

The BULGE BUGLE

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

VOLUME XXIV NUMBER 1

THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

FEBRUARY 2005



60th Anniversary Trip to
Belgium and Luxembourg a
**TREMENDOUS
SUCCESS** *See Page 17*

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Complete details next issue

**VETERANS OF THE
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**P.O. Box 101418
Arlington, VA 22210-4418
703-528-4058**

Published quarterly, *THE BULGE BUGLE* is the official publication of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

Publisher/Chief Editor:

George Chekan
9th Infantry Division

Contributing Editors:

Robert F. Phillips
28th Infantry Division
Historical Research:

John D. Bowen
Associate Member

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9th Infantry Division

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Nancy Monson 703-528-4058

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CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

ALABAMA
GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON, JR. (XI)
James W. Siniard 205-163-8175
125 Summer Brook Ln
Alabaster, AL 35007

ARIZONA
ARIZONA (XXVI)
Lester King 623-136-1184
828 N 68th Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85043

SOUTHERN ARIZONA (LIII)
John G. Westover 520-297-1492
6100 N Oracle #20
Tucson, AZ 85704

BELGIUM
5TH FUSILIERS OF BELGIUM (XXXVIII)
Roger Hardy (50) 41.71.13
14, Landdijk
8370 Blantbenberge, Belgium

CALIFORNIA
FRESNO (IV)
Arthur Steffensen 559-266-2397
469 S Cedar Ave
Fresno, CA 93725-9749

GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON, JR. (XIII)
Donald C. Stafford 408-662-0472
101 Via Soderini
Aptos, CA 95003

GOLDEN GATE (X)
William C. Armstrong 925-937-4415
510 Encanto Pl
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-2319

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (XVI)
John W. Mosley 562-947-1727
6428 Lebo St
Whittier, CA 90603

SAN DIEGO (LI)
Robert D. Schrell 858-274-5738
2530 San Joaquin Ct
San Diego, California 92109

CONNECTICUT YANKEE (XL)
Richard Egan 203-634-0974
79 Alcove St
Meriden, CT 06451

COLORADO
ROCKY MOUNTAIN (XXXIX)
A. Wayne Field 719-598-2234
PO Box 7247
Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7247

DELAWARE
BRANDYWINE VALLEY CHAPTER (LXVI)
Charles Gaffney 302-762-3023
1007 Shipley Rd
Wilmington, DE 19803-4927

FLORIDA
CENTRAL FLORIDA (XVIII)
Mike Skrzypczak 386-789-5375
1745 Bayon Dr
Deltona, FL 32725

FLORIDA CITRUS (XXII)
Gerald V. Myers 863-686-2121
320 E Palm Dr
Lakeland, FL 33803-2650

INDIAN RIVER FLORIDA (XLI)
Lester O. Bell 321-952-9591
2150 Atlantic St #414
Melbourne Beach, FL 32951

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA (LXII)
George Fisher 561-585-7086
3456 S Ocean Blvd #503
Palm Beach, FL 33480

GOLDEN TRIANGLE (XLVIII)
Harry E. Kirby 352-873-8380
11569 SW 71 Cir
Ocala, FL 34476-9482

FLORIDA SOUTHWEST CHAPTER (LXVII)
Vincent Runowich 727-323-3793
4063 10th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33713

INDIANA
NORTHERN INDIANA (XXX)
Phil C. Huffine 219-662-2302
254 E Greenwood Ave
Crown Point, IN 46307-4438

CENTRAL INDIANA (XLVII)
Julius G. Crycko 317-881-4280
7019 Manier St
Indianapolis, IN 46227-8523

IOWA
IOWA (XXXIV)
Pius P. Reis 712-368-2335
103 Davenport St
Holstein, IA 51025

HAWKEYE STATE (XLIV)
Harold R. Lindstrom 515-278-0081
4105 75th St
Des Moines, IA 50322-2551

MARYLAND/DC (III)
Daniel C. Funk 202-829-4940
PO Box 23237
Washington, DC 20017

MASSACHUSETTS
LAMAR SOUTTER/CENTRAL
MASSACHUSETTS (XXII)
John E. McAuliffe 508-754-7183
425 Pleasant St
Worcester, MA 01609

CAPE COD & THE ISLANDS (LVIII)
Alexander W. MacIsaac 508-362-6876
21 Freeman Rd
Yarmouth Port, MA 02575

MICHIGAN
WEST MICHIGAN (XXIII)
Maurice Cole 231-879-4040
PO Box 81
Fife Lake, MI 49633

GREAT LAKES (XXI)
Chapter now defunct

MISSISSIPPI
MISSISSIPPI (XXXIII)
(President's name needed)

GATEWAY (XXV)
W. Kent Stephens 618-344-1616
107 Bluffview Lane
Collinsville, IL 62234

NEW JERSEY
PETER F. LESLIE, JR. (LIV)
Alvin Susman 201-224-5086
900 Palisade Ave
Fort Lee, NJ 07024

FORT MONMOUTH (LVI)
Edward Turrell 732-264-5447
3 Chestnut Dr
Hazlet, NJ 07730

FORT DIX/MAQUIRE AFB (LX)
Joseph B. Kubeck 609-655-6380
23 Station Rd
Cranbury, NJ 08512-3115

SOUTH JERSEY (LXI)
Gus Epple (VP) 609-463-9690
43 Route 47 S
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

NEW YORK
CENTRAL NEW YORK (II)
Donald F. Dixon 315-668-7771
269 Northland Dr
Central Square, NY 13036-9756

MOHAWK VALLEY (XXVIII)
Kenneth C. Thayer 315-827-4241
6971 Stokes-Westerville Rd
Ava, NY 13303

HUDSON VALLEY (IL)
Andy Maler 518-235-1271
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Troy, NY 12182

STATEN ISLAND (LII)
William Abel 917-299-9766
297 Clarke Ave
Staten Island, NY 10306

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Thomas W. Hope 585-473-1629
58 Carverdale Dr
Rochester, NY 14618

MID-HUDSON VALLEY (LIX)
Stephen J. Drag 845-469-9612
40 Murray Dr
Chester, NY 10918-2407

LONG ISLAND (LXIII)
David Saltman 516-221-5096
PO Box 7127
Wantagh, NY 11793

NORTH CAROLINA
NORTH CAROLINA (IX)
William R. Strickland 910-897-8295
R.D. #3, Box #514
Dunn, NC 28334

NORTH DAKOTA
NORTH DAKOTA (XX)
Harry Swendsen (Secretary) 701-567-2308
PO Box 55
Hettinger, SD 58639

OHIO
BLANCHARD VALLEY (XLII)
Marvin A. Russel 419-423-8530
1926 Queenswood Dr #4
Findlay, OH 45840-6952

BUCKEYE (XXIX)
Milan A. Rclik 330-867-2061
1273 Culpepper Dr
Akron, OH 44313-6840

GEN. D. D. EISENHOWER (XXXV)
Gerald E. Hogue 419-675-2082
18905 State Route 309 E
Kenton, OH 43326-9723

NORTH COAST OHIO (XXXVI)
Edwin J. Stoch 216-731-1258
27101 Edgcliffe Dr
Euclid, Oh 44132

CENTRAL OHIO (LXVII)
Alton L. Litsenberger 740-363-0613
320 Saratoga St
Delaware, OH 43015

PENNSYLVANIA
DELAWARE VALLEY (IV)
Stanley Wojtusik 215-637-4191
9639 Wissinoming St
Philadelphia, PA 19114

SUSQUEHANNA (XIX)
Ms. Clara Gustin 717-342-8496
230 Crown Ave.
Scranton, PA 18505-2016

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA (XIV)
Harvey B. Vaugaman 724-834-4474
9 Meadowbrook Ave
Greenburg, PA 15601-1711

OHIO VALLEY (XXXI)
Felix J. Cisolo 724-758-3163
111 Franklin Ave
Elwood City, PA 16117-2214

SOUTHCENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA (XLV)
George F. Schneider 717-464-9442
237 Willow Valley Dr
Lancaster, PA 17602-4782

LEHIGH VALLEY (LV)
Mcrris D. Metz 610-252-3694
125 Richard Garr Rd
Easton, PA 18040-6916

READING (LXIV)
Samuel B. Scales 610-821-2568
3419 Foster Ln
Reading, PA 19605

CUMBERLAND VALLEY (LXV)
John W. Fague 717-530-8817
305 Lurgan Ave
Shippensburg, PA 17257

RHODE ISLAND
RHODE ISLAND (XXIV)
Manuel Ribeiro 401-253-7369
50 Greylock Rd
Bristol, RI 02809-1631

SOUTH CAROLINA
SOUTH CAROLINA (VII)
Joseph B. Jones 803-782-3638
5828 Pinebranch Rd
Columbia, SC 29206

TEXAS
GREATER HOUSTON (XXVII)
(Chapter no longer functioning)

BEN FREEMAN (XXXVII)
Ned W. Smith 210-696-1904
11399 County Road 2326
Tyler, TX 75707-9541

ALAMO (XLVI)
John Hamilton 972-222-9375
9606 Tigua Drive
San Antonio, TX 78269-1904

LONE STAR (L)
Ted Young 972-222-9375
1320 Rivercrest Dr
Mesquite, TX 75181-1079

VERMONT-NEW HAMPSHIRE-MAINE
TRI-STATE (XVII)
Alpha A. Chevrete 603-485-9448
16 Birch Hill Dr
Hooksett, NH 03106-1523

VIRGINIA
NORTHERN VIRGINIA (XV)
Robert J. VanHouten 703-273-4168
3745 Chain Bridge Rd
Fairfax, VA 22030-3212

CRATER (XLIII)
W. Baxter Perkinson 804-590-1185
9441 W. River Rd
Mitoaca, VA 23803-1019

WASHINGTON
NORTHWEST (VI)
Phil Robbins 360-674-7175
PO Box 993
Port Orchard, WA 98366

WISCONSIN
NORTHERN WISCONSIN (I)
Elmer M. Dellenbach 715-845-3951
9202 Highland Dr
Wausau, WI 54401

CONTACT THE CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA.
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.

President's Message

As I sit here and write this message, the news is that the Pennsylvania groundhog predicts six more weeks of snow, ice and cold weather. And that seems to be a fitting introduction to my first column of the year.

It is also a commentary on the recently completed trip to cold Belgium and Luxembourg for the 60th Anniversary observance of the United States Army's greatest land battle.

I was honored to be part of a detachment of 110 veterans plus their families and friends back to Europe.

It was a great 10-day trip and, indeed, we owe a vote of thanks to Earle Hart, Chairman, for the year-long effort he and his committee strived to make a huge success. Earle tells me that a lot of others deserve kudos particularly Christiane D'Haese, Mieke Shoekx, along with many Belgian soldiers and civilians for their assistance in putting it together. Equal thanks to Roland Gaul and company from the Luxembourg Government.

Marty Sheeron, from the Delaware Valley Chapter, has written a special report on the tour and you can read it all with pictures starting with page 17. Beaucoup thanks, Marty, from us all.

I want to say how proud I am of our vets and their families. We all remember the weather in the Ardennes in the winter of 1944-45 and I can tell you it was very similar for us in 2004.

From the time we arrived in Brussels we were welcomed with open arms and assurances that our sacrifices 60 years ago were not forgotten.

I tried to convey that we sincerely enjoyed our visit and that we had not forgotten the heroic people of Belgium and Luxembourg and their trials and tribulations during their four years of Nazi oppression.

I had the honor to speak at St. Vith, Clervaux and at the military cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg. After the ceremony at Hamm, the Grand Duke and Duchess asked me to accompany them in decorating several graves including that of General Patton. It was an emotional moment for myself and the VBOB troops assembled there. Equally thrilling were the ceremonies at the Mardasson Memorial in Bastogne.

While we were honored by the many notables attending the ceremonies, a highlight for many of us was the sincere efforts by our Belgian and Luxembourg hosts to include school children as participants in many of our observances.

Our friends in CIBA and CRIBA and the 5th Fusiliers have the same objective as we do in passing along the legacy of the Battle of the Ardennes for future generations.

That was the objective just a few weeks ago set at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, where a large number of Americans took part in the annual reenactment of the Battle of the Bulge. The week-long commemoration is staged by the WWII Reenactors Federation, and a good number of our VBOBers were there as observers. We lived in WWII barracks

reminding us of what army life was like 60 years ago. The young reenactors, in their unit uniforms, listened intently to our war experiences. Another example of how we keep our battle as a part of America's heritage. We thank Dave Shaw and his committee for making this annual event a highlight for all involved.

For me, it was a busy two months and there were sad days as we said a final farewell to a number of our comrades.

We attended the funerals of Darrell Kuhn, Past VBOB President (1990-92), and Jack Hyland, Vice President for Membership, Historian and Editor. Both, through the years, have made great contributions to the success of VBOB, Inc. Farewell, comrades, farewell.

In closing, I want to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year and urge you to write on your calendars the dates of our Annual Reunion at the Holiday Airport Inn, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 28 to October 1, 2005. Executive Vice President John Dunleavy and I will have complete details in the next issue if *The Bulge Bugle*.

I would also urge you to keep up your prayers for our men and women fighting for freedom in Afghanistan, Iraq, and countless other world hot spots. **WE SUPPORT OUR TROOPS**--good slogan in 1945--still good today in 2005!



George Chekan

Sixty years ago...

On December 16, 1944, General Bradley came to my headquarters to discuss ways and means of overcoming our acute shortages in infantry replacements. Just as he entered my office, a staff officer came in to report slight penetrations of our lines in the front of General Middleton's VIII Corps and the right of General Gerow's V Corps in the Ardennes region. . . . —Dwight Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe

NOPE, WE DIDN'T MOVE...

but the post office has changed our box number.

It is now P.O. Box 101418

Arlington, Virginia

and the zip is

22210-4418

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIDN'T FORGET...

in a letter in *The Bugle Bulge*, August 2004, John McAuliffe, of the 87th Infantry Division, wondered how I could have omitted listing the plaque in Wasserbillig commemorating the liberation of the town by the "Golden Acorn" Division. (Appeared in *The Bugle* May 2004 page 9).

As I was on the staff of CEBA which planned the memorial, I certainly did not forget it. Unfortunately on the long way from the original list to printing the 87th Infantry Division plaque in Wasserbillig and the 28th Infantry Division memorial in Wiltz were omitted. I got also complaints about Wiltz.

On the other hand I want to clarify that I am only the co-author of the book *The Liberty Road in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg*. My book *The Battle of the Bulge* in French, German and English has been reprinted in a second edition and is available at Fausto Gardini, 224 Five Pounds Road, Saint Simoins Island, GA 31522 or E-Mail VailCorp@aol.com.

Jean Milmeister
Associate Member

MAYBE PATTON KNEW...

I wish to limit my comments to the one sentence in the May 2004 edition of *The Bulge Bugle* on page 4 which states: "It would appear from the above that Patton did not at that time recognize the major threat either."

Your statement projects a very erroneous conclusion. Patton was the one general who had a grasp of the gravity of the Bulge attack. John Fotheringham of Toledo, Ohio, served as doctors' sergeant assigned to G-2 section of the Third Army. His task was to log in all intelligence received from any and all sources. He was privy to the vast collection of information about the huge German build-up east of Luxembourg. I worked with John for eighteen months at Willys-Overland. We had lunch together many times and the discussion frequently turned to General Patton and the Bulge.

General Patton withdrew the 26th, 35th, and 80th Infantry Divisions plus the Fourth Armored and many supporting units from the Alsace-Lorraine front and moved them to the Metz area. It was in the 26th Division and remember that we were in Metz a day or so prior to the German Offensive (Bulge).

Perhaps a better conclusion would indicate that he knew the seriousness of the situation and did not want to release the 10th armored.

The conversation between Bradley and Patton may have been incorrectly plotted or taken out of context. However, Bradley was far less informed than Patton. Patton was known to use diverse strategies to pursue his goals. Maybe he simply "laid a number on Bradley."

I wish to compliment the 10th Armored Division. They have been denied credit for the defence of Bastogne. I have had many contacts with 10th Armored veterans and discussed their achievements to great length.

My service was with the 26th (Yankee Division) from stateside through the entire war. I was in the 10th Regiment, 3rd Battalion, I Company.

Thank you for your article. I enjoyed reading your comments.

P.S. I am acquainted with the Patton Family. During last May, I attended the Dedication of both a museum and park located in Newnam, Massachusetts, to the memory of General George Patton. Also I attended the burial for the younger General George Patton at Arlington Cemetery.

William W. Houle
26 INF 104 INF 3 BN I

THE CHEESE IN THE TRAP

I was surprised and pleased to see the August article on the 28th Signal Corps in the Bulge. I had talked to Bob Eichner a number of years ago and included a similar report in my book, entitled *The 28th Signal Company in WWII*. This history of the 28th Signal Company covers the activities of the unit from 1936 to 1945.

In addition to Bob's experiences, I have included the personal experiences of other individual Bulge survivors recounting the events before and during the battle. With orders "to hold at all costs," the men of the 28th Infantry Division stalled an overwhelmingly superior German force for three days, enabling the 101st Airborne Division to move into

Bastogne.

Of particular interest to VBOB members is a chapter containing a highly original examination of the events that led to the Battle of the Bulge. Based on declassified secret information as well as personal accounts, this controversial and compelling analysis explains how the Bulge was not a "surprise attack"—but rather the springing of a carefully laid trap by Generals Eisenhower and Bradley designed to draw the Germans out from behind the heavily fortified Siegfried Line and engage them in the open. The extensive information, published for the first time in this chapter, supports the belief of the 28th Division veterans that they were the cheese in the trap.

The 298 page book *The 28th Signal Company in World War II*, is available from Trafford Publishing, 2404 Douglas Street, Victoria, BC, Canada V8T 4L7 or Toll Free 1-866-752-6820 or at www.trafford.com.

Robert W. Cronenweth
28 SIG CO

IN HIS FATHER'S HONOR

My father, David Wolf, a VBOB member and Past President of the Delaware Valley Chapter, died on November 11, 2004, on Veteran's Day at the age of 84. The last event he attended was the 2004 Annual Reunion/WWII Memorial Dedication which was a great event. I promised my father that the sacrifices and valor he made in the Battle of the Bulge is not forgotten. I would like to become an Associate Member of VBOB in honor of my father. I enclose the special associate membership application.

Mitchell Wolf
Associate Member

[Mitchell, thanks a lot. We need more like you.]

THANK YOU, VETERANS

I am Belgian with dual British nationality, born and raised in Belgium. Father was a British skoldier who died when I was seven. Mother is Belgian.

I am a retired police chie inspector at 57 because I am ill. I was a policeman for 33 years at the Brussels Federal Capital District Police.

During WWII my father was a private in the Royal Air Service corps and was at El Alamein, in Lybia, Tunisia and Italy.

I am writing to you to thank you and all the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge for all you have done for our freedom. I saw with deep emotion the ceremonies in and around Bastogne with Mrs. Helen Patton, the King of Belgium, and the Prime Minister. We saw veterans on the television. They have all a nice memory of the people of Bastogne in 1944.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge and thank you very much. Merci beaucoup!

Kenneth J. Heselwood

JUST IN TIME

I especially liked the November 2004 issue of *The Bulge Bugle* and the article "The Ride Was Over 350 Miles," by Mitchel Kaidy, of the 87th Infantry Division.

I was an 11th Armored Division man and found it to be close to being truthful. I know of our mad dash to get to Bastogne. My 22nd Tank Battalion got to the road between Houfallese and Bastogne on December 27-28, 1944. That morning my Company B was there just in time to stop the Germans from cutting off the one road for supplies into Bastogne.

Harry Schaeffer
11 ARMD 22 TK BN B

Regarding Mitchell Kaidy's article, "The Ride..." I'm sure everyone in the 87th Division or 11th Armored Division really appreciates his setting the record straight about our part in the Bulge.

Dale E. Dean
11 ARMD

"DAN" TO "DOAN"

Received the November edition and was glad to see that my combat experience was included.

I read with interest the article sent in by Mr. W. A. Lehnendorff,

MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

Jacky Janssen is searching for veterans from the 743rd Tank Battalion who took part at the Battle of the Bulge December 1944 and who were already in Belgium in September 1944. It was one platoon from the C Company, 743rd Tank Battalion, who liberated my village on September 12, 1944, with the 1st Infantry Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment. This village is Fourn-Le-Comte, Belgium, near the Dutch border. Afterwards, A and B Company, 743rd Tank Battalion bivouacked in the village from September 13 until September 16, 1944. Then they passed the Dutch border. Write to Jacky at: Boomstraat 136A; B-3798 's-Gravenvoeren, Belgium.

FRANK P. TRICARICO, SR., 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 60TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, is trying to find information regarding his friend **JOSEPH ANTONELLI**. They grew up together in Manhattan where Joe lived on West 51st Street. Joe was a POW in Kassel, Germany, but Frank isn't sure what unit he served with. If you can provide any information, write to Frank at: 15 Grandview Avenue, Nanuet, New York.

ROBERT BETZ, a member of the Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, Chapter is trying to locate **COLONEL CHESTER A. CARLSTEN** (unit information not available). If you can help write to Robert at: 16 Georgia Avenue, Port Monmouth, New Jersey 07758.

Dr. John C. McManus, Assistant Professor, U.S. Military History, University of Missouri-Rolla, is writing a book about the first few days of the Battle of the Bulge. He is looking for personal accounts from members of the 28th Infantry Division, CCR of the 9th Armored Division, CCB of the 10th Armored Division, 506th and 501st Parachute Infantry Regiments and the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion. If you can help, write to him at: 250 Hidden Meadow Lane, St. Louis, Missouri 63021

If you were part of the liberation of Weimar or Buchenwald during the month of April, 1945, please send your recollections to Bernd Schmidt. His students are preparing a competition designed to encourage them to realize the importance and proximity of historical events on their own lives. There's one catch. The deadline for the students is April so you will need to act promptly. Write to Bernd at: U.S. Veterans Friend Germany Association, Kurt-Nehrling--Str. 62; D-99423, Weimar, Germany.

JAMES ROGER SISON, 106TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 423RD INFANTRY REGIMENT, COMPANY C, would like to know if anyone can provide the name of a relative of **DARRELL "ROCKY" D. STONE, 106TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 423RD INFANTRY REGIMENT, 1ST BATTALION, COMPANY C, 1ST PLATOON**. Darrell was "missing in action" on December 19, 1944. If you have any information write to James at: 81 Middle Avenue, Tiverton, Rhode Island 02878.

Owen VanWinkle would like to know if anyone knew his brother, **PFC HUGH VAN WINKLE, 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION, 508TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT**,

MEDICAL DETACHMENT, who was killed in action December 31, 1944. If you can provide any information, write to Owen at 355 West Columbia Avenue #307, Battle Creek, Michigan 49015.

LLOYD POSEY JOHNSON, 761ST TANK BATTALION, COMPANY C, would like to hear from anyone who might have served with him. Write to him: c/o Nila Taylor, 6121 Code's Ridge Road #1620. Raleigh, North Carolina 27612.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *(Continued from Page 4)*

"Spearheading with the 3rd Armored Division." I noticed that he said he was with the 36th Infantry Division. He must have meant to say the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment which was a part of the 3rd Armored Division.

I noticed that he kept mentioning a Task Force "Dan" which I did not recognize until it dawned on me that he meant Task Force "Doan." Colonel Doan commanded the 32nd Armored Regiment which I was a member of. He was a wonderful combat leader.

I am also enclosing a page showing the makeup of Task Force Doan [which will be published in a future issue along with other information provided].

Mr. Lehbodoff's article was real good and accurate except for the correction I have made.

Oda C. "Chuck" Miller
3 ARMDD 32 AIR 2 BN E

172ND NOT 173RD

A minor correction to the August issue, page 4. A thank you for your support for a Combat Badge for the Army Engineers, but I see no support from your 75 chapters. I a little loose I guess.

Our battalion was 172nd not the 173rd.

Clayton S. Quimbach
172 CMBT ENGR BN C

NEVER FORGET...

[The following was printed in the December 30, 2004, issue of Arkansas Democrat Gazette.]

About 100 Battle of the Bulge veterans have just returned from a very memorable trip to Central Europe commemorating the 60th anniversary of the battle.

We were treated so beautifully by the people and the Governments of Belgium and Luxembourg that it would be hard to describe. It was a sometimes humorous but mainly an emotional journey, bringing a whole host of sometimes funny but mainly tearful moments from those years ago.

Battle dates were December 16, 1944, to January 25, 1945. For those not familiar with it, the Bulge was the biggest, bloodiest battle ever fought by the U.S. Army any time, any place, any war. But we won, finally, after six weeks. The casualties were about 19,000 young American soldiers killed, another 42,000 badly wounded and still another 22,000 listed as POWs or MIAs. Those killed, an average of 500 per day, exceeded the total lost in Pearl Harbor, D-Day, Iwo Jima, 9/11 and both Gulf Wars combined.

The Bulge was fought by very young, very inexperienced U.S. troops in the worst winter weather in Central Europe in more than 40 years, and we were short of winter clothes, food, ammo and medical supplies. So we are again asking others to join us in our regular New Year's Day toast--beverage of your choice at 2:00 p.m. (Arkansas time)--to all those in the Bulge who did not make it home, including hundreds in Arkansas.

God bless Arkansas and God bless America.

Pat Murphy
78 INF

[Editor's note: Pat, with regard to the 60th Anniversary Trip last December 20th at the Parc Hotel, we enjoyed your delivery of the "Pledge of Allegiance." You stressed the importance of every word and phrase. Thank, you Pat.]

MY THEORY ON THE "SURPRISE ATTACK"

By John W. Morse
Company C, 1st Battalion
422nd Infantry Regiment
106th Infantry Division

[John's book, *"The Sitting Duck Division,"* is available at Barnes & Nobel and can be ordered at any book store.]

Almost everyone seems to have a theory about the "Surprise Attack" of the Battle of the Bulge. When I wrote my little book, *The Sitting Duck Division*, I told the story of a small town kid growing up in the infantry during WWII. I still had many questions about what had happened and why. I have done a lot of research over the last two years to find answers.

I discovered the cover up and it shocked me! Dereliction of duty is a serious charge and a threat to those involved. From what I've learned there was a cover up and it worked. Generals returned as decorated heroes. Eisenhower was elected president of the United States. Promotions and a secure place in history depended on the Academy clique putting up a solid front. They did. My view is that the Supreme Command simply could not lose track of that many men, tanks and big guns...a huge force, if they were paying attention.

Ike took the calculated risk of moving to a hideaway on the golf course Northwest of Reims with his young English lady driver many miles from SHAEF headquarters to manage the war. They discussed getting General Marshall to, "come out to discuss the matter." Field Marshall Sir Alan Brooke, of the British Imperial Staff, was quoted as saying, "...finally decided to see the PM to discuss the situation." The situation?

Some SHAEF and around the front were worried. It is a matter of record that Japanese diplomatic traffic intercepts reported that Hitler was planning a large scale offensive in the West some time after November 1. Numerous warnings from dozens of sources were ignored. It appears that most of the First Army brass were convinced that the German army was done for and posed no major threat. They were snug in their castles and manor houses. Montgomery was planning a holiday in England while Patton was busting a gut to mount an offensive while, at the same time, making plans to head North if things got sticky for the VIII Corps in the Ardennes...something he warned SHAEF of.

Why not the Ardennes? Germany used that route in WWI and, again in 1940, with great success. Maps, aplenty!

William B. Breuer's, *Unexplained Mysteries of World War II*, "Evidence of a High-Level Cover-Up," pages 48, 49, 50, and 51) (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.) sums up the dereliction of duty in a nutshell. Richardson Peterson's, *Healing The Child Warrior*, quotes the official Army Historical Library account of General Eisenhower's written effort to cover up details of the Battle of the Bulge a YEAR AFTER the event. Richard Peterson wrote:

"In response to suggestions to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, General Eisenhower, Chief of Staff, on December 18, 1945, wrote to Robert Patterson

"I am unalterably opposed to making any effort to

publicize at this time any story concerning the Ardennes Battle or even of allowing any written explanation to go outside of War Department.

I thoroughly believe we should say nothing whatsoever to anyone except in response to casual inquiry from our friends."

Patterson to Eisenhower December 19, 1945

"I believe the main features of this operation (Ardennes Battle)--the events leading up to it, the incidents of the fighting and the outcome--should be made known to the American people. Otherwise they will hear nothing but fault finding, and many of them will think the Army is covering up."

This sanguine attitude toward any discussion of the largest land battle in history by the former commander of SHAEF is astonishing. In spite of Eisenhower's desire to limit discussions to "casual inquiries from our friends," the confusing story continued to unfold.

According to, *Unexplained Mysteries of World War II*, and others, twenty-five years after the event General Strong (SHAEF Chief of Intelligence) learned that a covert after-action investigation had been made in 1945. Both copies of the report (SHAEF and London) were "missing" from the files. Surveying papers "had been doctored" according to High M. Cole, the U.S. Army's official historian. Many other authors offer the same story. Yes, there was a cover up. Careers depended on it.. and, it worked!

"In response to suggestions to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, General Eisenhower, Chief of Staff, on December 18, 1945, wrote to Robert Patterson then Secretary of War.

"I am unalterably opposed to making any effort to publicize at this time any story concerning the Ardennes Battle or even of allowing any written explanation to go outside of War Department.

So, why bring all of this up after all these years? Well, 19,000 GIs died, didn't they?

Now, we, as a nation, are attempting to become the world's police force...invading when and where we want. More lives are at stake. The future of the world is at stake. If it takes 25, 50, ...or 60 years for the truth to come out about those responsible for the actions taken, or not taken, what have we learned from the past? Responsibility should be assigned DURING the career period of our leaders...not covered up.

Perhaps I don't understand the BIG PICTURE. I can't claim to be a military or government expert. My experience was as a rifle squad leader and a POW during WWII. I can, however, study accounts other than the self-serving and self-protecting "Brass" histories (they call it spin these days). Just as the CIA and FBI failed to connect the dots before 9/11, the High Command in Europe failed to react to the dots available to them and take those warnings to react to the dots available to them and what was available before the Battle of the Bulge. Nineteen thousand of our fellow GIs paid the ultimate price. It is time to set the record straight for their sake. And, to discourage spin cover ups in this day and time.■

CHRISTMAS 1944

By Henry W. Mooseker
Company A
347th Infantry Regiment
87th Infantry Division

[The following article appeared in "The Golden Acorn" the newsletter of the 87th Infantry Division, December 2001.]

I don't really remember having any indication of when Christmas 1944 happened. There were no indications whatsoever of Christmas except that the landscape was very white. As a rifleman in a rifle squad (scout at that) I was cold hungry, scared as hell and I was supposed to find out where the enemy was. My feet felt like they were frozen and the leather boots we had did little to protect your feet from the cold or the wet. I cannot pinpoint where I was at that time.

According to Battalion records we entered the fray (the battle of the Bulge) on December 23, 1944 when we left Libremont, Belgium, to help free Bastogne. We headed in the direction of Moiricy, Bonnerue. Although I prayed, I was not thinking of Christ's birth.

Bastogne was freed.

I do remember thinking I sorely need real sleep, some warmth and hot food. None of these really happened until January 7th, 1945, when what was left of us (167 men out of the 800 men of the 1st Battalion, 347th Infantry, who entered the battle on December 23, 1944) were taken back for rest and relaxation. We needed outfitting, and many replacements. It was really Christmas now, with hot showers, new underwear and socks and plenty of hot food. My how good it felt to be warm in candle lit, smoke filled rooms where the floor actually felt soft and we had hours of God-given sleep.

Trench Foot

At the start of our engagement with Jerry in the Bulge we all wore standard GI leather boots. These boots were wonderful in the U.S. but weren't worth a damn in December and January in the Battle of the Bulge. Our clothing was GI underwear, OD woolen shirts and trousers, a woolen cap that fit under our helmets and a woolen OD overcoat. Seems as if I had a rain coat on and off, a light pack that carried an entrenching tool and a gas mask carrier that had long had the gas mask removed and that now served well to carry cigarettes, K rations, condoms, and the wax candles that we used to heat food with, toilet articles and any loot we could eat. This along with our piece and bandoleers of ammunition, web belt, and bayonet which I lost somewhere in Belgium. The condoms were particularly useful to keep many small items like matches, cigarettes, etc., dry and they also fit over the muzzle of my rifle to keep any debris from falling down the barrel. Other than that they served no other purpose.

It didn't take long to realize that the weather, freezing rain, sleet, snow and bitter cold were as much the enemy as were the Krauts. As we took casualties, replacements came and went. Many just got sick and if the medic found an appreciable fever they were sent back. I cannot remember any one ever returning to our squad once they had been evacuated. It seemed that they had all been sent to a haven that each of us secretly desired.

In a very few days of fighting, trying to dig an adequate hole in frozen ground, many of the men were getting frost bitten toes and trench foot. One after another we were getting trench foot. The feet turned blue-black. These men were evacuated. I did get some frost bite and still many years later my toes are ever sensitive to the cold especially when I've gone cross country skiing.

My effort to keep my feet from freezing was to keep them as dry as possible. This was difficult. I changed socks as frequently as possible. One pair on my feet and another inside my long johns against my belly.

They didn't dry completely on my belly but they were better than the pair I took off. I repeated this procedure whenever I could.

Fox holes were a serious problem. The top layer of ground was frozen. A pile of snow was no shrapnel barrier. The work of digging would make you perspire and this moisture soon froze during the night. The entrenching tool was regarded as very important.

After hunkering down in the hole, sweat frozen stiff, I would gouge out a shelf in the fox hole side for my paraffin candle. I'd insert the candle, light it and have some warmth. These candles were always welcome. I melted snow in the cup to quench my thirst. During the fighting we'd just scoop up some snow to melt in our mouths. On many occasions the fox hole bottom became muddy from the heat of my body and paraffin candle.

As the campaign continued there were more and more trench foot casualties. Our medic would look at a soldier's feet and if they were black and blue enough he'd order an evacuation.

Somewhere beyond the Ourth or St Hubert we were told that trench foot was no longer an evacuable condition. Soon there were men who couldn't remove their boots--their feet were swollen tightly into the wet leather boots. I can remember following one lad (I was assistant squad leader at the time) who seemed to be walking on posts instead of legs. There was no ankle movement whatever and he had that Zombie look on his face. You knew then that men in that condition couldn't go on much longer and they usually did not.

The condoms were particularly useful to keep many small items like matches, cigarettes, etc., dry and they also fit over the muzzle of my rifle to keep any debris from falling down the barrel. Other than that they served no other purpose.

Replacements came so quickly and repeatedly that we could remember only their first names or none at all. Since they came and went to fast it got to where we didn't want to know.

Besides the fear of Jetties mortars, M.G. fire, 88's and tree bursts I had a constant fear of my piece blowing up in my face because of snow, ice, or mud plugging the barrel. Snow and ice always did seem to get into the barrel or the breach. I can remember on one occasion when the squad had suffered several casualties and their abandoned M-1's were strewn around the ground. Checking the other pieces it was always easy to find one that was newer and in better condition than one you had been using.

Cigarettes were our constant companion. Once the fox hole was dug you could light up safely. We always got a French carton once a week and these were delivered with our K rations.

Finally heavy over boots (Arctics) arrived. When you put these on over your leather boots your feet seemed four times as heavy. With these on it was very easy to trip. This was a clumsy arrangement but they helped keep our feet warm and dry but they came after the worst weather was over.

Double timing with a light pack, entrenching tool, piece, six or seven bandoleers of ammunition, and a gas mask carrier stuffed with cigs, and K rations while making an assault made you gasp for air.

On many occasions you could hear the unmistakable snap of bullets zinging close by. It was a sound that told you how close they were. They weren't very loud but very ominous. You knew Jerry had spotted you. Soon the heavy bark of the squad's BAR would be heard over all the rifle fire we could snap off.

Jerry was quite accurate with his mortar fire. After one round over and then one under we knew the next one would be on target after the second round we always used the rhythm of the mortars to get the hell out of that particular area.

This went on day after day. Replacements were coming and going. Slowly the snow melted and it was a pleasure to ditch the Arctics. ■

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE "FRIGID"

[The following article appeared in "The Flash," the newsletter of the 78th Infantry Division. It was written by JAMES D. JOHNSON.]

On the night of December 16, 1944, Hitler unleashed against the allied forces the heaviest counter attack of the entire war on the western front--the counter offensive to split the allied forces and to drive and capture the seaport of Antwerp, Belgium. This became the famous Battle of the Bulge. The point of this attack was directed at the small town of Bastogne, Belgium, where German intelligence had determined the allied line to be the weakest and thinnest. The 106th Infantry Division was occupying this sector, and their lines were so thin that they could offer almost no defense against the blitzkrieg of the Panzer tanks of Hitler's crack armored divisions. The 106th Division lost almost all its men and most of its line officers in its heroic and valiant defenses of Bastogne. I believe it was later reinforced by the famous and heralded 82nd Airborne Division.

Just a few kilometers north of Bastogne and flanking the 106th, stood the 78th Infantry Division, locked in deadly combat for the small town of Kesternich. Kesternich had just fallen to the 78th, and we were licking our wounds and strengthening our defenses against what we thought would be a counter attack to retake the town. Little did we realize that we were in the line of Hitler's mad attack to reach the sea, committing his most efficient and effective armored divisions of the whole German army. He had decided to gamble his best and most seasoned tank divisions in a life or death attack.

I am not sure when we as a division, became aware that this was no counter attack for Kesternich but rather a massive do or die major thrust. At any rate, we were ordered to pull back from Kesternich and do a cartwheel to the south--establish strong defensive positions to protect the northern flank of Bastogne. In other words, we were ordered out of the offensive mode and placed in a defensive mode. Furthermore, we were ordered to defend a major supply route directly in our sector to prevent any supplies of troops, food, ammunition or fuel from reaching the advancing German Army. These orders were probably issued to our division commander on the 17th of December.

By then the weather had become a major factor. The snow was still falling and the temperature had fallen to way below zero. It was reported at minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit at its coldest. It really didn't matter whether it was minus 30, minus 40 or whatever it was cold as hell. It was a dry cold which made it bearable but dangerous. Fingers, hands, toes, feet, noses and ears could freeze before you realized it. Quartermaster issued sheets for ponchos for all infantry and forward troops such as our forward observer teams, etc. These ponchos served our troops as excellent camouflage in the heavy snow. Our firing gun and other personnel in and around the gun positions did not use the ponchos.

In addition to special precautions against our men's freezing, we had to take precautions against trench foot and frostbite. I remembered some of my lessons from scouting and established the buddy system. Every man had a buddy. They were responsible that each day, when possible, their buddy had to wash his feet and change into a fresh and dry pair of socks.

This is just one example of the advantages artillery men had over other troops especially the infantry. The doughboys were lucky most of the time to be able to eat, let alone wash their feet and change their socks. I am proud that "A" Battery did not have one case of trench foot or frostbite, and I believe ours was the only unit in the 78th to have that distinction--that is a unit of battery, company and troop size. At least, I received a report to this effect from Division to Division Artillery Headquarters.

In addition to protecting our men against the bitter cold we had to take precautions with our equipment. For example, our normal hydraulic fluid in the recoil systems of our howitzers froze under such severe temperatures. We had to drain the recoil system of each howitzer and replace the fluid with pure glycerin, a trick I believe we learned from the Russian artillery. Again, I had to call upon Sgt. Babcock for his professional expertise. I can't recall that we ever had a problem with a function of any of our guns, and I credit this good fortune to Sgt. Babcock and his skill. A personal word or two about Sgt. Babcock because he was such an expert: when I realized that our battery needed a technician that was an expert in ordinance, back in Camp Butler, I went to Sgt. Huserk, our Motor Sergeant, and asked him who was the best motor mechanic he had. Without hesitation, he said, "Private Babcock--he is the best I have ever had." I talked with Babcock and explained as much as I knew about the requirements of this technician. I told him that he would have to attend and pass a special training course in ordinance, which I believe was conducted at Ft. Meade, Maryland. I told him also that with the position came the rank of T-4, which was comparable to a Buck Sergeant, and that if he did well in this course. I could promote him immediately upon his return. He not only did well, he knocked the top out of it. All his grades were nearly perfect and he graduated the top of his class. Another stroke of luck--he was no longer vulnerable to be shipped out but he became a super ordinance expert for our battery, not only in our 105's but in our small arms as well. He was an excellent soldier.

It was about this time, December 16 or so, that another tragic incident occurred. Upchurch, Rosenblatt and I returned to the battery early one morning. We had been with the infantry battalion commander. When we walked into the lodge and kitchen, I found my mess sergeant, Sgt. Blair, in bunk, which was unusual. I asked him what was wrong. He said he was pumping up one of the tanks on a field range, and all of a sudden the tank exploded, and one end of the tank had hit his leg, outside the calf, below the knee. We decided later the valve on the air tank was defective, thus the explosion.

I said, "Let me have a look."

His leg was so swollen that we had to split his trousers at the seam to expose his leg. His foot and toes were black and swollen. His leg up to his knee, was black and swollen. His leg above his knee had red streaks up his thigh.

I said, "Sgt. Blair, why haven't you gone to the Battalion Air Station?"

He said "I have--every day for three days."

I asked if Capt. Kaylor had seen his leg, and he said "Yes, sir." "What did he say?" I asked.

"He said it was bruised and that I should stay off of it."

Also his leg had a bad odor. I told my men to load Sgt. Blair into my jeep--that I was taking him to see Capt. Kaylor. When we arrived, Capt. Kaylor was busy seeing another soldier. I told him that as soon as he could,

(Continued)

"FRIGID"

(Continuation)

I wanted him to examine Sgt. Blair. He said he had seen him earlier that morning, and he had a bad bruise.

I said, "I want you to see him again--his leg looks awful and smells bad. It looks like gangrene to me."

At that time, I had no medical training at all. I had taken a course in first aid at Memphis State in 1941. During the course, we had studied a number of diseases and trauma conditions, one of them being gangrene. We had seen no patients, but we had seen pictures of typical cases. This looked typical. Capt. Kaylor came to my jeep and looked.

He said "It is a bad bruise. He needs to stay off it for a few days."

I replied "Capt. Capt. Kaylor, this leg looks bad--I think he has gangrene. I want Sgt. Blair to be evacuated to the nearest field hospital. Smell his leg."

Capt. Kaylor became very angry and said he would not evacuate him. I pleaded with him--he said "No." At this point I did something very foolish. I pulled my 45 pistol.

I pointed it at Capt. Kaylor and said angrily, because I was very angry, "You son of a bitch, you order our men to load Sgt. Blair in that ambulance and take him to the nearest field hospital or I'll blow your brains out."

You can imagine the tenseness. Capt. Kaylor was white as a sheet, and I am sure I was, too. In what seemed like forever, there was a pause. He finally said to his NCO, "Put this man in the ambulance and take him to the hospital."

As soon as the ambulance left I went immediately to Col. Irving's C.P. He was there, as was Capt. Wheatly, our battalion S-2. I told him exactly what I had done, and what I had said.

I said, "Colonel, if you will wait until we get a report from the hospital, and if I'm wrong about Sgt. Blair's leg I will request that you relieve me and transfer me. You may have to court-martial me, but please wait until we get a report. But if I am right, I want Capt. Kaylor transferred." Colonel Irving agreed to wait, which demonstrated one of his strengths of command. He was never one to act on impulse or over react.

That evening, Col. Irving called me at my C.P. and said, "Captain Johnson, I have just received a report from Colonel (somebody). They amputated Sgt. Blair's leg this afternoon just below the hip." That is all he said, and he never mentioned it again.

I have recounted this incident in my own mind a million times since then. I still don't know what I would have done if Capt. Kaylor had not ordered Sgt. Blair's evacuation. I was lucky--Capt. Kaylor didn't know either. I was lucky also, that Col. Irving was my Battalion Commander. Some other more impulsive, commander might have relieved me on the spot and placed me under arrest to await my court-martial. As I remember he never mentioned it again, and neither did I, but Capt. Kaylor was not transferred. The Bulge was just beginning and we had more important matters to attend. But I did avoid Capt. Kaylor for the duration, and I think he avoided me. Fortunately, I was not wounded badly enough to need his professional help.

During all my combat, I received just one wound, somewhere between the Roer and Rhine Rivers. A battery of German 88's fired on us going into firing position one day. I was helping my ammunition section move a trailer full of 105 mm shells behind a building. One of the German shell fragments went through the flesh between the thumb and index finger of my left hand--it never touched a bone. I should have turned in for the Purple Heart but I didn't I had other things to do.

After the Bulge and after we began to get mail again, I had a letter from Sgt. Blair from a hospital in England. The war was over for him, but he had lost a leg unnecessarily. He informed me of his amputation--too close to the hip for prosthesis. He thanked me for saving his life. He said he had been told in one more day, he would have died. As you might imagine he was extremely bitter toward Capt. Kaylor. I think I answered his letter, but I am not certain. I have never heard from him since. All I remember about him is that he was from Texas and was an excellent soldier and mess sergeant.

Days after the Sgt. Blair incident, Upchurch told me that the story went through the enlisted men of the battalion like wild fire--that the men were proud that I had gone out on a limb for one of my men. I, too, am proud of what I did but I could have handled it better. Again, I attribute my actions to youth, fatigue and loss of sleep.

About the Bulge--our division had just participated in a week of fierce offensive combat. Our infantry had suffered extremely heavy losses. Some companies were fighting with only a few men and hardly any officers. The weather was bitter. When we were ordered to defend our positions and protect the northern flank of Bastogne, it was somewhat of a relief for our troops. In combat defense is usually easier and less hazardous than an offensive attack. I can't speak for our infantry, but my battery was under less physical stress than it had been during our week of attack. The mental stress was always there--when are the massive tank attacks going to hit us? We knew, to some degree what was going on in Bastogne. We didn't know those troops deserved the title of those "Battling Bastards of Bastogne." Actually, our number of firing missions decreased from the previous week. They were more intermittent and less constant. It was about this time--we may have used it in our attacks on Kesternich, etc.--but it was this general time period we first used the so-called "PPSIT" fuse or proximity fuse. It was a brand new technology in artillery application. The fuse itself, as I remember emitted radio waves and when enough of these waves bounced off the earth's surface and back onto the fuse, it exploded the shell. This revolutionized artillery fire against enemy personnel. The shell actually exploded about 20 to 30 feet above the ground and was devastating. No longer were foxholes relatively safe against enemy artillery--they had to be dug deeper and down and under. Captured German prisoners stated that it was the artillery they feared most. I have read or heard that the Germans referred to our artillery as "automatic artillery," and they were deathly afraid of it.

I think American soldiers feared land mines most--I know artillerymen did. Another thing our soldiers dreaded and feared was the German machine gun. I believe the Germans deployed their machine guns more effectively than any other army in the history of warfare. Of course, in the case of World War II, the Germans fought mostly in defense and the machine gun is an excellent defensive weapon. Even so the Germans were excellent machine gunners.

As I stated during the Bulge, our fire missions were more intermittent and there were some days that it was relatively quiet. To digress a moment, ever since we had occupied our first position on December 10, 1944, Upchurch, Rosenblatt and I had noticed a good number of fat looking deer both bucks and does, in the fire breaks of the beautiful fir forests of this area of the Ardennes.

One quiet day, I said to Upchurch, "Let's go get us a deer." Our rations since the beginning of the Bulge, had contained little, if any, meat. Upchurch, Rosenblatt and I left our CP and headed for the nearest forest. I might add that I always carried my 45 caliber automatic pistol on my right hip which I never fired once during combat. The only time I even drew it, I believe was on Capt. Kaylor. But I did carry two other weapons--I carried a 30 caliber carbine (rifle) during the day and an automatic semi-machine gun, called a burp or grease gun, at night. I kept both of these within easy reach in my jeep at all times.

We had not gone too deep into one of the fire breaks when we spotted this beautiful, big buck standing in the middle of the break. He just stood there with his gorgeous antlers, looking at us. Upchurch slowed to a creep until we were in range. The buck was still just looking. Upchurch stopped the jeep, and I got out with my carbine. I felled him with one shot. He dropped and never moved. He was big and he was beautiful. We three had a hell of a time getting him across the hood of our jeep, but we did and slowly made our way back to headquarters. As we drove I had the feeling that this buck's eyes were focused upon me. He seemed to stare soulfully only at me. I still remember those eyes and how they affected me. By the time we reached the lodge, his eyes had gotten the best of me. I promised myself that I would never kill another deer and to this day, I haven't. I have kept my promise.

When we returned to the lodge, some of the men converged upon us. They were happy to see fresh meat. Corporal Feiblekom, a member of our line section, who had grown up in Wisconsin and was an experienced hunter, volunteered to direct the skinning and cleaning. He said the meat would taste better if it froze overnight, which produced some moans and groans. But freeze it we did (freezing was a simple process of letting it hang on the same limb all night), and our kitchen crew went to work on our big buck early the next morning. That night everyone agreed that was the best venison they had ever tasted. Feiblekom and the cooks had done a good job, but honestly, by that time, any meat would have been the best we had ever tasted.

Battery "A" continued its rapid advance to the Rhine, stopping only to deliver fire when called upon. The situation was extremely fluid and speed was the essence of our performance....■

"HELL ON WHEELS" TANK MEN HALTED DRIVE TO SPLIT U.S. ARMIES

**2nd and 3rd Armored, 82nd Airborne,
28th, 28th, 83rd and 85th Infantry
All Played Big Parts in Checking Foe**

[This article appeared in the January 7, 1945, issue of the St. Louis-Post Dispatch and was sent to us by KENNETH WHITE, COMPANY D, 41ST ARMORED INFANTRY, 2ND ARMORED DIVISION.]

Gen. Harmon's men stopped Von Rundstedt after spectacular 100-Mile Night March--"Bloody Bucket" Group shattered in Epic Fight to Gain Precious Time.

With the United States Second Armored Division in Belgium, January 6 (1945) (AP)

"Old Gravel Voice," is happy again. His "Hell on Wheels" tank men are belting back the Germans--after a heroic action that saved the American armies from being cut in two.

Maj. Gen. Ernest Harmon, who has directed the killing and capture of more Nazi troops than any other division commander, is spearheading the American drive across the enemy salient to Bastogne with his hard-riding Second Armored Division.

His men have taken several hundred prisoners and liberated a half dozen Belgium villages in weather that would irritate a polar bear.

They are back in combat after only three days of rest following one of the greatest battles of the war--a head-on smash that broke the German drive toward the Meuse River, kicked back the Nazis 10 miles and practically destroyed a prize SS armored division.

100-Mile Night March

Lifting of censorship today permitted for the first time the full story of how the "Hell on Wheels" division, after a spectacular 100-mile night march to the battle scene, halted the Nazi drive only three miles from its river goal.

It was an epic engagement ranking with past achievements of this famous division the capture of Palermo, Sicily, the breakthrough at St. Lo, and the piercing of the Siegfried Line north of Aachen.

Here is the box score of the four-day battle:

Enemy losses--69 tanks, 33 artillery pieces taken intact, 211 armored cars and trucks, more than 1200 dead, and 1213 lost as prisoners.

Second Armored Division losses--four Sherman tanks and light casualties. "And a good number of these were from respiratory diseases rather than battle wounds," said Capt. Harry Volk, of Cleveland.

Received S.O.S. Call

Harmon's division was sitting along the Roer River front in Germany when it was called on its emergency mission to assemble near Ciney, Belgium, to keep the enemy from reaching

Dinant or Meuse on the Meuse and then swinging north to Liege.

Lt. Col. Joe A. Clema, of Humboldt, Nebraska, organized the traffic control and speeded the tanks along the difficult night march, losing only 17 vehicles from break-downs and minor accidents.

The division went into action on Christmas Eve after its patrols ran into strong German forces at Celles three miles from Dinant.

Then the division's two big combat commands went to work. A force under Brig. Gen. John H. Collier, of Dallas, Texas, raced into Ciney, knocked out all the enemy tanks there and broke up a Nazi column of 125 vehicles driving toward Celles. Another few hours and the Germans would have reached Dinant in force--thus splitting the American armies in half.

Nazis in Trap

A second force under Brig. Gen. I. B. White, of Des Moines, Iowa, swept through Ciney to Celles and polished off an enemy column just outside the town. The Nazis were by then trying to regroup and stab back, but their trapped armor was virtually destroyed and 800 prisoners were flushed out of the woods.

When the battle ended after four days of heavy fighting the Nazis had been thrown back 10 miles and a German SS Division fighting against the Second Armored was a division in name only.

One captured German officer complained: "How many Second Armored Divisions does the American Army have? We thought you people were pretty well bedded down in Germany." ■

[The following appeared in "The LOBSTER," the newsletter of the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion, dated November, 2004.]

The old American absent mindedly arrived at French customs at Paris airport and fumbled for his passport.

"You have been to France before Monsieur?", the customs officer asked sarcastically.

The ancient Yank admitted that he had been to France before.

"Then you should know enough to have your passport ready for inspection," snapped the irate official.

The American said that the last time he came to France he did not have to show his passport.

"Impossible, old man. You Americans always have to show your passports on arrival in France."

The old American gave the Frenchman a long hard look. "I assure you, young man, that when I came ashore on Omaha Beach in Normandy on D-Day in 1944, there were no damned Frenchman on the beach." ■



Mark your calendar

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Sept. 28 – Oct. 1, 2005

Details in next issue

LOST AND RECOVERED

World War II Pilot Looks Back on His Funeral and His Plane That May Have Been Found Nearly 60 Years After Being Shot Down

[The following article appeared in "The South Bend Tribune" on November 10, 2004, and was written by Don Porter. The article was sent us by GEZA CSAPO, 32ND CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON.]

When Thair W. Best was shot down Near the Luxembourg-German border in 1945 after helping the allies win the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, he thought it was the last he'd ever hear of his plane.

Imagine his surprise to be told recently that wreckage of the P-38 Lightning photo reconnaissance plane that crashed and burned on his final flight may have been located more than 57 years later.

Best, a resident of Howard Street, was contacted last month by representatives of a Luxembourg military museum. They were seeking his help in identifying the wreckage of a World War II aircraft discovered near where Best went down and subsequently was captured by the Germans.

Best, who turned 81 on Thursday, was serving as a member of the Army Air Corps 31st Photo Reconnaissance Squadron on January 22, 1945, when he made his last flight of the war. His squadron was part of the 3rd Army Division commanded by General George Patton.

With the Allied Forces just having pushed back a major German offensive at the Battle of the Bulge at Germany's border with Luxembourg and Belgium, Best was flying his 45th photo reconnaissance mission. His squadron was seeking out information on the positions of the retreating Nazi troops.

"It turned out to be 44-1/2 missions," Best quipped of his war tour.

His flights were made in the lightning fast and unusual looking twin fuselage twin-engine fighter modified for reconnaissance work. The plane was fast, capable of cruising at 275 miles an hour at high altitudes.

The photo P-38s carried no armaments. The normal machine guns and cannons were removed to make room for the bulky film cameras. The cameras shot long rolls of film 12 inches wide.

"The idea was that we could outrun the enemy plane, you ran as fast as you could."

He was flying at very low level barely more than 50 feet above the ground on his final flight. Reconnaissance pilots frequently had to fly that low to capture details of the enemy terrain.

"I was looking up at telephone poles on some flights," Best recalled.

As he was on his fateful mission, one of his plane's engines was hit by the enemy ground fire. It caught fire and the cockpit began filling with smoke.

"The smoke got so thick I had to ditch the canopy," Best said. The force of it being blasted off tore off his flight helmet and goggles.

He quickly realized the plane was going to crash and he needed to bail out. Because it was flying so low, doing that would almost certainly have been fatal.

So he struggled to get the P-38 up to a higher altitude so he could safely jump out and parachute down.

He was able to climb about 2,000 feet, but another major problem remained. P-38 Lightnings were notoriously difficult to bail out of climbing out the cockpit and then dropping off a wing as was done with other planes. It was very risky in a lightning because of the rear connector joining the two fuselage sections.

The Army recommended pilots crawl to the middle of a wing and then jump off outside one of the fuselages. With flames spreading across the wings, through, Best couldn't do that.

Since he couldn't jump out, he decided to fall.

Best inverted the plane so that he was flying upside down. He then undid his harness and pushed off.

That got him safely out of the burning plane, but not out of the woods.... As he was floating down on his parachute, he could see German soldiers waiting for him below. "All I could see was a big circle of gun barrels pointing up at me," he said.

He was quickly captured and taken as a prisoner of war. After interrogation, he joined nearly 10,000 other captured allied airmen at a POW camp in Germany. To get there, he was forced to walk some 140 kilometers (87 miles) with other POWs.

"I walked right through the soles of my boots," he said march.

Best spent 99 days as a POW. He said the detainees were treated reasonably well.

"We weren't mistreated, but they didn't have any food for themselves," he said. "By the time we were freed our stomachs had shrunk."

The prison camp was liberated by 3rd Army troops about three months after his capture.

Knowing the Americans were about to take the camp, their German captors simply surrendered to the POWs, Best said. Before the Americans arrived, however, German SS troops came and killed many of the guards, he said.

Because no other pilots had seen his safe ejection from his plane and capture, the other members of his squadron thought he had been killed.



This model is of the P-38 Lightning, the reconnaissance plane Thair Best flew during World War II. His plane may have been recovered recently, nearly 60 years after it was shot down in Luxembourg.

Tribune Photo
ERIN LANTRIP

The P-38 Lightning reconnaissance plane. Tribune Photo by Erin Lantrip.

"All they saw was it crash in a mass of flames and fire," he said.

Believing he had been killed the Army notified his parents back in his hometown of Pomeroy, Iowa, of his "death."

"My obituary was in the paper and they even held a funeral for me," Best recalled.

For his military efforts he was awarded the Silver Star, the military's third highest honor behind the Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross.

(Continued)

LOST AND RECOVERED

(Continuation)

Best said he hopes to learn soon if the wreckage discovered in Luxembourg actually is from his plane.

While having a plane shot out from under him wasn't particularly pleasant being at the controls of a P-38 was, he said.

"It was a beautiful plane to fly. When trimmed properly it would almost fly itself," he said.

Unlike bomber crews, reconnaissance pilots weren't able to retire after flying a limited number of missions, Best said. Those completing 60 photos flights, however, were entitled to a two-week pass, he added. ■

A PEBBLE OF THE ROCK

By Phil Melleno
955th Field Artillery Battalion

Way back when--on December 18, 1944, my outfit was in a support action of the 1st Division. Our task was to help in delivering the Butgenbach-Weisnes-Malmedy Route which at the time was a primary goal of the German army.

Shortly thereafter, January 25, 1945, our Battalion Commander received a commendation from the 1st Division Command through channels. Each commanding officer transmitting the commendation added a few thoughts and/or expressions of appreciation, extolling our efforts.

When our battalion commander received the commendations with all of the "endorsements" he had copies made for each member of the 955th, however, he added his own endorsement which read in part:

1. *When the Germans broke through into the Ardennes you were one of the few corps artillery battalions east of the Roer River. You were the only one that never moved west of it.*

2. *Congratulations, I am proud of you "ROCK OF THE ROER"*

James J. Winn, Commander Officer "955."

Well--many months later when we were all returned home, many of us kept in contact with each other through short notes Christmas cards, letters, etc., many of us would sign off our notes thusly--i.e. Phil Melleno--A Pebble of the Rock.

This always stuck with me--after all these many years so I will close by signing.

Phil Melleno
A Pebble of the Rock ■

Disparaging ditties

British

Even Hitler had a mother
Even Hitler had a ma
Although he may suffer from his sins
At least, thank God, he wasn't twins

Whistle while you work;
Ribbentrop's a twerp
Hitler's bawny
So's his army;
Whistle while you work.

—(British musical revue)

A SLIGHT CHANGE OF PLANS

By Charles M. Price
Company B

92nd Chemical Mortar Battalion

We were in support of the 30th Infantry Division having smashed the Siegfried Line where we spent 75 straight days and also the capture of Aachen. We were preparing to cross the Roer in support of the 30th Infantry Division when the German counter division in the Ardennes forced a postponement and withdrawal from the front and hurry to Malmedy to hold off the German threat there with the 30th Division we met and smashed the 1st SS Panzer Division.



Charley couldn't remember all the names but here are the ones he recognizes: Left standing--Sgt. Thomas; fourth from left is Charley; Squatting second from left Sgt. Joekeys, fourth from left was Blackie.

It was very cold and snowing and in going there I was driving the jeep with a trailer with our mortar and ammunition and going down a hill and making a U-turn I got into the tracks of a tank ahead of us and they were so deep in the snow and ice I couldn't get out of them and the German's starting shelling us, we left everything in the middle of the road and took cover. After the shelling we loaded up and went up front to our position.

In going to our position we crossed a small bridge and set up on a small hill. The ground was frozen and covered with snow and using a pick we managed to dig a shallow fox hole.

Visibility was so bad the airplanes couldn't fix and we got caught in a pocket like a horseshoe and our supplies were cut off for three days. We had chocolate D bars to eat and melted snow. Our beards were getting long and when our eyes and noses ran it would freeze on our faces. We wore every piece of clothing we had to keep warm--luckily the guns didn't freeze.

After a few days the weather cleared the sky was blue and it sure was good to see the airplanes back doing their strafing and bombing and opening our lines up so we could get supplies.

On Christmas we had cold K ration's to eat, we were hungry and they were good.

At one time there was a German airplane flying over our position, I shot at him with our 50 caliber machine gun mounted on the jeep but I missed he was so close you could see the white of his eyes.

The first week of February we went back to prepare to cross the Roer. ■

OUTNUMBERED AND OVERWHELMED

[Following are excerpts of an interview with JOEL D. HOOD, MEDICAL DETACHMENT, 44TH COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, conducted October 6, 1999.]

I was in the U.S. Medical Corps. Captain Benjamin Perrino was the Battalion Surgeon and I was his assistant (Technical Sergeant). We were a part of 44th Engineer Combat Battalion, a support unit in the Third Army, under General Patton, in Normandy, and as we pushed through Normandy and on in through France.

We were very much involved in the Battle of the Bulge, particularly in Luxembourg. On the 15th, 16th and 17th of December, we were ordered to be support units in Wiltz, Luxembourg. The Germans had fortified their lines, had built up their troops and were being directed by Hitler near Frankfurt, Germany. His outpost was called the "Eagles Nest." So this was a very important last stand for the Germans. They threw everything they had into this campaign.

We were outnumbered and we were overwhelmed by their force and were forced to evacuate Wiltz, Luxembourg. We (the Medics) had not only the casualties from battalion headquarters, but the Medics had taken over the civilian hospital and we had many casualties at that time. But on December 19th we received orders from (44th) headquarters that we were surrounded and it was every man for himself. Under the Geneva Conference Rule we cannot leave the patients without being attended, so one medic had to stay. Captain Perrino put three names in the hat, Ambrose Blake, John Druley and myself. And Blake's name was drawn out to stay with the patients.

Blake, Druley and I had been very close in our relationship throughout the service and we were reluctant to leave him under those conditions. But he insisted and we gathered blankets and overcoats and took off in the snow at 9:30 in the evening of the 19th of December. We got up on the hill; we could see back down in the valley, we could see the hospital. We threw a couple of blankets on the snow, we hadn't had very much sleep for two or three days. And when we woke up the next morning a German ambulance was backed up to the hospital and was evacuating the patients and we saw our friend Blake entering into the last ambulance and they drove away. I said to Druley, "I guess we are the dumb ones because he is riding out and we are out here in this deep snow with no food and no compass, any direction."

But we decided to make our way the best we could back toward Bastogne. And so we began to fight our way through the heavy snow and it seemed that every direction we went we would just run right into the German line, so we would have to retreat, hide out and wait until we could get passage. We did this for three days, without food, water or shelter.

We came to an opening, a large field, and Druley says, "What are we going to do?" I said, "Let's go to that farm house, they have food." We went straight across this field to this farm house and knocked on the door. An elderly lady opened the door, and I could speak a little French and she could speak some English. I told her our [situation] and she said, "Americans! Americans! Come in!" And there were three of the seemingly old maids, and I will never forget the food on the table. ...I told Druley,

"That looks just like my grandmother's table."

A wooden table with two wooden benches on each side of it, and they invited us to sit there. And the food consisted of steamed cabbage, boiled potatoes, cornbread and tea. I could hardly believe that would be the menu, but they invited us to eat all that we wanted, which we did, because we were starved.

While we were eating one of the ladies disappeared and I asked another one, "Where did the other lady go?" She went down to the near town to get a man that had lived in a cave up in the mountains for the period that their country had been occupied by the Germans. The four of them had lived there in the cave. I said, "Well, no, that won't be necessary. We can just sleep in the barn." She said, "No, no, the barn is full of Germans." And that brought on a different light.

So the man soon came and guided us, Druley and I, up in the mountains to the cave. And as we climbed, Druley, he just about passed out climbing the mountains. He had yellow jaundice and was 37 years old, and he was not required to go overseas. He could have stayed within the States on limited service, but he said, "If anybody in our outfit is going over, I'm going, too." He was a determined South Dakotan. He almost passed out by eating all the food he could eat and then walking and climbing up the mountains.

But just as we were, before we started climbing the mountains the gentleman says, "I want to show you where you can get your water supply." There was an open well right beside of a path before going up the mountain. So I took note of that. We got up on top of the mountain and he says, "Well, here is your cave." He says, "Step over." I stepped over, he raked off some pine straw and opened up a trap door which had a ladder to it. We went down into the cave, which had four bunks and a charcoal stove. And he says, "You stay here until the Americans come, and we'll send you food every other day."

On the 24th a young lady brought us a burlap bag of food and I can remember very distinctly what was in that bag. She had a large loaf of French bread, pork roast and large bottle of wine, some GI coffee and sugar and cream, and she says, "Have a good Christmas with this and I will be back the day after Christmas with more food." And she left. And we enjoyed the food.

On the 24th of December the Germans started to fortify the mountain that we were in the middle of. Tanks came in behind and the infantry down below us. Our troops were across the road and the river on the mountains on the other side of the road. And, by the way, Druley and I, we would get out in the sun a little bit in the afternoons. We were sitting there one afternoon in the sun and two of our planes spotted a German convoy down in the valley and they dropped a bomb on the first two vehicles and then they strafed that convoy, and they did a beautiful job. We were up rooting for them. One of the plane's nose turned toward us and the bullets flew...we ducked back in our cave. That was like the 23rd when that happened.

And then there was several raids on the highway while they were fortifying their position. But, on the morning of the 26th our artillery opened up on the German fortifications on that hill and we were right in the middle. A shell hit our cave and just opened it wide open. Neither one of us were injured. We were down under the bunks with our helmets on and Druley was wrapped up with a few rocks. I pulled him out. We were both addled and were undecided if we were to try to stay or go. But we decided we could go toward our front lines. (Continued)

OUTNUMBERED AND OVERWHELMED

(Continuation)

I could hear the carbines and MIs, and I knew that was our fire. So we decided to go right toward the front lines, which was not a very good idea. But sliding down the hill--the snow would melt some in the daytime and then at night it would freeze over and you could just go just like a sled. And that was the way we were going down the hill. I got up such speed I could hardly stop. And when I did make a landing it was right on two Germans in a foxhole and they whirled around and started shooting at Druley and I yelled, "No, no, don't shoot!" The sergeant pulled out his pistol and stuck it in my belly and he says, "Comrades, comrades, where are your comrades?" I said, "There," and I pointed across the river. So he, the second thing he asked, "Chocolate, do you have any chocolate?" I said, "No; no chocolate." So he called a private that was with him, he put him on us as a guard, to take us back up to...back behind the lines. This guard marched us back and we went across the door of our cave we were living in, and went right down that path that we came up on.

But one thing that was very interesting at that point. When I had to go down to get water out of that well and it was freezing cold, it was on a moonshine night, and I was down dipping water and I heard a noise and I looked up the path and I saw motion. It was a platoon of German soldiers with white sheets on and they were coming right at me. I just slid right down in that well and nothing stuck out but my helmet. I could have reached out and touched every one of them. They got by and there I was in that cold water and wet, so I went back up to the cave and pulled off and rung out my clothes and we fired up that little charcoal heater and dried out over night somewhat.

But after I was captured on the morning of the 26th they carried us back somewhat behind the lines and they did not know what to do with us so they put us in a half track with three or four Germans in it and we rode around on front lines with the signal corps for a couple of days. But they had fresh roast pork in there that they served us. When they got through, they put us in a basement, up in a little town, and the basement had a big pile of apples in it so we are just ate all the apples we could eat.

It made me think of, that at that point, in which I thought of this many times, is a portion of the 23rd Psalm.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

I have said that many of times and continue to. That is proof that food was to some extent available in the presence of our enemies, even though they did not have very much.

We went from there to, a few days later, for interrogation. A guard took me in to the German major. I was in charge of all of the medications that we had in the battalion, which consisted of the narcotics, the amytal, nimbital, the barbiturates, all of our sulfonamides and morphine, and was just strapped by the front and back. And by the way, when we were in the cave and the shells started falling, the Germans were moaning and groaning all around us and Druley says, "Joel, you better go out there and give those guys a shot of morphine." I said, "Druley, I don't believe I can quite do that." But the German major asked what I had in those bags. I told him. He says, "Well, I will take those." I said, "Sir, I am suppose to get a signature for these

from a medical officer. I will be glad to turn them over to a medical officer." He says, "I can make you give them to me." I said, "I am sure you can. ...That is against the Geneva Conference Rules." He says, "Are you going to report me?" "No, no; I am not going to report you, but I will be glad to turn these medications over to a medical officer."

His aide left and came back with a medical officer. He asked me what I had and I told him. He said, "My God!--sir, he could speak English better than I could--" "You have more medications here than the whole German Army has got." He signed for it. I handed the piece of paper over to the major. When he finished the interrogation, which was about it. He asked me what outfit I was in. I said, "Sir I am not a soldier; I don't fight, I try to keep the guys patched up so they can." He accepted that. When he got ready to leave he gave me a Red Cross pack; it was the only one I got while I was captured.

Only Druley and I, were captured. Because there was such a small number, we rode around in the signal car; there was only two of us. But we finally got back far enough after the interrogation that there were 22 in the group, and had two German guards. We started to march and we would just march enough each day enough to stay behind the German lines.

They wanted us to dig emplacements for their artillery. The only way they would give you food would be if you would go out and work. They got to me, and John wasn't able to work. I said, "No, but if you have anything else I can do, but I'm not going out to dig gun emplacements to put your guns in to shoot our guys." Every day, I didn't get any food, there was 22 of us in a small room....

By the way, when I was sitting at the door one night and this was about January 6th or 7th something like that the first part of January, the guard opened the door, said, "Move over." There is not much room, we were all sitting around on the floor, but I moved over enough and two guys came in. One of them asked, "When were you captured?" I told him. He says, "Where are you from?" "North Carolina," I said, "Where are you from?" He says, "I am from North Carolina, too." I says, "Where?" He says, "Pethidine out in Goldsboro." I said, "Did you have a sister named Molly?" He said, "Yes, I sure did; she taught school at Grantville," I said, "That is where I am from." and the other guy was James ____; he was a brother to a policeman in Goldsboro that I knew. I thought that quite a coincidence....

The only work, on that 100-mile march, I worked in the field kitchen one day. That was the best day I had. Plenty of split pea soup and I took two loaves of bread. I was on two 100-mile forced marches. ...we got back to Limburg, Germany, on March 15. I had on the same clothes that I was captured in. I had not had a shave or shower. I would take my clothes off...when we would stop. I would take all my clothes off; my body was scarred all over by body lice. I would turn my clothes inside out and crush every louse I could find. I would take the snow and wash my body and then put my clothes back on.

[Joel's interview was quite extensive and space limitations will not permit us to print it all. He was in Stalag 10-B (between Hamburg and Bremen) and was liberated by the British on May 2nd (the day before his birthday.)]

CHECK TO SEE IF YOUR DUES ARE DUE--IT APPEARS ON YOUR MAILING LABEL.

SHOW BIZ...

By David Saltman
638th Tank Destroyer Battalion

On Thursday, November 4, 2004 at 11 a.m. I took a limousine from my home to the broadcast studio of The History Channel in New York to participate in a discussion of the Battle of the Bulge. My fellow panelists were Bob and Pete of the 1st Division, both of whom lived in Naples Florida. Steve, moderator for the History Channel, did not want a Q&A session because that is too dull. Instead, he wanted an informal discussion that was spontaneous, casual and interesting. The three of us chatted with each other as a warm-up, the type of discussion that would characterize the broadcast.

Steve asked us how cold it was in the Ardennes when the battle started on December 16, 1944? Pete said he had never been colder in his entire life--just freezing all the time. The American forces had been taken by surprise and did not have the warm clothing needed. Bob picked up the conversation and said he was a tank driver. There is nothing colder than a steel tank in freezing weather. I picked up where Bob left off and said that the temperature in the Ardennes mountains at that time was 20 degrees below zero. In the Boy Scouts I had learned the importance of wearing layers of clothing to preserve body heat. On the outside I wore an army field jacket that was designed for post summer weather. It was still very cold.

For the next question, where were you when the fighting broke out in the Ardennes? I was in Holland enjoying the luxury of a hot shower on the ground level of a coal mine in Eindhoven. On my way back to Germany where my unit, the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was located, I checked into headquarters via radio. The battalion commander responded on our walkie-talkie in a sharp tone: "Silence your radio and return immediately. Out!" On the way back north I got another shock--the battalion was on the same road heading in the opposite direction. I kept moving with my eye on the column, until I saw the last vehicle, then made a U-turn. When the convoy made its frequent stops, I hailed one of the men and asked him "Sergeant, what's going on? Where is the battalion going?" He replied, "I don't know, sir. We got sudden orders to pack up and follow the 84th Division to Belgium."

It was nightfall when we entered Marche, Belgium, a town with very important cross roads about 30 miles northwest of Bastogne. It was filled with troops when I accidentally met General Bolling, the 84th Division commander. We chatted briefly about the enemy situation. The General was anxious to know their locations so that he could plot them on his map in the division command post. I mentioned that I had a large radio in a half track and would contact the various companies to see if I could pick up some intelligence information. The general was grateful and asked me to come to his CP when I learned anything. I stayed up all night in the freezing cold but the trees, the mountains and the cold weather were not conducive to reaching anyone on the FM radio channels. Two hours later the Germans found us and greeted us with the usual heavy artillery bombardment. The infantry and tank destroyers stayed in the area but the division command post moved out of town to a safer location.

The next day I was in a jeep heading for a small hilltop. In the field were two of our tanks, knocked out and still smoking. When I got to the hilltop I stopped to talk to the soldier on duty but he waved at me frantically. "The Germans have this area under observation. Leave immediately!" I grasped the edges of my jeep and vaulted over the side, instructing my driver, "Take this vehicle over the side of this hill, fast!" I joined the soldier behind the tree line to escape observation. Seconds later a tank shell came whizzing by, missing its target, then exploded on the other side of the hill. That soldier saved my life.

Steve, of the History Channel, asked, "What happened at Christmas time?" Pete said that the Americans and the Germans observed a truce for awhile to celebrate the holiday. Some of the troops were lucky and had a hot meal delivered by their kitchen staff. I had no such luck and had to eat the usual K-ration in a paper box. When I tried to get a drink of water out of my canteen, I couldn't. The water in the canteen was frozen into a solid lump of ice. We had no break in the action at any time.

"How did you feel when the battle ended?" In January, 1945, we kept pushing the Germans back to the original position when the Bulge started. During that period ending January 25, 1945, there were 1,000,000 troops on both sides engaged in battle. The question arose regarding how the Germans were resupplied? They weren't. The objective was to cut the Allied troops in half en route to the seaport of Antwerp. Gasoline was critical to refuel all vehicles and the German plan was to capture gasoline supplies from the Americans.... When they reached a point three miles from the Meuse River, they got an unexpected surprise. There was a one million gallon gasoline dump near the road where the Germans were approaching. The troops guarding the supply acted quickly. They dug a trench line from the road back to the gasoline supply area and filled it with gasoline. When the rumble of German tanks signaled their approach, they set fire to the trench and the fire spread quickly to the road. The tanks did not dare to advance further, so they turned around and retreated. This was the limit of their advance.

The Battle of the Bulge was the greatest single battle in American history. It lasted six weeks and in that period we suffered 19,000 troops killed and 81,000 wounded.

When the battle was officially ended, I took a jeep and went back to the area we had left in Germany. As soon as I returned, one of the men approached and said: "Don't get out of your vehicle. You have been transferred to the 6th Tank Destroyer Group and you are ordered to report there immediately." I had forgotten my last conversation with the 84th Division anti-tank officer when he had described the visit of the Tank Destroyer group commander to my battalion commander. The group commander was a full colonel, a West Point graduate, and he decided that I was the kind of officer he was looking for. While he was having XIII Corps cut orders to transfer me, our battalion got sudden orders to leave for Belgium and I was then in First Army territory. When I returned to the Ninth Army area at the end of the Bulge campaign, I was then back under Corps jurisdiction.

A 3-Hour Drive to Nowhere

The half-hour broadcast was short and the three of us had performed well. I went down to look for my limousine for the trip home. There was a stretch limo with my name on the windshield. I asked the

(Continued)

SHOW BIZ....

(Continuation)

driver why such a big car for only one person and he said all the smaller cars were in use. I sat in the back seat and in the middle was an elaborate bar with two flasks of whiskey and lots of glasses with napkins. Nostalgically, I wished that I had access to that 60 years ago when I was in combat. As a nonagenarian I am not a drinking man any more. The driver was so far away up front I figured I would need a bull horn to talk to him.

As soon as we started out, the traffic in New York City was impossibly heavy, especially in the afternoon rush hour. The rain added to the worst type of traffic, going cross town to reach the midtown tunnel. We were out two hours had only gone 7 miles from the studio when the driver said I had an important call on his cell phone. The studio wanted me to come back! I made some unprintable remarks to myself and told the driver I couldn't get to the front of the limo while it was in motion. He somehow maneuvered the car into a U-turn and parked in a spot off the highway. I went up front and took the phone. The caller identified herself as Lisa, the production manager of The History Channel. An unusual situation had occurred and part of the broadcast was defective and had to be redone. I said I couldn't do it—I was exhausted. Lisa put me on the spot. "If you don't come back, we will have to ditch the whole program." I was stunned. I thought of the great expense of bringing two panel members from Florida, the large staff involved in the broadcast and the three video cameras that were involved in the taping. I relented and said I would return to the studio. The limo driver said he would be waiting for me when I was ready for the return trip home. It was a 3-hour trip to nowhere.

A staff member was waiting for me in the lobby and escorted me upstairs. The entire staff was waiting—now operating on overtime. The staff member said it was great to have me back. "There are very few 93 year old men who would come back as you did." I said "You're wrong, there aren't any. They're all dead."

The studio had served us a hero sandwich for lunch, so I ordered a turkey and cheese sandwich for dinner. I was in the make-up room when the sandwich arrived so I ate there. The make-up person completed my facial touch-up, then I joined my two fellow panelists and the studio moderator. We went back to the studio for the remake. Only the first segment was defective, and we finished that part quickly.

I went downstairs with two staff members and looked for my limousine. It was raining heavily. My driver was parked somewhere on 10th Avenue comfortably parked in the rain waiting for me. I was stranding uncomfortably in the street watching the rain, waiting for him. A young lady staff member took an umbrella, stood in the street and made all kinds of hand signals to my hidden driver. Five minutes later he drove up.

I asked the driver which way he was going back. He said he would try the Triboro Bridge. That was a good choice. It was night, raining heavily, and the traffic cross town was still bad. We were slow again but moving a little faster than many hours ago. When we reached the East Side drive we still had heavy traffic. The cars in front of us eventually began to speed up; things were returning to normal.

At about 10:00 p.m., we arrived at my home in Wantagh. What a day! Three panelists for a half hour broadcast, a 3-hour taxi drive to nowhere, a remake of a broadcast segment, much preparation, almost half of the broadcast will be commercials and I was away from home for 11 hours. That's Show Business. ■

TURNING THE TIDE

[The following appeared in "The Pekan" the newsletter of the 526th Armored Infantry Battalion and was written by ED PICCONE, of C Company.]

It was nearing the end of December 1944 on one evening, standing guard at the entrance of the Alfa Hotel, when I heard a rumbling sound in the distance. I could not figure out what it could be. The sound was getting closer and louder. Suddenly, out of the darkness, came a convoy of 6 x 6 trucks loaded with infantrymen and pulling trailers full of equipment. There seemed to be no end to them. Then came artillery pieces, prime movers loaded with tanks, etc. This went on for three nights and three days without much of a break in between. It was a sign, to me, that the "Bulge" was about to hit a wall, and so it did!

Vapor trails filled the skies over Luxembourg City, from what was to be known as the "ten thousand plane raid." It was a sight to see. The scene was played out only a few miles from the city, where the Bulge was stopped. The bombers would drop their load, and those who were not shot down, would return to base to reload. Fighters and interceptors would engage in dogfights with winners and losers on both sides. This went on for hours, to where the sun was no longer visible, hidden behind the vapor trails. As I watched these events play out, I realized I was watching a major event taking place one that would turn the tide for the allies. So it did! ■

WWII VETERANS PROGRAM

Every August, there is a WWII Veterans Program at Fort Dade Park, outside Bushnell, Florida. Four members of the Mt. Dora Chapter attended (taking along applications for VBOB).



Left to right: Wilbur MacDougall, Gerald Myers, Milt Bartelt and Harold Ledbetter. ■

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Prelude

Due to the shortage of U.S. Army personnel in Europe, our brother service, the U.S. Navy, stepped in to furnish a navy band from Naples, Italy, for music at the ceremonies. Members of the Naval Station Rota, Spain, volunteered to act as host to the VBOB veterans and as military detachments in the various ceremonies.

The weather for this tour was typical "Battle of the Bulge" weather, overcast, misty, foggy, cold and snowy at times, true to the spirit of this anniversary.

"Task Force Ardennes 60" must be recognized for a super job in organizing all the arrangements related to the presentations at the various monuments. "Mieke" and "Christiane," Belgian employees of the Belgian Embassy, in Washington, deserve special recognition for their untiring efforts to keep the various events on schedule.

Celebrating and participating in the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium and Luxembourg, during the period of December 10th to 20th, 2004, was a tremendous success, events long to be remembered.

The VBOB 60th Anniversary Tour and Celebrations Begin

Thursday, December 7, 2004--VBOB members taking advantage of the Belgian Air Force airbus departed the U.S. from Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, DC. On arrival at Brussels airport members were escorted to the Belgian Military Academy in Brussels. Members were assigned individual rooms; breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals were also furnished at the Academy. During the days, members were escorted to many historic sites in and around Brussels.

Friday, December 10, 2004--VBOB members, families and friends departed from the U.S. from Atlanta, Dulles, JFK, and Chicago airports for Brussels, Belgium.

Saturday, December 11, 2004--On arrival at Brussels Airport, after claiming luggage, and passing through security and passport checks, members boarded buses. From here the buses were escorted by Military Police cyclist to the Belgian Military Academy, where we met up with the earlier arrivals. After a hot cup of coffee, members and relatives walked to the "Royal Museum of the Army and Military History." The museum houses weapons, uniforms, aero-planes, and tanks. It covers the history of the world's soldiers, ranging from shiny armour of the Middle Ages to the camouflage uniforms worn today. After the visit to the museum, the VBOB group returned to the Military Academy for lunch by military cooks. Note of interest: the plaque on the wall of the Academy reads: Koninklike Militaire School (Dutch); Ecole Royale Militaire (French); Konigliche Militar Akademar (German). Why three languages? Belgium is a trilingual country; has three national languages--northern Belgium speaks Dutch, central Belgium speaks French, and lower Belgium speaks German. Belgian laws are written in these three languages. After lunch the VBOB group boarded buses for Houffalize escorted by the MPs. Hotel Ol Fosse d'Outh (English translation--the whole Ourthe River Valley) was our home for the next six days. After rooms were assigned (a nightmare) and unpacking luggage, dinner was served in the hotel restaurant. Thus began our luncheons and dinners savored with bottles of wine and bottled water.



...VBOBers on early flight



...Arch at Royal Belgian Museum



...Belgian Gen. Van d Ven (R)
with curator

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Sunday, December 12, 2004--The tour began with a visit to St. Vith for a wreath-laying ceremony at the 106th Infantry Division monument. The Mayor of St. Vith welcomed members and praised members of the 106th for their efforts to defend this area. VBOB President George Chekan thanked the mayor and citizens of St. Vith for caring for this monument.

On to Prumerberg, one mile east of St. Vith, to the memorial dedicated to the 168th Engineer Combat Battalion, a handsome seven foot granite monument. The engineers fought as infantry. The 168th ECB was awarded the Presidential Military Citation and the Belgian Croix de Guerre for their bravery. The City Council of St. Vith made a park in the forest that surrounds the monument area. Today, there is still clear evidence of the fox holes used by the engineers to defend this area with orders to "hold at all costs."

From Prumerberg to Malmedy. The memorial was erected to the memory of 84 American prisoners of war murdered on December 17, 1944, at Baugnez Crossroads. A few men managed to escape by feigning death but the majority were taken prisoner and assembled in a meadow alongside the road where a German column opened fire on the prisoners.

From the Malmedy Monument, we proceeded to Camp D'Elsenborn, the only army camp in Belgium. Here, we had a delicious lunch served by men in white jackets. Camp Elsenborn was originally built by the German Army in WWI. After the treaty in WWI the camp reverted to the Belgians, in WWII the German Army reoccupied the camp.

From Camp Elsenborn we traveled to Stavelot. Here, Dorothy Davis narrated her experience in this area. The memorial was dedicated in tribute to the civilians murdered by the German SS. It was here that the 5th Belgian Fusiliers Battalion, guarding a fuel depot set fire to rows of jerricans creating a gigantic wall of flames denying Peiper the fuel he urgently needed.

From Stavelot we traveled to LaGleize. Here, at LaGleize, American paratroopers, supported by an armoured unit, sealed off Peiper's vanguard. Unable to advance further, the German survivors destroyed their vehicles and on foot rejoined their unit, the 1st SS Panzer.



...VBOB Pres. Chekan thanks the Mayor and citizens of St. Vith



...Ol Fosse Hotel, Houffalize our quarters for most trip



...Chas Nelson and John McAuliffe chat with former mayor of St. Vith



...fox hole is still recognizable after 60 years

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Monday, December 13, 2004--Today we visited the "Musee National d'Histoire Militaire" in Diekirch, Luxembourg. This renowned museum is one of the best in the Ardennes. A considerable amount of WWII war material, American, English and German uniforms, vehicles and firearms are on display. There are numerous life-sized, impressive dioramas of the dramatic and tragic situations that both soldiers and civilians were caught in; in addition there are numerous personal soldiers' belongings, photographs, documents and maps.

From Diekirch, we visited the nine foot statue of General Patton in the Patton Park on the edge of Ettelbruck, Luxembourg; and then to the General Patton Memorial Museum in the City of Ettelbruck.

This museum has many mementos of General Patton and numerous artifacts of equipment, tank bogie wheels and ammunition.

From Ettelbruck we returned to the cultural center of Diekirch for luncheon as guests of the Luxembourg Government at the "Aal Seerei" Building (English translation--"Old Saw Factory"). At this luncheon there was no end to the wine and beer, volunteers were constantly refilling empty glasses. I was so impressed with the grandeur of beer glasses that I asked a waitress if I could buy some as souvenirs for my children. The waitress took me to the head beer dispenser; she explained to the man what I wanted. Lo and behold, he gave me six beer glasses free of charge. Thankfully, I was able to carry these glasses home with only one breakage.

On to Vianden, Luxembourg, to view the 700 century-old castle and the town in the valley. The castle today is not occupied with royalty; it is rented out for weddings and parties. Vianden was unfortunately the last town in Luxembourg to be liberated. The natives proudly said after the war: The town is in ruins, but the ruins are in tact.

Next stop was a monument to the 5th Infantry Division at Echternach, Luxembourg. After the ceremony we were directed to a pedestrian bridge, 40 feet from the monument, over the Sure River that divides Germany and Luxembourg. Our group crossed the bridge to Germany to view a block house and other German defensive positions. With time to kill, members wandered into the Town of Echternach to browse and shop.

Next was the ride from Echternach to Luxembourg City to visit the American Embassy and a reception and greeting by Ambassador Peter Terpeluk, Jr. (a fellow Philadelphian) and his wife, Diane. The security at the embassy was very tight. The VBOB group had to walk two blocks to the main entrance as buses were not permitted in this area. To gain entrance to the embassy, it was a must to show your passport. Champagne, wine, and orange juice, and hors d'oeuvres were offered during the reception which lasted from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. We retraced our steps back to the buses. The tour arrived back to our hotel in Houffalize at 11:00 p.m. The hotel furnished a light snack.



...Vianden castle



...Ambassador Terpeluk and lovely wife Diane



...happy faces waiting for parade



...5th Fusiliers and company

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Tuesday, December 14, 2004--This was a free day. We were permitted to go anywhere provided we had transportation. My buddy, Jim Barlow, somehow was able to hook-up with Rich Williams, a retired "bird" colonel, working for NATO Headquarters in Brussels. Rich drove all the way from Brussels to volunteer his services. With this good news, my son, Gerry, and I went along with Jim. Rich has a BMW car--nothing like riding in luxury. Rich took us to Liege. Here we strolled the streets of Liege and luck was with us. We met a Belgian civilian, Patrick Lischer, who noticed by our VBOB hats that we were Americans. He was thrilled to greet us. He was only eight in WWII. He had three uncles who were shipped to Dachau and Buckenwald. Two of his uncles died in the camps. He told us he always wanted to greet American soldiers. Patrick showed us around a certain section of Liege. I was looking for a special Christmas gift for my children but we could not find the right store. We invited Patrick to have lunch with us in LePerron Cafe in Liege. As we were departing Liege, we offered to take Patrick to his home. As he left the car, he directed us to a store at a shopping mall off the main highway. We departed with a handshake and well wishes. At the mall was Carrefour Department Store. As I entered the store, I spotted the gift I was looking for--a gift package of four bottles of beer and a goblet (gifts arrived home with only one goblet broken). Paid the bill with a credit card. We arrived back at the hotel around 6:00 p.m. in time for dinner. After dropping us off, Rich headed back to Brussels--a two-hour drive. Rich was a friend and gentleman in the truest words.

Wednesday, December 15, 2004--Today we traveled to Clervaux, Luxembourg, for ceremonies at the GI Memorial. We were greeted by the Mayor of Clervaux and the President of CEBA. Colors were presented by the U.S. Color Guard detachment. Wreaths were laid at the base of the GI Memorial. *Taps* were rendered by a member of the Navy Band. During the playing of the national anthems, one of the rifle-bearing members of the Honor Guard collapsed and was rushed to the first aid station. In true military training an alert member of the Honor Guard detachment replaced the fallen soldier. In a welcome address, VBOB President Chekan paid tribute to Tilly Kimmes our friend. After the ceremony ended the VBOB group was bused to the Clervaux Community Center. At the Center the Luxembourg Government "Liberation of Luxembourg," 60th Anniversary Medallion, A Tribute to Veterans, was awarded to all VBOB veterans. The award was presented by Luxembourg soldiers in a very military ritual, placing the Luxembourg ribbon and medallion over the head of the recipient followed by a smartly executed salute. The reception was conducted by the City of Clervaux and the special luncheon was through the courtesy of the Luxembourg Government. There was no stopping the flow of wine.



...thank you for remembering us



...GI Memorial, Clervaux



...a tribute to veterans

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Thursday, December 16, 2004--At 4:30 a.m. hardy members of VBOB departed for the night vigil at Villers Las Bonne Eau. At 5:30 a.m. church bells rang; members gathered around a U.S. Memorial; the mayor of the community conducted the services, followed by a wreath-laying; *Taps*; and a prayer. An early morning breakfast was held at the center. At 11:00 a.m., the rest of the VBOB group were bused to Mardasson Monument in Bastogne for a wreath-laying ceremony. The Mayor of Bastogne and the American Ambassador to Belgium Tom Korocogos greeted veterans seated in a sheltered area. Present was the U.S. Navy Band, mixed platoon of Navy and Army personnel, U.S. Color Guard and two platoons of Belgian soldiers and their standard bearer. During the night four inches of snow blanketed the Bastogne area. The Belgian officials were quick to react as the area around the monument was cleared of snow for the ceremony. After brief speeches by Belgian and American dignitaries; a wreath was laid; followed by a 21-gun salute; followed by *Taps*. After this ceremony we were bused to the Royal Leopold Club in Bastogne for lunch and refreshments. Here a bottle of beer cost one Euro, only time we had to pay for refreshments.

From Bastogne we traveled to the Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial in an area called Hamm, Luxembourg. The big event of the day. In attendance was His Royal Highness, the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, His Excellency U.S. Ambassador Peter Terpeluk, Jr. and his wife, Diane, and other dignitaries. Ceremonies included presentation of the Colors; invocation by military chaplain; address by the prime minister; offering of wreaths by HRH The Grand Duke and VBOB; *Taps*; ceremonial 21-gun salute by Luxembourg Army 105 mm salute battery; address by George Chekan, President of VBOB (see speech on page 25); closing remarks by Ambassador Peter Terpeluk, Jr.; National Anthems of Luxembourg and the United States; announced conclusion of official ceremony. VBOB veterans and friends were seated in a reserved area back of the dignitaries, blankets were furnished to ward off the cold weather. After the ceremony members were bused to a U.S. army base in Dudelange, Luxembourg for a USO Styled Canteen Night. Entertainment was furnished by the Liberty Bells, three beautiful young damsels. This USO trio sang numerous songs of the 40's, mingled and cuddled with the veterans. Music was furnished by a Navy band flown in from Naples, Italy. Many sailors and WAVES came from Rota, Spain, to act as hosts to the veterans. Many "cheesecake" pictures of the Liberty Bells and veterans were taken. Jitterbugging was the dance of the night. The building was a converted warehouse, camouflage netting adorned the walls interspersed with Christmas decorations and trees. Wine and cokes flourished all evening with hamburgers and other goodies in the chow line. A real typical USO atmosphere, first class entertainment, and a great night of fun was had by all.



VBOB President joins Luxembourg's Royal Highnesses paying tribute to the fallen at Hamm Cemetery



...thanks, so much, for the cozy blankets



...a visit to Gen. Patton's statue Ettlebruck



Midge Mariotti's dance card was completely filled.

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Friday, December 17, 2004--Prior to departing on our tour, members were required to pack their luggage and place the luggage in a designated area for pick-up and delivery to our next hotel--Alvisse Parc Hotel in Luxembourg City. From the hotel in Houffalize we were bused to the center of town. In town we were directed to St. Catherine Roman Catholic Church for ecumenical service. As we entered the church, grade school children lined the aisles of the church. Veterans were directed to a reserved section. Those civilians in the church gave us a standing round of applause. After seating, the American and Belgian Colors were presented. The scripture readings and sermon were in French, translated in English by another member of the clergy. To be surrounded by the children was very emotional and heart warming. After the church services we were assembled at the Houffalize Town Memorial for a wreath laying by town officials. In the background were children of lower grades unable to see the ceremony. John Bowen and I ushered the children in front of the VBObers for a clear view of the ceremonies. From this memorial we walked to the Link-up Memorial of the 1st and 3rd Armies on January 16, 1945; a wreath-laying ceremony was held, followed by *Taps* and the national anthems were played by the Navy band. From this memorial we were bused to the Houffalize Sports Center, where we were greeted by the mayor and children of Houffalize. Laura Lejeane and Anthony Uhoda thanked us as their liberators. The children were interspersed among the veterans, during the greetings and at a certain point in the program, the children presented a certificate of appreciation to the veterans. Refreshments were served at the center. Veterans were seen giving children U.S. money--bills and coins as souvenirs.

At this time a select group of 40 VBObers left the tour in preparation of a reception with the Prince of Belgium.

The rest of the group continued on the tour to Baraque de Fraiture (aka Parker's Crossroad) named after Major Arthur C. Parker, who established here a defensive position with three 105 mm howitzer guns to resist the German advance. Major Parker

was seriously wounded and the position was overwhelmed. Americans were forced to surrender and were taken prisoner.

Next was a visit to LaRoche en Ardenne Museum. This museum has three floors, the dioramas and showcases display over 100 dummies of American, British, and German soldiers with their equipment and weapons; there are also displays of personal objects found on the battlefield, light and heavy weapons, documents and photographs and some 20 military vehicles. On departure from the museum members were given a medallion by the Association Des Musees De La Bataille Des Ardenne. After this museum, the group was bused to Alvisse Parc Hotel in Luxembourg City.

In the meantime the select group of 40 was in a holding area of Houffalize and Bastogne for approximately six hours. This select group in formal dress and army uniforms was eventually bused to Pope John XXIII Building in Bastogne to await reception with the Prince of Belgium. As we entered this building, we were greeted by a swarm of press photographers. As photographs were being taken an uninvited person, dressed in a white baseball cap, heavy wool sweater, and jeans, sat with the invited members. Earle Hart, our group leader, questioned the uninvited character and politely requested he leave the room. While in this holding area, we were furnished refreshments of wine and orange juice and canapes. Finally we were escorted to a small theater which seated about 500 persons. Entering the theater we received a rousing applause. We had to stand in a row across the width of the theater awaiting the arrival of the Prince. As the Prince arrived, all members of the audience stood. The Prince greeted each VBOber personally. After the greetings and seating of the Prince, the audience likewise was seated. The stage play "Et puis...Bastogne" was in French. The dialogue was superimposed on two screens, in French and translated in English. The play lasted two hours. After the end of the play we were again greeted and bade our farewells to the Prince. The select group arrived at our new hotel about midnight.



*All wrapped up-
Dorothy Davis &
Granddaughter at
Hamm ceremony*



*General Patton's Gravesite,
Hamm Cemetery*



*Earl Hart, 60th Anniversary Chairman
surrounded by enthusiastic children.*

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Saturday, December 18, 2004--We were bused from Hotel Parc, Luxembourg City, to Bastogne's Patton Monument. Here veterans were separated from family members for a short ceremony. Mercy Place was lined with flags of the 50 States and Belgian flags of patriotic organizations of Bastogne. American and Belgian dignitaries were escorted to places of honor at the Patton Monument. *Taps* was rendered by two buglers of the Navy band; and Belgian *Last Post* was played by the two buglers, followed by the national anthems. This closed the ceremonies at the Patton Monument.

From the Patton Monument a parade was formed on the Perimeter de Bastogne, a walk of approximately one mile, with the Navy band in the lead; followed by American and Belgian dignitaries; American detachment with Colors; Belgian detachment with Standard; followed by American VBOBers; 50 American State flags carried by American servicemen and women; Belgian flags of patriotic organizations of Bastogne; and Americans accompanying veterans. A wreath-laying ceremony was held at the McAuliffe Monument. The Deputy Mayor of Bastogne; patriotic organizations of Bastogne; and the U.S. delegation laid wreaths at the base of the McAuliffe statue. *Taps* and *Last Post*, the American and Belgian National Anthems, were played by the Navy musicians. Lunch and refreshments were furnished to members and families at the Athenée--



...King Albert II



...one of many displays of appreciation

a fusilier building in Bastogne.

From the Athenée Building we were bused to the Mardasson Memorial. On arrival here we were given a tour of the heroic battlefield that surrounds Bastogne. After this tour our buses were driven as close as possible to the memorial to ease the amount of walking that veterans would be required to walk to our reserved sheltered area for the ceremonies. As we approached our sheltered area we were given a rousing reception. In this sheltered area we were given Belgian army blankets to ward off the cold, wintry blast. In the meantime, the military units were organizing for their pompous military entrance on the grounds of the memorial. The parade was led by the Belgian Musique Des Guides. A smartly dressed band of approximately 200 musicians; followed by the American detachment; a Belgian detachment; and the USA Colors; and finally the Belgian Standard. On arrival of the Belgian King everyone stood. The King reviewed the Belgian Honor Guard, and then took his seat in the sheltered area. Speeches were made by the Deputy Mayor of Bastogne, the American representative, and the Belgian representative. Wreath-laying was done by R.H. the King, then by the Ambassador of the United States. A 21-gun salute was rendered by the Belgian military. National Anthems of Belgium and America were rendered by the Belgian musicians. At this point the King departed.

We were again bused to Place du Marche, the City Hall Room, Bastogne. His Majesty the King presented to six previously appointed members the 60th Anniversary medallion. At approximately 5:30 p.m. began the historical re-enactment through Sound and Light performance reviving the Bulge for one hour. This is similar to our 4th of July fireworks. During this time the city will be in total obscurity, even the reception room was in total darkness; all food and refreshments ceased. The show could be witnessed from the windows in the reception room. After the Sound and Light performance, all VBOB veterans received a medallion from the Mayor of Bastogne. After the show and presentations of medallions, we were bused to the Parc Hotel in Luxembourg City, arriving at about 10:00 p.m.



Jim Barlow, Kate Nolan, John McAuliffe, Marty Sheeron at the Mardasson Memorial

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Sunday, December 19, 2004--This was a day of choice. One option was a city tour of Luxembourg City; another option was a visit to the German cemetery at Sandweiler, Luxembourg; or attend catholic mass in Luxembourg City.

I did not opt for the tour of Luxembourg City.

There was a group very interested in the cemetery at Sandweiler. VBOB President George Chekan led this tour. The gist of George's tacit, short speech was a reconciliation of our feelings in 1944-45 with our feelings at this present time. Many had adverse feelings for this trip. The German press gave full coverage to this event and it was aired on German TV.

Others, including myself, opted to attend mass in the Roma Catholic Cathedral of Notre Dame in Luxembourg City. After mass, members were free to do some Christmas shopping. In this part of town there was a "flea" market far superior to what we know in the U.S. These wooden stalls were well kept, neat, clean and heated. They offered numerous types of Christmas decorations, toys, wines, beers, nick-knacks, all top grade--nothing was cheap. Some of these vendors sold food popular with the locals. Also in the area were a McDonalds, ChiChi's,

and a Pizza Hut. The city streets were well kept and clean, no sandwich wrappers, or soda cups--a very clean city.

After Christmas shopping, which was in the high priced part of town, we returned to the Parc Hotel. This was our farewell banquet night. The decor of the dining room was outstanding. Wine, natural water bottles, and cokes were plentiful. Dinner menu was super. Last minute time departures were announced. Certain individuals who were key players in this 60th Anniversary tour were given Certificates of Appreciation in recognition of their talents to make this event an outstanding success. CRIBA (Centre de Recherches et d'Informations sur la Bataille des Ardennes) in the certificates issued to members, eloquently stated their feelings for the veterans: "To the gallant veterans we say, thank you, we will never forget you." As we left the dining room each veteran was given a 60th Anniversary Medallion from VBOB.

Monday, December 20, 2004--Members were advised to get up at 3:00 a.m. and have luggage placed in designated airport areas by 4:00 a.m. Breakfast was at 5:00 a.m. Buses departed Hotel Parc at 6:00 a.m. for Brussels Airport. My bus driver was aggravated by the MP lead vehicle. He realized we were going too slow to meet our departure time in Brussels. As we approached Brussels the auto traffic was becoming very heavy. Somehow word got to the MP to speed up the route to the airport. Finally, the MP turned on his flashing light and siren to weave in and out of the traffic lanes. Our departure for JFK Airport was 10:10 a.m. We arrived at Brussels Airport at 9:10 a.m. We were given high priority to get our return tickets, luggage checked in, and clearance through security as our plane was loading.

Due to inclement weather reports our return flight to U.S. was delayed 45 minutes. People heading to Chicago and west were told their flights would be delayed six hours. After we took off for JFK, the flight was peaceful with some turbulence. We arrived at JFK at 1:40 p.m. EST, Monday, December 20, 2004.

Members are asked to remember in their prayers Jim Oliver (Connecticut) and Dan Funk (Washington, DC). Both these men spent time in hospitals in Belgium. As I understand it, Jim underwent heart surgery on December 23, 2004, to have a new mitral valve and is recovering in Washington Adventist Hospital. Dan's return to the U.S. from Belgium was delayed to December 24, 2004. He is in a VA hospital in Washington for additional medical needs.

Amitié pour toujours--Friendship forever.

Marty Sheeron
53rd Field Hospital

*Christiane ...
our charming
Belgian
hostess*



...VBOB in Bastogne

As VBOB President, I was honored and privileged to give this address Thursday, December 16, 2004, at Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial, Hamm, Luxembourg.

Your Royal Highnesses,
Mr. Prime Minister,
Speaker Hastert,
Members of Luxembourg Government,
Members of Congress,
Ambassador Terpeluk,
General Soyster,
Fellow Veterans,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear Friends,

As President of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, I have the honor to bring you greetings not only from the veterans who are with me today--but from my fellow veterans back home--and indeed from all of your many friends in America.

It has been 60 years since those dark days when we stood together to fight through to victory in the Ardennes Forest in snow, sleet and freezing rain.

We stood together for 60 miles stretching from Monshau to Echternach--and at hundreds of small villages and crossroads whose names never made the newspaper headlines.

Together we fought for freedom--a freedom that you had lost in 1940--regained in 1944--and were threatened with losing it again in December.

Your friends in the United States Army vowed that would not happen again and sent troops from other parts of the front lines in response to the German surprise attack.

Many of us here today, both American, Belgian and Luxembourgians cannot ever forget the scenes of those days--even though it has been 60 years since then--we can still see before us the roads filled with young mothers with small children--and grandfathers and grandmothers--the age we are today--pushing wagons and baby carriages filled with their prized possessions.

We can still recall tragic scenes of unarmed civilians being executed for no other reason than that they were trapped in the path of the brutal invaders. Those scenes are engraved in our memories, with the scenes of American soldiers taken prisoner only to be machine-gunned in snowy fields and roadside ditches.

Yes--we do have those dark memories.

But as the years have gone by, they have been joined by the smiling faces of villagers--many with their homes in ruins--greeting the liberating patrols--where the First and Third Armies met to seal off the Bulge.

And we have happy memories of both group and individual trips back to this beautiful country in the years since that victory in 1945.

We come back to visit the hill where we lost our close friends--or the crossroads where our company commander gave his life to save his troops and to die for freedom--ours and yours.

During our visit we are visiting the American military cemeteries to pay homage once again to our comrades who made the supreme sacrifice for that freedom. Here at Hamm, lies General George Patton long with the soldiers he led in battle.

We know that you have not forgotten them.

Our friends from CIBA, CRIBA, the Fusiliers and other groups tell us how you take school students out to visit the graves of their American friends, and how you remind them that--along with freedom fighters of Belgium and Luxembourg--they paid the supreme price for the liberty that all free people prize so much.

With that freedom--that liberty we fought for so long ago--there is also a very strong American word that fits in here. That word is Friendship--the Friendship that has reached across the Atlantic from your homes to ours--from your hearts to our hearts--that has grown stronger as we have grown older.

Thank you for remembering us--we will NEVER, NEVER forget you!!

George Chekan



LITTLE ROCK, ARK. JANUARY 25, 2005

Gov. Mike Huckabee presents Pat Murphy, VBOB Inc. member with the official proclamation remembering Jan. 25th, 2005 as the Battle of the Bulge Remembrance Day in the State of Arkansas. Later the veterans were honored with a resolution by Sen. Paul Miller, D-Melbourne, whose father was killed in action during that epic World War II battle.



"But sir, you're a General. They wouldn't dare say no to you!"

Revisiting the Battle of the Bulge



Dec. 16, 1944, in Bastogne, Belgium in fog and zero degrees: American soldiers were surprised at 5:30 a.m. by German Panzer divisions roar-

ing out of the Ardennes Forest. The Battle of the Bulge, the largest land battle in American history, had begun.

Sixty years later, I stood there at 5:30 a.m. at a night vigil in snow and frigid temperatures to mark the beginning of this battle, which officially lasted until Jan. 28, though some areas around Echternach were not liberated until Feb. 12. Traveling as a reporter with a delegation of 102 American veterans of the Battle of the Bulge and 116 family members, I relived those moments in the snowy Ardennes.

What I experienced as a veteran history teacher during those 10 days from Dec. 10-20, could not be found in

'The pouring rain did not stop the throngs of people from lining the streets and watching the veterans and their King in a parade. Their American heroes were there and they would not miss it.'

any textbooks. The veterans recounted their stories hidden in foxholes as if it were yesterday.

Mayor and citizen alike poured out love and appreciation saying, "We will never forget what you did here and we will never let our children forget either." Veterans autographed books about the Bulge as if they were rock

stars. Everywhere, people said, "Thank you." One lady had a sign that read, "You rescued me from a concentration camp." They were given medals by the King of Belgium and the Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

At Wiltz, I learned that William Nellis, for whom Nellis Air Force Base was named, was shot down near there. At Hamm Cemetery in Luxembourg, wrapped in blankets for 90 minutes, one of the veterans told me that he wanted to come here to honor his fallen buddies because, "They were the real heroes." That night we were treated to a USO-style canteen at a local air force base. The event was hosted by the U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg Peter Terpeluk and his wife, Diane.

Dec. 18 is known as "nuts" day named in honor of General McAuliffe who, when asked by the Germans to surrender, said "Nuts." The pouring rain did not stop the throngs of people from lining the streets and watching

the veterans and their King in a parade. Their American heroes were there and they would not miss it. The king threw nuts from the balcony and everybody received a bag of nuts.

The Belgian and Luxembourg people know what it is like to be without freedom. The American veterans gave them their life, their prosperity and their children. For this they are eternally thankful. I am in awe at how these people survived. Everyone is a hero.

I plan to continue to tell the story of our American veterans so that the work they did at the Battle of the Bulge will be remembered by our American school children as it is remembered by the children in Belgium and Luxembourg.

Linda Karen Miller, Ed.d., a retired history professor and Henderson resident, is an adjunct instructor at the Community College of Southern Nevada who traveled with the veterans as a historian-journalist.



Fine Dining at Hotel Francaise

USO Styled Canteen Night Trio sang songs of the 40's



Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the McAuliffe Monument



Gen Patton's Granddaughter at Hamm Ceremony

We plan a more elaborate VBOB 60th Anniversary book, in full color covering copy, pictures, testimonials, etc. Also, Bob Rhodes, our photographer, is involved in producing a photo CD and a professional crew is working on a documentary.

Earle Hart
60th Anniversary Chairman

THE GERMAN "88"

*"...rumors become sanctified as facts
in the chronicles of war."*

By Keith W. Bose
413th AAA Gun Battalion

Having served as an artilleryman in the Bulge and another largely forgotten war in 1952, I have become intrigued by the myth of the "German 88." Stories of our war in Europe carry a prevailing myth of a German antiaircraft gun sometimes reputed to kill and wound more GI's than any other field piece. Respectable historians and writers repeat the legend of the "German 88," picked up from narratives of front line GI's willing to swear that their wounds came from invincible muzzles of the 88's. GI's at the front waiting for the first whisper of an incoming shell deserve to believe anything they want of the German 88. Historians and philosophers would be better used to seek an explanation for the way rumors become sanctified as facts in the chronicles of war. German gunners who served the 88 may be amazed if not overcome with laughter at the reputation the 88 has inspired in American war literature.

Soldiers never see the deadly guns that shell them. Artillery is invariably hidden by terrain from the Main Line of Resistance (MLR). Most Wehrmacht shells on the front line came from 105mm. howitzers, the same caliber as our divisional field artillery. How did the enduring legend of the German 88 enter into our war stories?

By the time of the Battle of the Bulge, the reputation of the 88 had become a solid part of GI lore. But the German's were forced to a realistic view of the 88's limitations. When Bastogne was surrounded, von Lutwitz, commanding the 47th Panzer Corps that encircled Bastogne, sent an officer with a surrender note for McAuliffe, the message that received the famous "Nuts!" reply. It happened that von Lutwitz did not first consult with his boss, army commander General der Panzertruppen Hans Manteuffel. Manteuffel thoroughly chewed out von Lutwitz. The inability of the 88's to deliver accurate ground fire made von Lutwitz's list of artillery appear ridiculous. Instead, von Manteuffel got the Luftwaffe to raid Bastogne, although this also failed to impress their 101st defenders.

A thorough search for the first 88 story comes from a prewar report to President Franklin Roosevelt. The report was from an international lawyer and wheeler-dealer named William J. Donovan. FDR had subsidized Donovan for a trip to Germany to find anything he could of the mighty German military force that had been holding impressively photogenic parades in Berlin. With a note from President Roosevelt, Donovan had sufficient stature to have himself invited to Wehrmacht summer maneuvers in 1938. German officers assigned to show Donovan around proudly showed him the 88 mm Flugwehrcannone 18. Donovan had never seen an antiaircraft gun. The Germans did not say that the 88 was developed at the tail end of the First World War, in 1918, although it was too late for production. Hitler had the gun revived and placed in production by 1936. There were not many antiaircraft guns in Donovan's war. Donovan was holder of the Medal of Honor from the First World War, therefore he was obviously too busy to become interested in cannons for shooting at aeroplanes. His reputation would later come as head of Office Strategic Services (OSS).

When Donovan returned from his trip to Germany, he told the story of a wondrous gun he had seen to various military and

civilian confidants. It could be concealed behind a hill for fire at troops, he said. The Germans also told Donovan that the impressive gun could penetrate any tank.

The next stage of the legend of the 88 came to North Africa. Wavell's 8th Army had just received over 200 new Matilda tanks to use against Rommel's Africa Corps in April, 1942. In mid-June, Wavell mounted operation Battleaxe before Tobruk. The Desert Fox set a trap with Flak 1941's, which was the first version of the 88 to use an accurate panoramic ground sight. In less than two hours Wavell lost 90 Matilda's with direct hits from armor piercing 88 mm. shells firing from over a mile of desert. When correspondents heard about this they added it to rumors heard from Donovan's OSS boys. By D-Day, 1944, thousands more GI's had heard of the 88 than they would ever meet in anger. There were not that many 88's near the front. Most were needed to defend cities from murderous Allied bombing.

Any artilleryman would soon find that an antiaircraft gun is a poor means for indirect fire against ground targets, which is the routine mission of field artillery. Shells emerge with high velocity, which means that a slight change in elevation of the gun will shift the shell impact by a large amount. The science of ballistics tells a lot about hit probabilities of the 88, enough to embarrass the superlatives of writers and historians who repeat narratives of front line soldiers.

Ballistics of the standard 90 mm. antiaircraft gun of the Royal Artillery were almost the same as the famous 88. With a muzzle velocity of 2,756 feet per second, the 88 could reach 25,000 feet into a formation of bombers. So could the Allied guns. Maximum ground range was 78,700 yards, or about nine miles. If used at all, antiaircraft guns were employed for harassing fire near bridges or road junctions, etc. The high muzzle velocity caused dispersion that was too dangerous for firing a few hundred yards over the heads of friendly troops. Our field artillery FO's would sometimes call for fire on the next Normandy hedgerow.

Nevertheless, the 88 was a superior antitank gun when fired directly at a tank with its optical sights, as a rifle is pointed. With the ability of penetrate 155 mm. of armour at 1,000 yards, Rommel's gunners cut into Allied tanks. This could also have been done with any Allied antiaircraft gun, but the superiority of the 88 was its terrain mobility, proper sighting equipment and training. All antiaircraft guns must be capable of firing in all directions. When set up to fire, they look ungainly when compared to a wheeled field gun.

Three versions of the 88 were produced, the original 1918 model, the 1936 and the 1941. The 88 in march order was on four wheels with the center of gravity near the center. It was towed by Daimler-Benz (DB-10) 12-ton or bussing-NAG 5-ton treaded tractor prime movers. The choice depended upon availability in the hard-pressed German inventory. Toward the end, only one prime mover was available for several guns. The gun was served by ine cannoneers and a gun commander, each with a specific duty in preparing to fire or firing at 15-20 rounds per minute, a rate also typical of our guns.

The 88 weighed 24,600 lbs. on wheels and featured far superior mobility than the America 90 m. gun. Our gun had a hydraulic servomechanism that enabled it to automatically follow electrical data from the fire control system. This made our gun superior once it was in position. In march order, however, all its heavier weight was on a single

(Continued)

THE GERMAN 88

(Continuation)

two wheel bogie with dual wheels. In mud, our gun sunk like a diving submarine. Moreover, the American gun lacked sights for either ground fire or directly at tanks. The 88 had panoramic precision ground angle sighting equipment.

A deciding factor behind the fate of the German 88 was that anti-aircraft guns came to Germany during the empire building phase of the Nazi Government after the 1933 seizure of power. Guns, searchlights, radar, and paratroops ended up under command of Herman Goering's Luftwaffe. Gunners of 88's were part of the Luftwaffe and wore air force blue for dress, rather than that of the Heer, or German Army, that wore field gray. This meant that a separate bureaucracy was responsible for field administration of crews manning the 88's. We can only imagine what this did to command efficiency in battle. In 1944 Hitler ordered that Army commanders would be free to employ Luftwaffe anti-aircraft troops as they saw fit.

A similar four-wheel version of the U.S. 90 mm. gun was in consideration when the Second World War ended. A heavy anti-aircraft gun similar to a German model for city defense had begun production in the 1950's and was ballyhooed as the "Stratosphere Gun," but the Army did not really want it. The German Wasserfall surface-to-air missile was just coming in with war's end. This ended the fame of anti-aircraft guns. Nevertheless, like second-hand tobacco smoke, literature continues to support the deadly fame of the "German 88." ■



The American 105mm A.A. Antitank Gun, right, and German 88mm A.A. Antitank Gun, left, are shown side by side.

A GREAT BIG THANKS!!!

In September of 2004, the Headquarters Office requested each chapter to submit a roster of their members and to notify us of any members who may have passed away so we could mark our records accordingly.

The results compiled for the 25 chapters submitting rosters was astonishing and very disappointing.

Total names submitted	2,447
Total Life Members thereon	407
Total never on our records	894
Total delinquent (some for many years)	504
Total members whose dues were current	568

REUNIONS

2ND ARMORED DIVISION, 17TH ARMORED ENGINEER BATTALION, August 31-September 3, 2005, Kansas City. Contact: John A. Shields, PO Box 106, East Butler, Pennsylvania 16029. Telephone: 724-287-4301.

4TH INFANTRY DIVISION, July 17-23, 2005, Las Vegas, Nevada. (No contact)

5TH ARMORED DIVISION, August 24-27, 2005, Watertown, New York. Contact: Herbert O. Elmore, Box 226, Frewsburg, New York 14738-0226. Telephone: 716-569-4685.

10TH ARMORED DIVISION, September 3-5, 2004, Arlington, Virginia. Contact: Please provide for next issue.

28TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 103RD MEDICAL BATTALION AND REGIMENT, September, 2005, Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Contact: J. Paul Luther, 626 Hillside Avenue, Ligonier, Pennsylvania 15658. Telephone: 724-238-9849.

75TH INFANTRY DIVISION, August 31-September 4, 2005, Rosemont, Illinois. Contact: James E. Warmouth, 6545 West 11th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46214. Telephone: 317-241-3730.

84TH INFANTRY DIVISION, August 27-30, 2005, Springfield, Illinois. Contact: Troy L. Mallory, 2229 Jersey Street, Quincy, Illinois 62301. Telephone: 217-223-9062.

86TH CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION, May 12-15, 2005, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Contact: George L. Murray, 818 West 62nd Street, Anniston, Alabama 30206. Telephone: 256-820-4415.

86TH INFANTRY DIVISION, August 24-27, 2005, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: Walton W. Spangler, 8275 Hagerty Road, Ashville, Ohio 43103. Telephone: 740-474-5734.

291ST ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, April 28-May 1, 2005, Arlington, Virginia. Contact: Joe Geary, 70 Linden Drive, Kingston, Rhode Island 02881. Telephone: 783-9155.

501ST PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT, June 1-5, 2005, Springfield, Missouri. Contact: Ralph K. Manley, 2335 South Golden Avenue, Springfield, Missouri 65807. Telephone: 417-882-7358.

557TH ANTI-AIRCRAFT AUTOMATIC WEAPONS BATTALION, May 19-21, 2004, Holiday Inn, Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Contact: Harry M. Rightnour, 110 Fieldstone Avenue, Johnstown, Pennsylvania 15904. Telephone: 814-266-2637.

ANZIO BEACH VETERANS, 14-17 April, 2005, Williamsburg, Virginia. Contact: John Boller. Telephone 631-691-5002.

As you can see, there are more **not** paying annual dues than there are paying annual dues.

Upon receiving this information, several chapter presidents took immediate action to see that their members were on the national roles. Three have taken outstanding actions to correct the matter. They are:

David Saltman, Long Island Chapter (NY)

Richard N. Brookins, Genesee Valley Chapter (NY)

Milan A. Rolik, Buckeye Chapter (OH)

Thank you, gentlemen. We are hopeful the other chapters will be as fruitful. VBOB depends on the chapters to see that their chapter members support the national organization's endeavors.

VBOB Executive Council

WE DIDN'T CATCH A COLD, BUT...

by Harold J. "Hal" O'Neil
83rd Signal Battalion
83rd Infantry Division

The 83rd Division was pulled out of Germany and sent southwest across Holland into northern Belgium. Bumper to bumper military vehicles stretched for miles on a road on top of a dike surrounded by flooded fields. Air cover patrolled overhead and when a vehicle broke down it was pushed into a ditch or field. I was transferred to a messenger jeep that now required three men instead of two. The MP's stopped us repeatedly to ask about the winner of the World Series or Betty Grable's leading man in some movie. This was to detect English speaking Germans in our rear areas.

The jeep had chains on all four wheels and the windshield laid on the hood to stop reflections. We put up a ten inch board for a windshield and drove with a bobbing motion peeking over it to see the road. Welded to the front bumper was a six foot tall angle iron with a notch to catch and break cables strung across the road at night. We carried K-rations and sometimes Ten-in-One rations that we heated on the engine block. You had to remember to punch a hole in the can or it would explode and the jeep smelled of burnt eggs or Spam. Jeeps have no winch so larger vehicles had to pull or push us out of drifts or ditches.

We wore long johns, wool shirts, and pants and mackinaws instead of overcoats. Finger gloves were useless, so we traded with German prisoners for their fur lined mittens and a rabbit fur vest. The cost was only a few cigarettes. I wore three pair of socks with size 12 boots instead of my normal size nine. Towels with eye holes protected our faces. Wet feet meant trench foot and frost bite was a problem. We usually had a pair of socks drying from armpit warmth and growing a beard helped.

The messenger jeeps ran between the division headquarters and the 3rd Infantry Regiment Headquarters. With units on the move the info was often out of date and we spent two or three days on the road before returning to division headquarters. Thirty-five year old Pop did most of the driving and I did the navigation. Teenaged Elmer did a lot of sleeping. We rotated sitting in the back seat since it was the coldest.

The Army issued single blanket sleeping bags, so we stopped at an aid station to pick blankets with the least blood stains. Out doors or in a building we put six or seven blankets underneath and as many above. Only our boots were removed for sleeping.

One bitter night we parked between the two blazing buildings for extra warmth and one time we slept on the second floor of a windmill. Heavy Elmer collapsed the staircase so Pop and I used our tow rope to get down. We threatened to put him on a diet.

Near the end of the Bulge we picked up an illegal trailer that had no lights or brakes. It carried a small pot bellied stove, stove pipe briquets of coal dust and molasses or something, a 220 volt radio, a 110 volt radio, souvenirs, wine for Pop, rations, a tarp for a ground sheet, Army overcoats or mackinaws depending on how close we were to returning to division headquarters and extra cigarettes or coffee when we passed a farm with people still living there.

None of us even caught a cold and we were happy when told to head to a coal mine for delousing and showers. The lice carry from sleeping in barns and were known as mechanized dandruff. ■

COMBAT EXHAUSTION CENTER

By Dewey Harris, Jr.
95th Medical Gas Treatment Battalion

During the battles of the Hurtgen Forest and Battle of the Bulge, the 95th Medical Gas Treatment Battalion operated a combat exhaustion center located in the forward area, near Heerlen, Netherlands. The center treated trauma patients arriving directly from the front lines.

The shortage of infantry replacements was so critical that 18 year old soldiers arriving from the United States were rushed directly to the front. The death and destruction compounded with the worst winter in history, was so traumatic that some of these young soldiers lost their voice.

These patients arrived at the center in a continuous flow of ambulances. Our doctors, technicians and administrative personnel performed miracles. In just a few days they were on their way back to the front, outfitted with clean uniforms and combat gear, including rifles.

These young soldiers were treated with dignity and respect by all of the members of our units. However to expedite their return, we delivered them directly to troop units, via the replacement depot and the respective army headquarters.

I recall arriving at First Army Headquarters, then located near Verviers, Belgium. To my dismay they were undergoing a chaotic emergency evacuation. In a mud splattered uniform and with an attention of a senior staff officer. I informed him, "I have a truck load of infantry replacements. What do you want me to do with them?" He kindly replied, "Leave their service records here and take the soldiers to the front lines and turn them over to a infantry unit."

The roads were so jammed with vehicles fleeing to the rear, I had to take to the fields to get to the front. I finally located an infantry unit. They were surprised to learn that I had a rifle platoon for them, complete with a platoon sergeant. ■



"Looks like
we're having
fish for
dinner again,
Shadroe"

HISTORY OF 200TH QUARTERMASTER GASOLINE SUPPLY COMPANY

[The attached history was kept by John R. Ferrell, Company Clerk, and was sent to us by OLIS D. BARTON. Olis tells us that the group was formed in 1943 by volunteers from Company B, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division.]

On 28 November a guard detail was sent from Pepinster to Spa, Belgium, to guard a gas dump that we had been building up from gas that had been coming to the railhead at Pepinster. This dump was located in the woods near Spa and it had close to 12 million gallons of gas in it.

On 13 December the rest of the company moved from Pepinster to Malmedy, Belgium, to operate another gas dump. On December 14 one officer and 25 men of the 4th Company, 5th Battalion, Belgian Fusiliers, joined the company to pull guard duty. On 15 December the guard detail at Spa joined the rest of the company at Malmedy. On 16 December the town of Malmedy was shelled by the Germans. We were located just on the edge of the town and there were no casualties.

On 17 December all of the company moved out of Malmedy through St. Vith. Things were really getting hot here, but at the time we did not know about the big counter-attack that was in the making and developed into a breakthrough a few days later. We moved to Bovigny but did not unload any of our equipment as things were too hot. The 1st Section of the 1st Platoon stayed at the truck head at Bovigny to issue gas to the units that were moving out. The rest of the company moved on to Melrux Hotton staying overnight and moving out the afternoon of 18 December. The people were really getting excited by this time and as we moved toward St. Hubert the roads were jammed with GI equipment moving up and back. Rumors as to where the Germans were located were really running wild and no one seemed to really know what was happening. We moved into a couple of buildings at St. Hubert, company headquarters, and the 1st Platoon was located in a school house. We stayed in St. Hubert the night of 18 December and the night of 19 December or until about 0400 on the morning of 20 December. We left here in a hurry as the first sergeant came in and told us to grab out gas masks and rifles, liner and helmets and get the "hell out." We loaded on the trucks leaving everything else behind. I managed to get my field bag and mess equipment.

We moved out of St. Hubert about 15 miles in the direction of Sedan, France. There were rumors that the Germans were entering St. Hubert on the morning that we left. That night of 20 December we slipped back into St. Hubert and recovered all of our equipment. The town was really dead that night and there were tank destroyers in the street but no signs of the Germans yet. After getting our equipment we moved to Lacuisine, Belgium. The 1st Section of the 1st Platoon that had been at Bovigny joined us at St. Hubert that night and moved on to Lacuisine with us.

Things were still plenty hot. We only stayed one at Lacuisine moving out the next night to Pure, France, the 22nd of December. While we were at Pure we were operating a railhead at Florenville, France. The men were moving back and forth to work. I was on guard New Year's night and a Heine plane kept

flying over really low and you could see him in the moonlight. We were all sweating it out thinking he would drop his loaded bomb on us any minute.

We moved from Pure, France, on 3 January 1945 to Mars La-Tour, France. We had sure been having some cold weather during this time. Mars La-Tour was supposed to be a rest area for us but the work was just about the same as we were operating a railhead but the issues were not very heavy. While we were here the trucks were patrolling the highways policing up empty gas cans. Mars La-Tour was in the 3rd Army area and we were under command of the 3rd Army for some time.

On the 17th January the 1st Platoon moved from here to Wideumont Station, Belgium, to operate a railhead. On the 19th January company headquarters and the 2nd Platoon moved from Mars La-Tour to Wideumont Station but there was very little room at this place so part of the company headquarters and the 2nd Platoon moved on over to St. Marie, Belgium, about 6 miles from Wideumont Station. We lost the Belgian Fusiliers while we were at Mars La-Tour. (Since the 3rd Army did not use any of them, they went back up in 1st Army in Belgium to another gasoline company.)

On the 24th January the part of the company at Wideumont Stations moved to Sibret, Belgium, about a 7 mile move. This place was only about 3 or 4 miles from Bastogne. In January the party of the company at St. Marie moved to Limerle, Belgium, to operate a dump.

On the 4th February company headquarters and the 1st Platoon moved from Sibret to Beho, Belgium. Beho was a dirty town and the Germans had really left the surrounding territory heavily mined and booby-trapped. We moved from this town on the 6th February to Neufchateau, Belgium. This was a real nice town for we had electric lights for the first time in about a month. We were operating a decanting place here, the gas coming in by railroad tankers. We were in a nice building here for the first time in a long while. On the 10th February the 2nd Platoon moved from Limerle Belgium, to Orth, Belgium, where the dump was located.

The 1st Platoon and company headquarters stayed at Neufchateau until the 26th February at which time we moved to Konzen Station. Germany was only a distance of 135 miles. The 2nd Platoon moved from Ourt, Belgium, to Konzen Station on the same date. We were operating a railhead at this place. We moved back into tents here and it snowed like hell for a day or so.■

DID YOU KNOW??

The January 2004 issue of *The American Legion Magazine* on page 44 contains an article about sled dogs. The article mentions that Air Force Colonel Norman Vaughan--"During World War II, Vaughan led search-and-rescue efforts on the Greenland ice cap using dog teams and saved the lives of 24 servicemen. He later mushed supplies through blizzards during the Battle of the Bulge."

Do any of you know anything about this? It would make interesting reading for our members. Let us know if you saw any dogs mushing by.■

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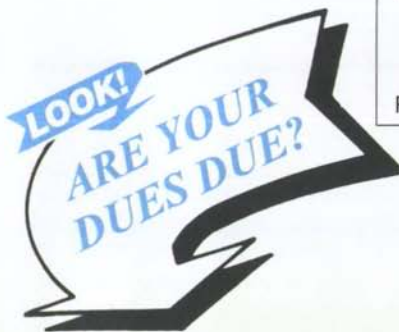


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Make check or money order payable to VBOB
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