. All observers were busy 24 hours a day firing at the inspired Germans.

In the afternoon of 2 January the Battalion displaced to positions 1,500 yards from the front lines. These positions became untenable, "B" Battery losing two vehicles. On the 3d a move was made to an area in the eastern edge of Bastogne. Heavy counter-battery fire here again forced a displacement to the original to the original positions south of the city.

January 4th was the beginning of the German's last effort to wipe out the thorn of Bastogne. As day broke, 1st Lt Roger N. Knickerbocker, "A" Battery forward observer, took 10 tanks under fire near Arloncourt and set one afire. During the rest of the day over 100 rounds per hour were fried on observed targets with withering effect. The pressure on the 6th Armored Division front was too great and a general withdrawal was ordered to stronger positions. At dusk the tank of Lt Wiley slid on an icy road and had to be abandoned and burned because it was so far forward as to prevent recovery.

On the evening of 5 January a steadily increasing flow of armor and men into Magaret attracted all the fire Battery "A" and "B" could provide, and as a sustained German attack developed the Division Artillery allotted five additional battalions to the 253d. Intense artillery fire broke the back of the thrust and American patrols sent into Magaret reported two Panzer tanks and one anti-tank gun burning and 100 Germans killed. After this effort German pressure, though still heavy, shifted south in the Vicinity of Warden, where the 253d participated in further firing. Lt McFadden was able to spot muzzle flashes of a Nebelwerfer battery and his firing silenced the rockets.

On 13 January "C" Battery, returned to the Battalion.

While with the 6th Cavalry, "C" Battery furnished valuable support as the cavalry screened the area east of Bastogne and protected the left flank of the 4th Armored Division. Later it inflicted casualties on the enemy with accurate artillery fire as the group captured Lutremange, Tintage and Harlange and maintained contact with the 35th Infantry Division and 101st Airborne Infantry Division.

At 1330 hours 13 January the 253d supported an attack spearheaded by the 50th Armored Infantry Battalion which marked a slowly gaining attack which never stopped until the Siegfried Line was reached. Half of Magaret was retaken on the 13th, on the 14th the woods northeast of town and on the 16th the entire 6th Armored (the 253d Armored again in direct support of Task Force Kennedy) surged forward wiping out all resistance to and beyond the line Arloncourt-Longvilly.

At 1400 the forward fire direction center and "B" Battery moved 2 miles east to Neffe, Belgium. The remainder of Headquarters and "A" and "C" Batteries moved up the morning of 16 January. As the 2d Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Division, moved through the front lines pressing the attack the 253d was placed in direct support of that unit. Second Lt John R. Andres and Lt Cartwright, in a battalion liaison plane, fired three very effective problems in support of the continuing attack. The same pair spotted two tanks moving near Moinet and after expending 200 rounds succeeded in disabling both vehicles.

For the next two days the attack was yard by yard through heavy woods, Lt Olson and Lt Raymond A. Nelson doing most of the firing. Enemy shelling of battalion positions continued, and on 17 January Tec 5 Elias E. Reed and Pvt Charles A. Dunn, of "A" Battery, and S/Sgt Hubert W. Williams and Cpl Robert K. Durham, of "C" Battery, died from shell fire. Tec 5 Clifton S. Fardo, of "A", was wounded.

At 1600 hours 19 January "C" Battery again left the battalion, this time displacing on a night march to Bonal, Luxembourg, reporting to the 6th Cavalry Group on verbal orders of the Commanding General, III Corps Artillery. (Note: A typical weather report on this day describes the battle of the Ardennes: Cold, with high wind and snow.)

On 20 January the 253d was again placed in direct support of the 69th Tank Battalion as the 6th Armored Division prepared to attack. The attack jumped off the morning of 21 January with both Combat Commands pressing forward rapidly without enemy opposition to Troine, Luxembourg. Near Moinet Tec 5 Johnny G. Scott was killed and Pvt Thomas J. Carrico was wounded when the jeep in which these Headquarters Battery men were riding hit a mine.

Firing all the way, the battalion advanced a few miles a day to the east. On 22 January all observers were busy. Two battery observers with the infantry, a tanker, and the air observers fired 17 observed missions in the afternoon. The battalion displaced to positions near Hoffeldt and Hachiville. On the 22d word was received that Pfc Alex Huniowski, medical aid man with "C" battery, had died of wounds incurred in an accidental rifle discharge on 6 January.

On 23 January tank Sgt Roger C. Nottingham, of Headquarters Battery, became 2nd Lt Nottingham by direct battlefield appointment, having assumed forward observer duties on 3 successive occasions when his officers had been wounded in action; (Lts Parsoe, Przewlocki, and Lyons).

On 24 January the 253d assumed direct support of "Task Force Craig" composed of the 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division, and "A" Company, 69th Tank Battalion, and on the 25th moved to Trois Vierges, Luxembourg, to support the advance. Here several men barely escaped death when the "A" Battery wire truck was destroyed by a wooden mine.

On 26 January the 253d displaced Weicherdange after a difficult 8 mile march over snow-swept one way roads. Here it was relieved of attachment to the 6th Armored Division and attached to the 183rd Field Artillery Group.

"C" Battery rejoined the Battalion here after being on detached Service with the 6th Cavalry Group from 19 January to 26 January. On 21 January the group had captured Wiltz, former command post of the 28th Infantry Division, and an objective which divisions had not been able to take. An officer prisoner stated that the artillery fire was so intense and accurate that the Germans thought Wiltz was being attacked by a division instead of one cavalry group with an artillery battery.

Firing subsided to base and check point registrations and a period of relaxation started. Under Capt William C. Jackson, a rehabilitation center was established at Habay-La-Neuver, Belgium, where clothes could be washed, baths and sleep obtained for gun crews, etc., who had lived amid the roar of

*(continued on next page)*

# IT'S A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS

*[The following article appeared in the 1st Infantry Division newsletter, the "Bidgehead Sentinal" and was sent to us by Dale L. Shoop, 1st Infantry Division, 1st Engineer Combat Battalion. The story is a recollection by John Howard, 745th Tank Battalion.]*

[Excerpt] On Christmas Day, our outfit was in position on the north flank of the German advance. Up in the turret of our tank, the gunner and I were standing trying to see through the fog when the gunner jabbed me in the ribs with his elbow and said, "Look at that." I whirled around. A girl, nine or ten years old, was walking toward our tank. She told us that when the fighting came back toward her town, all the people left. But her grandfather was an invalid and couldn't travel. She had stayed behind to take care of him. She said they had no food left and wondered if we had any to spare. We immediately gave her all the rations we had in the tank. She made sort of a basket out of her apron to put them in. She looked up at us, as she turned to leave and said, "Oh! It's a wonerful, wonderful Christmas after all!" The marvelous thing is that all of us in the tank agreed with her. It had become a wonderful Christmas for us, too.◘

# A 12-HOUR MARCH

**By Harvey H. Reese**
**18th Field Artillery Group**

The 18th Field Artillery Group was at Weisweiler, Germany, when we received the news of the German breakthrough into Belgium that became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Our group made a 12-hour, 80-mile march on narrow, shell-torn roads filled with heavy traffic to get to Somme Leuze, Belgium, to help drive the enemy back into Germany.

On Christmas Day, 1944, we had moved south to Bohon, Belgium, and spent Christmas there. It was extremely cold, and snow was on the ground. I spent Christmas night outside on duty with my best friend--my 30 caliber carbine. I also had a 50 caliber machine gun, but it was frozen, and I doubt that it would have fired if I had had to use it.

Throughout January we were in general support of the 18th Airborne Corps, reinforcing the fires of the 82nd Airborne Division.

On January 26, 1945, we moved 25 miles north and took up a position at Born, Belgium. On the road to Born we stopped at the Village of Saint Vith, Malmedy, Belgium.

The rumor that we had heard earlier, that a group of American soldiers had been slaughtered appeared to be true. In a field were approximately 200 dead American soldiers, all covered with snow. A graves registration unit had put a white tape around the area to keep others from walking among the dead. We learned later that the dead soldiers were from the 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion that had been attached to our unit.

In early February, we began our march back into Germany.◘

# A COLONEL, A PFC, AND SOME 50 POW'S

**By Melvin Johnson**
**11th Armored Division**
**55th Armored Infantry Battalion, Company C**

It was my turn to walk prisoners back, one soldier to every five prisoners to guard them. So it was just me and five prisoners and we had about 2-1/2 miles to go to turn them over to military police. I was carrying a more than adequate weapon to handle any bad situation with the five and felt safe.

After about a mile down the road, off to my right across a field was a wooded area. At the edge of the woods some German solders were waving a white flag and they were yelling "mercy comrade, mercy comrade." They wanted to surrender. One of my prisoners could understand a little English, I told him to tell them to come out in a single file with their hands on top of their head and go down the road in front of us. At least 50 of them came out...I wasn't feeling quite so safe by now. Their war was over and they knew it.

Just about the time I got them all lined up along the road, two jeeps showed up. In one of them was our regiment commander--a full colonel--Colonel Virgil Bell. When they got alongside of me, Colonel Bell yelled at me, "Soldier, what outfit are you with?" I told him Company C of the 55th. He said, "Don't they know there is supposed to be one guard for every 5 prisoners?" I told him, "Well, I started out with five and picked up the rest on the way." He laughed, got out of his jeep, slung a 45 caliber grease gun over his soldier and told the drivers to turn their jeeps around and follow. He walked a mile or so with me asking all kinds of questions...what state I was from, did I have a girlfriend, etc.

He was an older man and had been at West Point. I was very impressed that he would get out of his jeep and walk back with me. That day I took time to talk with some of the prisoners and they gave me some souvenirs to take home. I got a free jeep ride back up on the line.

Over 50 some years later, I'm still impressed with the thought of a PFC walking side-by-side with a full fledged colonel (Eagle), and a group of surrendered German prisoners for a couple of miles talking about each others lives. I asked him several questions about his career. I was 19 years old and he appeared to be in his late 50's.◘

## COMBAT RECORD

*(Continued from Page 36)*

cannon exposed to the European winter for over three months.

At 1400 hours on the last day of January in order of march "C" Headquarters, "A" and "B" the battalion moved to Clervaux, Luxembourg. From these positions fire could be placed into the Siegfried Line. Supporting two units which received presidential unit citations for their work, and at the irreparable cost of eleven men killed and over 30 wounded, the 253d Armored Field Artillery Battalion had earned the right to wear the battle star--"Campaign Ardennes."◘

## Remembrance & Commemoration
## 59th Commemoration of the Battle of the Bulge
**By Joseph Zimmer, 87th InfD**

Our organization VBOB, is now 22 years old. For much of that time you have heard my 'reflections" at these occasions. It is good for us to be here, among our band of brothers, our comrades, their companions, our distinguished guests from Belgium and Luxembourg. The presence of the grandson of the great General, George S. Patton, Jr., Colonel James P. Totten, has added a highlight to our occasion. We thank him for his comments and for his service to our beloved country over the years.

By some count, perhaps four generations are represented here. Our numbers are diminishing for sure, as we brave souls, in our 80s vintage years, endure the effort to be here, and yet, there is no other place we would want to be, tonight. It was 59 years, we recall again and, remember those who fell in battle, and those who have passed on since; and reminisce about the performance, dedication, uncommon valor, courage and sacrifice exemplified on the field of battle, by a mostly citizen soldiery. General Patton mentioned this in his writings. It turned the tide of battle, which hastened the defeat of the desperate Nazi horde and their final surrender on 8 May 1945. Oh the terror, cold misery and death during those 41 days of conflict, in which, 19,000 died, many taken prisoners and, another 70,000 were wounded. Charles de Gaulle put it well when he said, "Graveyards are full of indispensable men." The cemetery at Hamm, which my wife and I visited in 1990, where your grandfather is interred, among his own men, Colonel Totten, comes to mind. It is a reminder too, that in our history overseas, we have never sought another country's territory, other than to bury our dead from each war we entered, to save mankind. The one thing they took with them, when they died, was the wealth of their spirit.

Wow! What we've been through since last we met here like this. Mourning and remembering, we commemorated the 2nd anniversary of the attacks on our stunned country in New York City, the Pentagon and the loss in Pennsylvania, of those heroic air passengers, who prevented an even greater calamity. Hurricane Isabel left its horrific calling card on our tri-state area. (We in our household were without power for eight days). Remember when we took lessons to get our driver's license. One big lesson was to look forward, but also, behind you, and, each side mirror from time to time, as a precaution. So let's look backward for a moment.

Our Nation's time as a player on the stage of world history has been brief (about 227 years). Some of our allies understand this, and many times, have been patient about us. This is so, even when Sir Winston Churchill, maybe the Statesman of the 20th Century, once said in exasperation, about one of our most distinguished diplomats: "He is the only case I know, of a bull who carries his own china shop with him." This might be said today, as we hear of unilateralism, preemption, the war on terrorism, and even the post-war construction and Iraq governing council. As former combat veterans of another era, let me share with you some figures I came across recently that outs in raw focus what the US Army, today, faces:

The Congressional Budget Office recently reported "the Army does not have enough active component forces to simultaneously maintain the reconstruction at its current size, limit deployment to one year and sustain all of its other worldwide commitments."

This year (2003), ending in about 2 weeks, 24 of the Army's 33 active brigades were deployed for at least some time overseas. At the end of July, the Army reported to Congress that 232 thousand of its 480 thousand troops were deployed in 120 countries. In addition, 19 or 24 active duty Marine Corps Infantry battalions and 4 of 9 Reserve marine Battalions were serving outside the United States. On the latter, my! How we have expanded the song's words in the Marine Anthem "From the Halls of Montezuema to the Shores of Tripoli." As we meet now, there are at least 40 separate conflicts, tribal, religious, ethnic, going on. Dear God, please save us from ourselves.

AS of October 1st, the total Reserve and National Guard personnel called to active duty was 169,279. Of these, Army National Guard and Army Reserve components accounted for 127,208 with 14,280 more being Marines. A new order was issued 8 September, requiring 12-month deployment tours in addition to any other time required to train and debrief. Many Guard and Army Reserve troops could have their yearlong mobilizations extended up to 6 months.

In 1990, before Persian Gulf I, the Army had 18 divisions. President George H. W. Bush reduced the Army to 14 divisions. President Bill Clinton cut it further to 10. The last time the Army had only 10 divisions was just before the Korean War in 1950. When General Eric Shinseki retired as Army Chief of Staff, in June of this year, he warned, "Beware the 12 division strategy for a 10 division Army."

Numbers sometimes get boring, but bear with me for one more moment. In pure economic terms, the Iraq War itself was a bargain. If the Iraq War costs $75 billion, that will be $255 per American. WWII cost roughly 80 times that of the war in Iraq per person, in constant dollars. In no way are these figures stated, to put a price on the loss of human lives and the wounded in any war – one casualty is one too many for sure.

As soldiers of the past, we have worries about how this will all turn out. Our direct stake is lessened by the years we have lived. As a grandfather of 10, ranging in age from 25 years down to 2 weeks, that is where my focus lies, in the sense that, what we need, is: that Peace which seemingly, this world is unable to give us; to discover a way for our world to understand the message of this season – Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all men and women. AS we leave, we take great comfort knowing finally, that the WWII Memorial on the Washington DC Mall is a reality, to be dedicated on 29 May 2004.

Happy Holidays one and all, and the very best to you in the year 2004.

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"My choice early in life was either to be a piano player in a whorehouse or a politician. And to tell the truth, there's hardly any difference."

*— Harry S Truman, 33rd U.S. president (1884-1972)*

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# OFFICIAL 60TH ANNIVERSARY
# VBOB TOUR
# BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG
# INFORMATION

**January 26, 2004**

The tour will depart on the evening of December 10, 2004, and return on the 20th--with the 11th being a day of rest.

The tour will be staying, for the entire time, in the first class Hilton Hotel in Luxembourg City with its many nearby restaurants, stores and points of interest.

The exact itinerary is still being worked out, but will generally involve four days each in Belgium and Luxembourg.

Those who attend the official events should be prepared to spend periods outside and/or standing. Every effort is being made to accommodate the veterans' physical needs; however, there will be periods (expectedly brief) when you must be able to cope with the circumstances.

Those who do not wish to attend a particular day's events can go off on their own--or stay in the hotel. Also, you can fly over before the tour group--or stay-on after the tour returns--to visit your own special places. With advance notice, this can usually be accomplished at no additional airfare cost.

The exact costs are being determined, and are subject to the tour group size. At this time, it is estimated that the total cost will be approximately $3,000. This includes all forms of transportation, hotel, meals (less most lunches), baggage, gratuities, admissions, wreaths, cocktail reception, farewell banquet, guest comps, memorabilia, professional tour director and guide, etc. Not included are: liquor, special beverages, non-menu meal items, laundry, insurance, tips to bus driver and tour director, etc.

Single room occupants will incur a "single room" charge of approximately $500.

Those who have a serious interest in participating in the tour should fill out the questionnaire on the reverse of this information sheet (as complete as possible) **AND RETURN IT BY MARCH 15, 2004.** We need to know approximately how many people are potentially interested in attending. Once the questionnaire responses are received, further information will be sent to the applicable respondent.

First consideration for space on the tour will be given to VBOB members whose dues are current.

Send responses to:

Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge
PO Box 11129, Arlington, Virginia 22210-2129
FAX: 703-528-5403
E-Mail: Vbobbulge60@att.net

Earle Hart, A-345-87 INFD
Chairman, VBOB Bulge 60th Anniversary Committee

# OFFICIAL 60TH ANNIVERSARY
# VBOB TOUR - BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG

## PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

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_____

or

Please assign a room mate: Yes ___
I will need additional room(s) for:

_____
who will share a room with:

_____
and

_____
who will share a room with:

_____
(List additional rooms on separate page, if needed.)

**Service during Bulge:**

Unit: _____ Dates: _____
Battle Areas: _____ Rank: _____
Function: _____
Non-Bulge Service: _____

Health: I and members of my party are able to travel without assistance Yes ___ No ___
If able to travel with assistance describe limitations: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____
My membership # is: _____ My VBOB dues are current: Yes ___

# VETERANS of the BATTLE of the BULGE

P.O. Box 11129
Arlington, Virginia 22210-2129





ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

LC0071 LIFE
NEIL BROWN THOMPSON
525 PATRICIA CT
ODENTON MD 21113-1716

**FEBRUARY, 2004**

## WE WILL HONOR ALL WHO SERVED AT THE WWII MONUMENT DEDICATION AND COMBINED VBOB REUNION

**(Details in this issue)**

*Detach and Mail*

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## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

**VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE**
**P.O. Box 11129, Arlington, Virginia 22210-2129**

**Annual Dues $15**

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❑ **New Member** ❑ **Renewal - Member #** _____

Name _____ Birthdate _____

Address _____ Phone (  ) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*All new members, please provide the following information:*

*Campaign(s)* _____

*Unit(s) to which assigned during period December 16, 1944 - January 25, 1945 - Division* _____

*Regiment* _____ *Battalion* _____

*Company* _____ *Other* _____

*Make check or money order payable to VBOB and mail with this application to above address:*

*Applicants Signature* _____

RECRUITER (Optional)