

# The BULGE BUGLE

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

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THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

NOVEMBER 2005



*4th Armored relieves encircled town*

## SPEARHEAD TO BASTONGE

By Albin F. Irzyk  
4th Armored Division *Page 7*



## Arlington VBOB DECEMBER EVENTS

Remembrance and Commemoration

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TO THE REUNION COMMITTEE

*"Big thanks for an enjoyable time  
and excellent schedule of events."*

Marty Sherron

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**VETERANS OF THE  
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CONTACT THE CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA.  
YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID.  
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

## Appreciation

Beaucoup thanks to all who helped Past President John Dunleavy and I during the recent VBOB Reunion in Pittsburgh to its successful conclusion. Special thanks to my three brothers who live in the Pittsburgh area and drove me all around that interesting city; to Dave Shaw, who handled the Hospitality Room and many other details; to Harvey and Gladys Waugaman; and other members of VBOB Chapter IV.

Special thanks to Mr. Mike Hauser, Principal of Moon High School, for the patriotic assembly as Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge were honored guests. And thanks to the 500 students for their participation in this much-appreciated "Thanks to the Veterans Ceremony."

Al Rosenzweig invited me to attend the 78th Division Memorial Dedication in Fort Hood, Texas, on October 25, 2005. Due to a retina tear, my doctor advised me to curtail all air travel for a month. Thanks, Al and Cel, and I know it had to be a spectacular event knowing you and the amount of time you spent on it.

## Membership Legacy

While other units, divisions are in the process of dissolution, we of VBOB still continue with a strong and viable membership and, judging from the opinions of many others through the years, there is a strong desire to continue the operation of this 20-year-old veterans organization.

Congratulations to Stanley Wojtusik, VBOB President-Elect (was also president 1995-97) and the new Executive Council which will serve you for the 2005-06 administrative year.

Stan comes to you well qualified and gives us the benefit of his experience with Congress and the diplomatic corps. Best wishes to all for a successful season.

## Swan Song

It was an honor and privilege to serve as your presiding officer again (first term was 1986-88). So many highlights: 60th Anniversary trip to Luxembourg and Belgium; visits to the White House; Arlington Cemetery commemorations and celebrations; reunions in different cities both here and abroad; meetings at Fort Meade, Maryland; visits to the Washington Embassies--but mostly the personal contact with VBOBers from all walks of life.

You made this a great veterans organization and it is my fervent hope that the interest continues for many years to come.



George Chekan

So hold on to your membership and while you're at it sing a couple of war songs in memory of that very interesting part of your life. Encourage other Bulge veterans and your family members to join.

In conclusion, here's a quote from a departed chaplain friend of mine. *"If you can't be content with what you have received, be thankful for what you escaped."* Think about it!

## Remember

In your thoughts and prayers remember the valiant soldiers who sacrifice so much today and those who made the supreme sacrifice so many, many years ago. ■

## BULGE TO BE IN CURRICULUM

Dr. Linda Miller, historian-journalist who traveled on the 60th Anniversary trip back to Belgium and Luxembourg, announces that her curriculum on "Teaching Strategies on the Battle of the Bulge" has been accepted for publication as part of a World War II curriculum being published by the World War II Veterans Committee.

The curriculum will feature lesson plans designed to guide teachers in teaching the events and ideas surrounding World War II. Maps, photographs, letters and articles contemporary to WWII will be included. Dr. Miller also will have a section of the homefront.

Publication of the WWII curriculum is scheduled for publication for late 2006. It will be on-line and in print. Dr. Miller wishes to thank all veterans and their wives who contributed to this endeavor. ■

## DON'T FORGET OUR NEW ADDRESS...

PO Box 101418

Arlington, VA 22210-4418

The old one still appears on many, many things.

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## ARE YOUR DUES DUE?



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SIXTY...NO BIG DEAL

What's the big deal about 60 years? VBOBer's have gone to their graves with misgivings and unanswered questions. I carried mine about the Huertgen til' I neared retirement and then wrote a book about it.

My file has letters from VBOBer's bothered by nagging memories. A favorite is from a Southern GI to whom I sent a copy of my book after we had a couple of phone conversations. In the middle of his reply letter were three large "THANK YOU!" Your recent article put to rest what I observed, what I was suspicious of and what I have carried. I have put it all away and am not at peace!

Bob Galgan  
113 GUN BN

### A GREAT ORGANIZATION!

What a great organization! I can relate to the letters and articles. I can't get over how you guys can remember so much in detail.

I was an 18 year-old buck private and when they said move, I moved! I belonged to the 787th AAA AW Battalion attached to the 9th Army Air Force. Our main job was in Holland fighting the V1 and V2's until we were sent down to the big battle in mid-December. I know it was cold.

I don't know who we were attached to--there were four of us in a forward observation post. I would like to contact some one from our outfit. It's been 60 years and I haven't seen any one.

[Russell included his address so you could answer. It's 4272 US 301 #226, Bushnell, Florida 33513.]

Russell Nichols  
787 AAA AW BN

### HIS STEPS WERE LIGHTER...

[Excerpt] In 1955 my father, George M. McManus, Sr., passed away from heart failure. He had served with the 2nd Infantry Division, Company C, in the Battle of the Bulge. He was able to go to the 50th reunion in St. Louis. When he returned with my mother from the 50th reunion, she noticed a change. It was the first time that he felt at peace. His steps were lighter, as though a weight had been taken off him.

When he received his certificate, he asked me to frame it for him. He took so much pleasure in looking at his certificate.

George M. McManus, Jr.

### ...ABOUT THOSE SHERMAN TANKS

I want to say amen to your [John Dunleavy] article about the Sherman tanks. The 2nd Armored lost 80% of its front line men as we entered Germany. They were picking us off when we could barely reach them. One we lost one night beside us but he couldn't see our tank.

I could see where he was coming from. I shot a bit tree down in front of him and a small round building, spooked him off. We lost as many as a battalion of tanks there. Heard Ollie North mention the 737th where the Germans had some infantry surrounded. He was doing [a story on] St. Lo and on into Belgium.

I learned that my tank commander, who was a lieutenant, was killed the next day after I was wounded. The boy who pulled me out was killed ten days later--he was our driver. I was gunner on the 75. Our bow gunner was killed when I was wounded.

We were north of Aachen when the Bulge started...made an all night march to get back in Belgium. We did lots of moving at

night. We hit a German convoy Christmas and destroyed most of it. This was out big one. We had to take our tank to maintenance after that one. I couldn't keep the gun steady--it rolled free when we were on a slope. They fixed it that night and we were back next day. We were pulled off the line December 28th for our Christmas dinner and back in action January 3rd. I was wounded that day. We lost two tanks. I left the war and came back state-side.

William C. Gilliam  
2 ARMD 66 AIR G

### STUCK IN THE MUD

As a Battle of the Bulge veteran (11th Armored), I enjoy your newsletter/magazine.

I suspect we all agree that was a very trying time for all involved--weather, multitudes of enemy, out-classed in armor, and loss of friends.

The first thing I remember about that battle, Company D attacked down a hill and across a creek just outside of Bastogne. Two tanks made it across, two were stuck, and the rest stopped.

A crewman in the other tank and I got out of the tanks and attached the two cable to the stuck tanks, pulled them out, and went back across the creek. It was then that I realized the snow jumping around us was the enemy firing at us.

The other crewman was killed by that fire.

Howard K. Bauer  
11 ARMD 41 TK BN D

### MOVE 'EM ON...

A belated note to say I enjoyed your [John Dunleavy's] M-4 article. Very true, of course, but sadly the brass wouldn't change their minds. We just had [to] move tanks!

Frank S. Senior  
28 INF 112 INF C

### SO MANY MEMORIES

I enjoy *The Bulge Bugle* but some of the stories bring back so many bad memories about the men who I saw killed and wounded. [That's what makes me sad] just seeing and reading about the war in Iraq.

I was in the 2nd Infantry Division, 9th Infantry Regiment, Company H, during 1943-45. I was wounded with two Purple Hearts and other medals, ribbons, and battle stars.

I was in the D-Day Invasion and the way through the war until V-E Day. We lost so many men (or you might say boys aged 18-21 years) were slaughtered. People now don't realize what the men had to go through to win freedom.

Leonard L. Huskey  
2 INF 9 INF H

### BOSE COMMENTARY APPRECIATED

[Response to Kenneth Bose's article in February, 2005, issue of *The Bulge Bugle*.]

This field artillery man of WWII appreciated Bose's commentary, and thought ETO veterans would be interested in knowing more about the 105mm field artillery guns used to directly support them so effectively.

Most WWII infantry divisions had three battalions of 105mm gun/howitzers and one battalion of 155mm howitzers. Each battalion had three "firing batteries" of four guns each, a headquarters battery and a service battery.

My comments and recollections cover the towed split trailed



105mm gun/howitzer that could be used to provide indirect and direct fires. Each gun was towed by a 6x6 open cab truck with a ring mount over the assistant driver's seat. This enabled us to mount a .50 caliber machine gun which could be swung in all directions. These trucks were equipped with a front-end mounted winch used on many occasions to move the guns into position.

My A Battery, 160th Field Artillery Battalion, 45th Infantry "Thunderbird" Division was the first to land on the beach in the invasion of Sicily (10 July 1943) and was the first allied artillery unit to fire against the Germans in the Mediterranean area.

"99-44/100" percent of our firing was indirectly controlled by forward observers attached to infantry units or air observation planes through a fire-direction center. My first recollection of direct fire against the Germans was during the battle at Salerno when German tanks approached us. At the end of this engagement we had three guns still working and only a few rounds of smoke shells and one or two armor piercing shells left in the battery. The second and last time we used direct fire was in our movement south of Nurnberg we fired on German trucks visible to us.

We used semi-fixed ammunition. The brass powder shell case contained sever powder charges packed in bags attached together with an easily breakable cord.

We had high explosive (HE) shells, various color smoke shells, white phosphorus (WP) also known as willy peter, and a few armor piercing shells.

The most frequently used fuze was an impact/delay (.15 second) that would be set causing the shell to explode on impact or after penetration. Time fuzes were set with a wrench to cause the shell to burst in the air over enemy troops, and proximity fuzes. This fuze was designed to burst about thirty[sic] above the ground. My recollection is that it was 80% effective--that is eight out of ten fuzes would cause the shell to burst at the proper height. Sometimes at night we would observe a shell burst at the apogee.

I thought proximity fuzes were first used at Anzio but was mistaken. I learned from the Aberdeen Ordnance Museum proximity fuzes were not issued to field artillery units in the ETO until December of 1944 since SHAEF was concerned that the Germans might retrieve dud rounds and reverse-engineer the fuze. However, we didn't know it at the time. The Germans were already working on their own proximity fuze. However, once we had them they were frequently and effectively used against enemy troops in place of timed shell bursts. These fuzes were first available to the navy early because duds would land in the ocean.

I learned from Dr. William F. Atwater, Ph.D., Director of the U.S. Army Ordnance Museum, that the first proximity fuzes were issued to the navy in the Pacific area and issued to army anti-aircraft units during the Battle of the Bulge, and then to the field artillery after December 18, 1945--What a Christmas present they were! Dr. Atwater also revealed that the shells needed to fall fairly perpendicular to the ground for best effect, and this dictated special calculations by fire control centers.

I later met two men involved in the development of the proximity fuze. Dr. Alan Astin, former director of the National Bureau of Standards, had a hand in developing a proximity fuze for non-rotating missiles, bombs and rockets. And, Colonel Alfred Reese, USA Ret., who as a sergeant ran the ammunition section of a detachment sent from Aberdeen Proving Ground to Fort Miles, Delaware, for one and a half years test firing of the proximity fuze.

I wondered what the rated tube life was for a 105mm gun because when we left Anzio we thought our gun tubes looked like shot gun bores. Dr. Atwater told me the rated life was approximately 20,000 rounds. I doubt if we ever fired that many

rounds through out guns (a lot had to do with powder charges used--the higher number of charges, the more wear on the tubes.) However, he did say may guns were replaced in the field because of cracks, blown seals, etc.

When the Germans tried to push us off the Anzio beachhead a vast number of shells were fired. A sister battalion to my 160th Field Artillery was the 158th Field Artillery Battalion which expended nearly 27,000 rounds [2,200 per gun] supporting the 157th Infantry Regiment [later termed The Rock of Anzio] by Flint Whitlock, who wrote a book of the same name. We were able to fire more shells than ordnance people thought possible by using a short lanyard on the trigger and load and firing at least five times before we had to let the recoil system return the gun to "battery position." We had stacks of prepared shells with three, four and five charges.

On numerous occasions throughout the war, we were part of Time-on-Target (TOT) fire missions when several battalions of artillery, 105mms, 155mms, and heavier guns were programmed to fire at predetermined times so that the first "load" of shells would fall on a target simultaneously. This was a very effective move against enemy personnel.

When moving up through Southern France combat teams [infantry, artillery, armor and engineers] were established and provided with an air-OP observation plane. When a target was sighted we would be alerted, stop and set up two guns on each side of the road and proceed to fire as directed. When finished we hooked up again and moved further up the road.

The battle of Nordwind launched on 31 December 1944 by the Germans was Hitler's last major offensive. It was designed to split the American Third and Seventh Armies. On 1 January 1945 we fired a mission that dropped shells on our own troops. We later learned the error was caused because the fire-direction center had not calculated for a sudden drop in temperature the night before.

Information proved by Colonel Alfred Reese from *They Never Knew What Hit Them*, by Ralph B. Baldwin; Reynier Press, Naples, Florida, 1999. According to Baldwin, 22,000,000 proximity fuzes were produced through August 1945, 1,500,000 were fired against the enemy. In 1942 they cost \$742.00, but the cost was reduced to \$18.00 each in 1945. General Patton was quoted as saying, "The proximity fuze won the battle of the Bulge."

I received my basic field artillery training at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. My first training was on an old French 75mm fixed ammunition gun left over from WWI. Then when I joined the 141st Field Artillery Battalion [known as the Washington Artillery] Louisiana National Guard they had 155mm Schneider single trail units also used in WWI. Eventually, I was transferred to the 45th "Thunderbird" Infantry Division Artillery equipped with split trail 105mm gun/howitzers.

I survived all eight campaigns with the 45th Division [more than 500 days of combat] and arrived back home with a Silver Star and two Purple Hearts.

About ten years ago [1995], I visited Aberdeen Proving Grounds with a small group of marines who served in the Pacific during WWII. I had my picture taken next to a WWI French 75mm gun and Anzio Annie. Anzio Annie was one of two German 280mm smooth bore [the shells were manufactured with rifling] railway guns that were fired against us on the Anzio beachhead.

I was privileged to talk to a small class of marines being trained as artillery mechanics. One of the things I said opened their eyes wide--that when "the manure hit the fan" during a battle like Anzio, the rule book vanished. Firing range safety rules were ignored. Ammunition trucks would back up to well dug in gun pits and off-load 105mm ammunition like it was fire wood and get out of there in a hurry before being observed by the [word missing]



may be "enemy".

On April 27, 2005, two bus loads of Anzio Beachhead Veterans were hosted for lunch at the Aberdeen Ordnance Museum by the base commander, Brig. Gen. Vincent Boles. We went there to have our pictures taken next to Anzio Annie now sitting on a stretch of railroad tracks. I also met Col. Kone Brugh, (Ret) Chairman of the board of Directors of the Museum. In a letter, Dr. Wm. F. Atwater provided me with much needed information for this article.

James R. Bird  
45 INF 160 FA BN A

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## THINGS TO REMEMBER

Epilogue:

•A child asked if I was in the Battle of the Bulge? I was.

•Where was I in Bastogne? I wasn't.

•When General Patton won the Battle of the Bulge, where was I in his Army? I was not in his army.

Where did you get this information? From a History Channel documentary.

**Remember:** Bastogne was a part of a huge battle area.

**Remember:** After Bastogne was relieved, there was much more fighting.

**Remember:** General Patton never commanded all or most of the American troops. There were General Simpson's Ninth Army, British Forces, and others.

**Remember:** General Patton was one of our better generals, BUT he always had superiority in airpower, manpower and supply.

I was tempted to call this--Media Power.

Hal O'Neil  
83 SIG CO

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## MISINTERPRETATION

Just received the August edition of *The Bulge Bugle*.

Sorry my letter of December 17, 2004, was misinterpreted. I just wanted to correct the statement that Mr. Lehdorff was in the 36th Infantry Division. If he was in the 3rd Armored Division, he must have been in the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment. I was in the 32nd Armored Regiment (not Infantry).

The two pages from the 3rd Armored Division History Book that I included was to show that the make up of "Task Force Doan" and the other page showing the correct enemy losses.

If I had known you were going to make a story out of it, I would have included the other three pages which were between the two pages I sent. I guess if a person was not there during the action, they would not notice the gap in the pages.

I do appreciate all the work you do publishing all of these memories. I did enjoy reading Mr. Lehdorff's Action Report.

Oda C. Miller  
3 ARMD 32 AR E

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## LETTERS HOME

As a new member, I enjoy reading *The Bulge Bugle* very much.

I was especially taken with Oda Tidwell's "experience" as a replacement in the Yankee (26th) Division in Metz and beyond. (Page 8 of the August 2005 issue)

As a member of A Company of the YD's 104th Infantry Regiment who was in Metz (supposedly resting from earlier punishing engagements by the division) I can add something of interest which complements Oda's story about the "replacements" of the time.

Part of my duties at the time was to read soldiers' letters home

to assure security. One letter by a new replacement was amusing and tells his (and others') experiences as a hurry-up transfer from a non-combat outfit to an infantry company. Written the day after we left our abbreviated "rest" because of the German surprise attacks, this soldier, whose name I don't remember and who I never saw again, wrote the following:

*"Hi folks; I'm no longer a clerk. I'm an infantryman in an infantry division as you can see by the address. Since I and many other replacements like me had no combat basic training, we were taken out to a range at this fort and given M1 rifles. We were at the ready; the order was given; 'ready, aim,...FALL IN!' Next thing was...we were on our way to the front somewhere. I'll probably get to practice with the rifle sooner than I expected! Love t all."*

I never forgot that letter! It is, of course, as I remember it--and not word-for-word; but it's pretty close!

Glad Oda made it back and had a distinguished service record. One minor correction to his article for accuracy: YD was at Metz because of depletion of its forces--but our losses were not in Italy, but in the European Theater (as part of Patton's Third Army).

F. Ralph Shirak  
26 INF 104 INF A

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## REUNIONS

What is it that binds combat veterans together? It isn't friendship...we all have friends. You can go to a high school or college reunion, and you will not feel the same emotion in the air as when you attend a reunion of combat veterans.

Maybe it's the fact that we were all in hell and back... Maybe it is the knowledge that we all lived through that terrible war. At these reunions, we all open our wounds and cleanse them. All the memories that were buried for years now come to the surface. "What ever happened to" or "Remember when" are repeated over and over. This is something binding with your buddies who lived and fought beside you.

I have attended many reunions over the past few years, and I still get a lump in my throat and a tear in my eye when it's time to leave. Sure, we may have less hair on top and a few more inches in the waist, but you could still recognize everybody.

Combat was hell, and you have many terrible memories of death and destruction...but the memory of total camaraderie with men who shared that hell will forever be embedded in your heart. There is no friendship like that of combat buddies. It is something that lasts forever.

I am most fortunate to still see my buddies from the 26th Division and the Battle of the Bulge. Our wives get along well, and we share enjoyable times together.

To me, it's a wonderful day when I can attend a reunion of combat veterans.

George Fisher  
26 INF 328 INF 3 BN K

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## CORRECTION

In the latest issue of *The Bulge* is a letter on page 8 from Oda Tidwell regarding the 26th Infantry Division. In his second paragraph he mentions the 26th lost a lot of their men in Italy and came to Metz, France. I want to correct this error and add a bit of information about the 26th.

The 26th consisted of three regiments. Mr. Tidwell belonged to the 104th. Then there was the 101st and the 328th. Prior to moving overseas the 26th was a New England National Guard Division engaged in coast patrol along the East Coast. Many of their men had years of service in the Guard. I joined the 328th Regiment as a child replacement when it was on Tennessee



maneuvers in January 1944.

In April 1944 the division moved to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, for final training prior to moving overseas. On August 17, 1944, we moved to Camp Shanks, and from Camp Joyce Kilmer, New York, loaded on transport ships for Europe. We sailed in what seemed to be an extremely large convoy for Europe, catching sight of the "Lizard" on September 6, 1944. The convoy split up before the English Isles were in sight, with the several ships carrying the 26th proceeding up the English Channel while the rest of the convoy continued on to England.

On September 7-8 our ships anchored just off Utah Beach and we went over the side on cargo nets into landing craft infantry boats which dropped us on the beach. The beach had long been secured thanks to the many Gi's that preceded us. We unloaded out equipment from the ships and spent several weeks unpacking and cleaning it. General Patton visited several of the hedgerow-enclosed fields where we were camped and told us that we were to be congratulated to be members of his Third Army. That wasn't quite how he phrased it. German airplanes strafed us on one occasion. It is my impression that we were the first division to move directly from the U.S. to land on French soil.

On October 5th we were committed to combat in the Port Sur Seille sector. We were in combat until December 20 when we moved to Metz to get replacements. My platoon got to Metz in the afternoon and some of us got hot showers in a coal mine dressing room. We went to sleep in an old French barracks and at three in the morning were awakened by non-coms handing out "K" rations and ammunition with the news that we were moving out to a place called Arlon.

We spent a night enroute and were in contact with the Germans on the 23rd. I spent my 21st birthday evening in a tent which my buddy and I tied to a concrete post in a very cold snow-covered field. The next morning we realized it was a border marker for France, Belgium, and Germany. We fought through Eschdorf where a 26th Division museum was later built. There was a statue of General Patton and a Sherman Tank in a small park. That museum was purchased by a local man who moved its contents to a new building in Auburn, Indiana. There was a famous meeting attended by Ike, Bradley and Patton at which Patton promised to have two divisions attack the south flank of the Bulge in two days. The 26th was one of those divisions.

We fought through the Saar, cleared the north bank of the Danube and accepted the surrender of the 11th Panzer Division in Linz, Austria, the day the war ended. I'm sorry, Mr. Tidwell, I just wanted to correct the Italian comment and got lost in memories. We had to teach some of the Metz replacements how to release a M1 safety as we were walking and riding north from Metz to the Bulge. I'm glad you and I survived.

Beresford N. Clarke  
26 INF 328 INF AT

#### INADEQUACY OF ANTI-TANK WEAPONRY

John Dunleavy is absolutely correct about the inadequacy of anti-tank weaponry during WWII. He states his opinion that if the 4th, 28th, 99th and 106th Infantry Divisions, plus the 9th and 10th Armored, had better tank and anti-tank weapons, the German advance on December 16, 1944, would have been stopped in its tracks.

Very possible! I don't know about other anti-tank outfits with their pitiful 57mm guns, but we in the 106th hadn't even been issued ammunition.

Although some gun squads had managed to borrow a few rounds from the 2nd Division when we relieved them, on December 16th, many squads' guns were still empty.

After all, in a "quiet sector," who needs ammunition?

Duncan T. Trueman  
106 INF 424 INF AT

#### A GREAT REUNION

VBOB Annual Reunion in Pittsburgh, September 28-October 2 in one word: GREAT!

All those who attended hope that next year's meeting (tentatively set for about the same time of the year in Louisville) will be just as good as this year's was.

Among the highlights:

- Full tour of the Pittsburgh Metro area--with outstanding guides--on trolley/vans...
- A talk by Gen. Van de Ven, of the Belgian Embassy...
- Classic lunch in the beautifully restored Pittsburgh Train Station...
- A superb cast of three singers, delivering songs from "our age"...
- The scenery along the banks and city skyline on a dinner cruise on the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio Rivers...
- Short tour of the Soldier-Sailor Memorial Building...
- A "barbershop chorus" evening...

We received information that the Belgian and Luxembourg Governments are donating a total of \$80,000 for a new VBOB monument at a new location in Arlington Cemetery. Some touch-ups will be provided the current one, located across the street from the Tomb of the Unknowns.

But...the event I feel most of those present enjoyed and appreciated was the assembly of students, faculty and meeting attendees (total of 750) at the Moon Area High School. I had the privilege of leading a slow "repeat after me" version of the Pledge of Allegiance, and then -the- high point was a description of the Bulge battle by John Dunleavy. (Shouldn't we do something similar at all our annual meetings?)

Congratulations, from all those who could attend, to the officers, staff and all the volunteers who did so much to make this VBOB Annual Meeting the best it could possibly be.

Try to be in Louisville next year!

Pat Murphy  
78 INF 4



"But Cap'n that ain't foreign debris, them beer cans was made right here in the United States!"



# SPEARHEAD TO BASTOGNE

By Albin F. Irzyk  
4th Armored Division

*[The following story appeared in the Spring Issue, 2005, of Rolling Together, the newsletter of the 4th Armored Division.]*

## A veteran of the Battle of the Bulge tells the story of the 4th Armored Division's drive to relieve the encircled town.

Just before dark on the day after Christmas 1944, elements of Third Army Commander Lieutenant General George S. Patton Jr.'s 4th Armored Division, attacking from the south, succeeded in making contact with the beleaguered Americans at Bastogne. The encircled 101st Airborne Division had occupied that critically vital Belgian town for several days categorically refusing German demands for surrender.

The dramatic linkup of the two forces broke the siege of Bastogne and was one of the great turning points in the Battle of the Bulge. This legendary event has often been described in histories of World War II, but there is a fascinating little-known subplot to the story.

It took the 4th Armored Division five days of bitter, costly fighting to break the ring of German units encircling the 101st, but only six days before the linkup elements of that same division had actually been in Bastogne, on the day it was being surrounded. In fact, during that earlier movement into the town, those forced had come within one kilometer of the same spot to which they would return six days later, after heavy fighting. How could this have happened?

To understand this enigma, we must go back to December 8, 1944, the day the 4th Armored Division was pulled back from heavy fighting after reaching the Maginot Line, at a point a little more than nine miles from the German border. It was time for refitting and rest so that the division would be better prepared to cross the border and continue its assault to the east. The move to the rest area was not only welcome and richly deserved but necessary. The men of the division were exhausted after incessant fighting during the heavy, record-breaking November rains. The weather, the enemy and the gummy mud combined to make conditions deplorable and had taken a serious toll on the men and their tracked vehicles. Such extended breaks in the fighting were rare and spirits were high.

At the time, I was serving with Combat Command B (CCB) of the 4th Armored Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Holmes E. Dager, and its 8th Tank Battalion, which I commanded as a young major. During the division's rest period my command post was in Dommonles-Dieuze, a tiny, wet, muddy and depressing French village about 40 miles northeast of Nancy. Almost immediately, the town became littered with tank parts and equipment of all types. Not knowing how long we would be there, the men wasted no time in pursuing their tasks.

On the fourth day the troops were excited and energized by the visit of the Third Army commander, General Patton, who swooped in for a quick stop. He arrived at high speed in his jeep, with a wide, crooked grin and all his stars blazing. He was

jolly, animated and interested in how we were doing. After jumping out of his jeep, he worked his way along the entire length of the small town. He stopped at every vehicle, talked with every cluster of soldiers and had something to say to each--a question, a word of encouragement or appreciation, a compliment, a wise-crack, a good-natured dig. He was a master at this kind of rapprochement. His visits were brief, and he kept moving. But in 30 minutes or so, he had worked his magic--he had touched virtually every man in that battalion.

We soon learned that the 8th Tank Battalion was the only battalion in the division that he visited. Although the troops had no inkling of the momentous events that lay just ahead, Patton was apparently aware that an attack might be in the offing. After visiting the three other divisions of the XII Corps that day, he wrote in his diary that he had decided to put the 6th Armored Division and the 26th Infantry Division into the III Corps because if "the enemy attacks the VIII Corps of the First Army, as is probable, I can use the III Corps to help."

December 18 is a day I will always remember as the most confusing day of the entire war. Early that morning I was told to attend a meeting at division headquarters, but before I left for the meeting it was called off. The previous day I had been told that a move was imminent and to have my troops ready to move on short notice.

At 10:45 a.m. on the 18th, CCB was placed on a one-hour alert. I continued with my preparations for the move the next day to the east, as well as the subsequent attack into Germany, by sending parties forward to obtain billets for the battalion to occupy at the end of the march to the border.

At 5 p.m. the one-hour alert was canceled. Shortly afterward, I also received word that the move to the east the next day was off. I recalled my billeting parties. With no order for the next day, the men settled in for the night after the evening meal.

Then, suddenly, at 11 p.m. the 8th was ordered by CCB to be prepared to move at once. That directive was quickly followed up with instructions to cross the initial point, or IP (as yet to be designated), at 12:50 a.m. and then move in a totally different direction--north! We would be moving to the III Corps zone (wherever that was) to assist in stopping a strong German counterattack in that sector.

The radical change in mission, the confusion that had preceded it, the lack of information, the uncertainty, the hasty departure in the pitch dark and the highly unusual timing of the move--50 minutes after midnight--all combined to indicate we were involved in something serious. A cloud of apprehension hovered over the entire battalion.

As ordered, the 8th Tank Battalion moved at 12:50 a.m. on December 19. We had no information about the situation up ahead or about the enemy. CCB's orders were to move to an area in the vicinity of Longwy, France, many miles to the north. The 4th Armored Division, previously attached to the XII Corps, was now assigned to the III Corps.

Combat Command B, with its 8th Tank Battalion out front, led the advance of the division. Combat Command A (CCA) would be the next to move out, nine hours behind CCB and along the same route. Thus, the 8th led the odyssey north into the cold, black night, reinforced with the half tracks of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion. At the head of the 8th was my tank, making it the lead element of the Third Army in its advance to the north.

Amazingly the combat command had but one map, and that was with General Dager.

(Continued)



## SPEARHEAD TO BASTOGNE

(Continuation)

During our rapid movements across France that summer and autumn, we occasionally had to rely on Michelin road maps for direction. But to be completely without maps was a new experience.

Once the column was on the road, we rolled mile after mile into the unknown. I was guided and directed by General Dager in a variety of ways. He radioed instructions from his jeep, his staff relayed radio messages, he sometimes rode alongside to shout directions at me in my turret, and at tricky intersections he dismounted and pointed the way.

The hours and miles passed, and Longwy loomed closer. The end was in sight. But then our spirits were dashed. As we reached Longwy, we were waved on, and we rolled through the city without slackening our pace. Our tank guns were still pointed to the north, and now, for the first time in the war, we were in Belgium. We passed through Arlon and changed direction to the northwest, still with no reduction of speed.

We began our journey in darkness and were to end it in darkness, as night came upon us again. A difficult situation became considerably more difficult, since we now had to travel under blackout conditions, and our progress would be greatly slowed. On top of that we had absolutely no idea of what lay ahead, and we were expecting to be fired on by the enemy at any moment.

As we neared the town of Vaux-le-Rosieres, we were at last told to stop for the night. Combat Command B moved into that location, which was west of the road. I selected a spot about two kilometers east of the road for our bivouac area (I would later learn that it was near a town named Nives). By the time we settled in, it was 11 p.m.

Except for brief halts, and one longer one to refuel, we had been on the move increasingly for more than 22 hours--half of one night, all day and half of another night under blackout conditions. Remarkably, we had traveled 161 miles over roads that were sometimes bad--without maps and without confusion.

The fact that we arrived was a tribute to both our men and vehicles and spoke volumes for the work we had accomplished during the recent rest period. Most important, there had been no enemy contact.

That night none of us realized that we were the vanguard of what would later be called the greatest mass movement of men in the shortest period of time in the history of warfare. Patton's troops had been poised to attack the Saar to the east. Forced to abandon that plan, he ordered the major part of his Third Army to make a gigantic 90-degree wheeling movement and then drive north at full speed. Involved in the spectacular maneuver were thousands of men and vehicles operating in damnable weather, often over icy roads.

Once we reached the bivouac area there was still no rest for many of us. Many of the men were exhausted, but as soon as

we reached our position we sent forward some strong patrols of light tanks and armored infantry to detect any enemy movement from the north.

Early the next morning December 20, I was, figuratively speaking, hit by a thunderbolt. General Dager called me on his radio and, without any preliminaries, ordered me to send a task force into Bastogne. I was stunned. I protested vehemently, reminding him that the situation up ahead was unclear, terribly confused, and that this was no time for a piecemeal commitment of my forces. To my great surprise, Dager agreed with me. He said that he had just made the same arguments in a tug of war with Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton of the VIII Corps. Middleton had ordered him to take all of CCB into Bastogne, and he had hotly resisted, insisting that Middleton wait until Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey arrived with the rest of the 4th Armored Division. Middleton finally agreed not to commit the entire combat command, but only after Dager conceded that he would send a task force instead. As ordered, I formed the task force. It consisted of A Company, 8th Tank Battalion; C Company, 10th Armored Infantry Battalion; and C Battery, 22nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion. I placed Captain Bert P. Ezell, my battalion executive officer, in charge of the task force. His force would henceforth be known as "Task Force Ezell." Ezell's mission was to report to Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, commander of the 101st Airborne Division, learn about the situation in Bastogne, receive instructions and render support if so ordered.

This task force moved northeast on the Neufchateau-Bastogne road and reached Bastogne without seeing any enemy troops. Upon entering the city, Ezell was told to report for instructions--not to McAuliffe, but to Colonel William Roberts, commander of Combat Command B of the 10th Armored Division.

Shortly after Ezell radioed me that he was in Bastogne and had made contact with our troops, I was astonished to receive an order from divisional headquarters to recall the task force to Nives at once. I immediately called Ezell, whose radio operator told me that he was out talking to a colonel. I shouted, "Get him!" I reached him not a moment too soon, for at that very instant Ezell had been receiving instructions for deployment from Colonel Roberts. When I told him to return, Ezell was dumbfounded. As was to be expected, he had a difficult time convincing Roberts that he had to leave with his force just after arriving in Bastogne. A short time later, just after noon, a delighted and vastly relieved task force was on the road again.

Seven hours after it set out for Bastogne, Ezell's task force returned to our bivouac area with many more vehicles than it had when it pulled out. The men were beside themselves, chatting and shouting excitedly. They had seen some strange sights--so strange that they had a difficult time explaining it all to the rest of us.

As the task force moved away from Bastogne, they had encountered an American 2-1/2 ton truck in a ditch on the right side of the road. The truck was barely damaged and its driver was still sitting behind the wheel. But the top of his head had been blown off above the eyes, apparently by an armor-piercing round.

Moving a little farther down the road beyond the ditched truck, the troops noticed tank tracks running across the asphalt pavement. They were much wider tracks than could be made by American tanks and must have been made by German Panther or Tiger tanks.

(Continued)





## SPEARHEAD TO BASTOGNE (Continuation)

The task force then came upon another strange sight--about two battalions of U.S. artillery stopped along the road. The equipment seemed to be in good shape, but there was no sign of any troops. Some of the vehicles were still idling. It was not clear whether the artillery units had been attacked and their positions overrun, or if they had been spooked by the sight of German tanks crossing the road just to the north of them and had abandoned their guns and vehicles. Given the evidence they had seen so far, it appeared that a strong German force had moved rapidly west and cut across the Neufchateau-Bastogne road while Ezell was moving toward Bastogne. Perhaps the lead German elements had been moving so quickly that following forces had not yet caught up with the vanguard. Ezell's units had apparently managed to slip through a gap in the enemy echelons driving west. The task force hauled back as much of the abandoned artillery equipment as they could handle and encountered no resistance on the way back to the bivouac area.

As December 20 passed, events continued to move swiftly. At 2 p.m., CCB was reassigned to III Corps with the rest of the division. The 8th Tank Battalion was ordered to retrace its steps of the previous night and move southwest to Neufchateau, then southeast to Leglise. We arrived in the vicinity of Leglise after dark on the 20th. Shortly afterward, I was surprised to learn that the rest of the division had remained in the vicinity of Arlon, and none of its units had made any attempt to close up on CCB. Only later did we learn why CCB had gone where it did and when it did.

On the 21st, I received my orders from General Dager at CCB headquarters for the attack that would take place the following day. I was also informed that during the previous night and early that morning very strong German forces had driven west and flanked the City of Bastogne on the north and south. The two forces had met west of the city and completely encircled Bastogne. Trapped in the city was the 101st Airborne Division, to which were attached elements of the 9th and 10th Armored Divisions.

This was shocking news, but Task Force Ezell had provided ample clues that the Germans had been on the move the previous day. What really was disturbing was the realization that the encirclement had been taking place while Ezell's group had been in Bastogne, and it had continued with unabated fury after the 8th Tank Battalion and CCB had left the area.

I could not help but think about what could have happened. If he had not been recalled by divisional headquarters Ezell and his men might have been trapped in Bastogne along with Colonel Roberts' combat command of the 10th Armored. And what if General Dager had not won the day in his tussle with General Middleton? All the 4th Armored's CCB--if we had moved into Bastogne as General Middleton had originally ordered--might well be stuck in the besieged city.

We moved out of Leglise at 4:30 the next morning--the 22nd--so as to arrive at the starting point at 6. The 8th Tank Battalion and the rest of CCB were part of the 4th Armored Division's attacking force, coordinated with the 80th and 26th Infantry Divisions of III Corps. The 4th Armored was on the left flank.

We began our slow, difficult return to Bastogne. The following day at Chaumont, the 8th Tank Battalion was on the receiving end of one of the most powerful tank-led counterattacks of the war, temporarily slowing its advance to Bastogne and inflicting heavy casualties. Ironically, the battle at

Chaumont was fought just four kilometers east of the quiet bivouac area we had occupied at Nives just three days earlier.

It took five days of bitter fighting to relieve the 101st in Bastogne, but by December 28 the area had been cleared of the enemy, and all of our positions had been consolidated. When Captain Ezell walked into the 8th Tank Battalion command post in Assenois, he was just one kilometer southeast of where his task force had been eight days earlier as it rolled into Bastogne.

Those of us who participated in this confusing operation, as well as historians who have analyzed the Battle of the Bulge in the years following World War II, could not help but note the ironies and incongruities surrounding the battle.

A number of questions have been raised about our mission:

- Why did CCB, whose original destination was the vicinity of Longwy, continue on alone until it reached a position in VIII Corps sector, only nine kilometers from Bastogne?

- Why did General Middleton of Vm(sic) Corps seem to exert "ownership" of CCB?

- Why did the rest of the 4th Armored Division not close up behind CCB instead of leaving CCB near Bastogne while the rest of the division assembled well to the rear, in the Arlon area?

- If General Dager had not protested dividing his command, what might have happened to CCB if it had rolled into Bastogne as ordered, on the day when the enemy was very much on the move?

- After moving unto Bastogne, why was Task Force Ezell immediately and summarily recalled, especially considering that General Middleton had argued strongly for its presence there?

- After the elements of Task Force Ezell had returned to their parent units, why was all of CCB relieved from assignment to VIII Corps and withdrawn--back to the rear--less than a day after arriving in the forward position?

- Should commanders at higher levels have exploited Task Force Ezell's rapid progress to Bastogne once they knew the unit had entered the town without a fight and returned? And should General Middleton have been allowed to hold onto CCB and use it to try to keep the Neufchateau-Bastogne highway open, possibly preventing the encirclement of Bastogne?

- Once CCB had moved into it bivouac at Vaux-les-Rosieres, should the rest of the 4th Armored Division have capitalized on the situation, moving up to attack from the bivouac location only a short distance from Bastogne rather than consolidating for the attack farther south and then fighting its way north along the difficult forest axis from Arlon to the encircled city?

Among those who have answered "Yes" to the last two questions is Charles B. MacDonald, who stated in his book *A Time for Trumpets*: "If Middleton had been allowed to hold CCB and with it keep open the Neufchateau/Bastogne highway, Bastogne probably never would have surrounded. Even if the Germans had cut the Neufchateau/Bastogne highway, the Fourth Armored Division might have capitalized on the location of CCB and attacked from Vaux-les-Rosieres instead of from Arlon. Which would have spared many officers and men of the Fourth Armored Division a great deal of misery and, in some cases, death." The following additional information about the events leading up to the battle of Bastogne provides answers to some of these nagging questions.

On December 18, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, commander of all U.S. ground forces, called off Patton's planned offensive into the Saar. Without hesitation, Patton told Bradley that he would

(Continued)



concentrate the 4th Armored Division in the vicinity of Longwy, pull the 80th Infantry Division out of the line and get in 26th Infantry Division moving in 24 hours. Much later that same day he issued the order that got CCB moving just after midnight.

Patton met with his staff at 8 the next morning, December 19, as CCB was already well on its way to Loangwy. His plan, he told his staff, was to strike north and hit the underbelly of the German penetration where it would hurt. During the next hour, Patton and his staff planned, in outline, three distinct operations. Arrangements were made for a simple code to indicate via a brief telephone call, which operation would be implemented.

Later that same day, Patton met at Verdun with Supreme Allied Commander General Eisenhower and a distinguished gathering of senior commanders that some have called perhaps the most historically significant conference of the 1944-45 campaign. All agreed there should be a counter-attack at the earliest possible moment, Patton told the group that he could be ready to attack with three divisions of the III Corps on December 22. A stronger force, he said, would take several more days to assemble and would forfeit surprise. The group was astonished at his rapid response to the situation and was more than satisfied with his proposal. It should be emphasized that at this meeting Patton pledged a three-division counterattack with the entire 4th Armored Division as the key division in the corps. He was completely unaware CCB was then on its way toward Bastogne.

Given the situation, it is absolutely inconceivable that CCB should have been sent on its merry way all the way to the outskirts of Bastogne and told to report to the Vm Corps. It turned out that General Bradley was responsible for that trip. Whatever the rationale for its mission may have been, the motivation for this decision is difficult to comprehend.

In his memoir *War As I Knew It*, General Patton wrote: "The next morning I arrived at Bradley's headquarters in Luxembourg and found that he had, without notifying me, detached Combat Command 'B' [General Dager] of the 4th Armored Division from Arlon to a position southwest of Bastogne. Since the Combat Command had not been engaged, I withdrew it to Arlon [not Arlon but Leglise]."

Historian Martin Blumenson, in the second volume of *The Patton Papers* quoted from General Patton's diary entry of the same day, December 20: "In the morning I drove to Luxembourg, arriving at 0900. Bradley had halted the 80th Division at Luxembourg and had also engaged one combat command of the 4th Armored Division in the vicinity east of Bastogne [not east but southeast] without letting me know but I said nothing."

General Middleton still must have been anxious to send CCB into Bastogne behind Task Force Ezell and surely requested permission to do so. Elements of his corps were already scattered and his armor was especially fragmented. Middleton wanted to avoid more of the same. General Gaffey must have wanted his combat command returned. With



a major attack coming up in just two days he needed his division at full strength, and it would have been severely handicapped without CCB. General Milliken also knew that the key to his III Corps three-division attack was having the 4th Armored at full strength. He surely must have supported Gaffey's argument to have his CCB returned.

As events later developed, CCB shouldered an extremely heavy share of the 4th Armored's fight at Bastogne. The combat command acted as the powerful left flank, not only of the division, but also of the III Corps all the way to the encircled city. In retrospect, General Dager's resistance to committing CCB to Bastogne earlier surely saved the unit. If he had not protested, fragile craft were lost en route, the remaining 33 arrived at the landing zone with their cargo relatively intact.

Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower later claimed that the resupply drops had ensured victory at Bastogne.

[Article stops at this point.] □

**CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL TO SEE IF YOUR DUES ARE DUE. THANKS.**



# WAR STORIES: VETERANS RELIVE THE HELL OF BATTLE

*[The following excerpts were extracted from an article by Natalie Pieterse, staff writer for Our Town, a publication we believe to be published in Palisades, New York]*

*[Excerpts: We have excerpted those portions of the article which deal with the Battle of the Bulge and its veterans.]*

**There'll be bluebirds over,  
The white cliffs of Dover,  
Tomorrow when the world is free**

The rich, melodic voice of Kate Smith, famous World War II chanteuse, greeted over one hundred guests to the Palisades Community Center... A special Veteran's Day Living History Program, sponsored by the Palisades Free Library as a tribute to World War II veterans began with a delicious luncheon reminiscent of the USO canteens that were located all over America for the purpose of entertaining the service men. In the spirit of volunteers so prevalent during the war years, the food was prepared and served by children from the club "Who's Cooking...Kids!" under the direction of Gale V. Barrett and Mary Ellen Ledwith.

Don Bracken, president of the Palisades Library and master of ceremonies, began the program with a tribute to all the men and women that served in the "most cataclysmic conflict in the history of the world," Bracken noted that although Palisades was a very small hamlet in 1942, 61 residents served in the armed forces with one death.

Bracken says there are history lessons to learn from listening to the experiences of these people. The five veterans, present and former residents of Palisades, invited to speak at the program were asked as "a tribute to the commitment, bravery, and sacrifice of all World War II participants." Throughout the program, video clips of the different battles described during the program were projected by Charles Richardson.

Morton Elevitch was a rifleman in Patton's Third Army, 94th Infantry Division in France and Germany. Like most of the combatants, Elevitch was 18 years old at the time.

A talented artist with a lively sense of humor, Elevitch became the company cartoonist. He also wrote hundreds of letters to his father, mother and brother describing the events and battles he witnessed as a way of coping with the incongruity and horrors of war.

He wrote about the cold during the Battle of the Bulge, the courage of the men who although they were still in their late teens, endured the worst of conditions: cold, hunger, loss, and worst of all, not knowing what was going on or what the next minute would bring. One 17 page letter describes the infantry's thrust to cross the Siegfried line. He calls the battle "IT." His best buddy, John Fanset, lost his life.

*We filed slowly through the woods, flattening when necessary. Fanset dashed ahead the last time I was to see him. The whole sky was a flaming, boiling mass and we didn't bother yelling to each other-just mutely picked our way...A brilliant orange outlined the figures of the men*

*ahead...I saw the medics jerking forward hunching down. Sgt. Dye was dead...Sgt. Dye is dead. It kept running through my mind.*

At the end of the battle Elevitch writes: We are so filthy--so unbelieving--but the torture is dropping behind us. Then he asks the unfaithable question that haunts every survivor. "Why am I alive?" I say over and over "Why am I alive?"

When the war was over Elevitch put it behind him and went on with his life. The letters were packed away in a box for fifty-four years until a friend came upon them and urged him to put them in a book. *Dog Tags Yapping: The World War II Letters of a Combat GI* was published recently.

The actor Kevin Spacey chose one of the letters to read on the PBS documentary "War Letters."

Stanley Weber, a rifleman in the 30th Infantry Division, recalled fighting along the hedgerows in Normandy...after D-Day.

Tall hedges used to partition off fields and farms that were part of the French countryside. Strategically they served as barriers and booby traps because the allied forces were unaware of their existence and unable to prepare the soldiers for the subsequent ambushes and battles that occurred in and around the hedgerows.

Weber calls his first experiences "baptism by fire. Then comes the ephiney, the revelation that you have entered a new phase of life from which you may not survive." Weber remembers being blasted by 88 cannonism, the worst weapon the Germans had. He dove into a headgear and stumbled upon dead and wounded men. Grenades were exploding everywhere. Weber remembers his buddy catching a grenade and tossing it back at the Germans.

We wandered around through the hedgerows looking for our squad. The wounded were so afraid of being left behind, they kept up with us until we were in safe territory.

Later in the Battle of the Bulge, he recalled the crippling cold. "We had to heat the frozen triggers on the guns with matches to get them to work." Weber recalls how tenacious the men were in battle. "They didn't give up even under the worst circumstances."

Wounded, he was sent behind the front for treatment. He says he was afraid he would never see his buddies again, but also was afraid of the time he would have to rejoin the outfit again. "But if I didn't go back, I knew I would be shirking my duty."

Rifleman Peter M. Abel, Ninth Division, was also in the Battle of the Bulge. After the battle, his division advanced virtually without resistance through the Ruhr Valley capturing towns. Along the way they took German prisoners and turned them over to the authorities. One evening, his squad settled down for the night to sleep. He says, "Unfortunately we violated the basic rule of the military. We didn't put out guards. A German squad circled back, surrounded us with tanks, and in the morning we were prisoners of war." Abel describes the march to the prison camp as "six days without food." When they arrived at the camp, they were sent to the showers. "That was a bad moment for everyone," he said. "We knew about the 'showers' in the concentration camps but it turned out all right."

"We were given a loaf of bread a day for ten men to share, and we each got one bowl of soup. It was enough to survive on."

The camp was occupied by prisoners of war from all the allied forces. Everyone was treated well, according to Abel, except for the Russian prisoners. "The Germans treated the Russians very badly. They were made to do all the dirty work. They were starved and sick, reduced to slave labor."

*(Continued on next page)*



# BRIDGES IN THE ETO

By Ralph Storm  
11th Armored Division  
21st Armored Infantry Battalion  
Company B

*[The following excerpts are from Ralph's article in the April, 2005, issue of the 11th Armored Division Association newsletter.]*

Some decisive battles were fought over bridges in the European Theater of Operations in 1944-45. A number of battles were fought for possession of large bridges over the Rhine as at Arnhem, Holland, and Remagen, Germany. Other bridge operations, mostly in the Bulge we aimed at denying bridges to the Germans by blowing them.

**Lienne Creek Bridge.** In the Ardennes, American strategy dictated the demolition of bridges to deny their use to the Germans. The Ardennes rivers are relatively small, however the valleys are often V-shaped. Many rivers can be forded by foot troops, but they have steep rocky banks which restrict tank crossings to bridges.

On December 18, 1944, or Day Three of the Bulge, Kampfgruppe Pieper of the 1st SS Panzer Division was heading toward the Meuse River with an armored force of nearly 4,000 men. On Day Two, or December 17, Pieper's men had captured and gunned down nearly one hundred men with machine guns. The place was Five Points as the engineers called it. On a map the crossroads hamlet is listed as Baugez and is near Malmedy.

A number of bridges had been blown by the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion on December 18, but there was a timber trestle bridge over Lienne Creek at the hamlet of Habiement. If Pieper could capture the bridge over Lienne Creek at Habiement, the way seemed open to Werbomont and the Meuse. It was a case of who would get to the bridge first: Pieper and his armored column or an engineer demolitions crew. As it was, the German column was delayed by sixteen P47 fighter-bombers that strafed and bombed the column knocking out one tank and two half-tracks. The raid forced a delay for the Germans as wrecked vehicles had to be pushed aside and the wounded tended.

Meanwhile at Werbomont, a dozen miles west of the bridge, fifteen engineers were loading a truck with explosives and wire. Their truck had a damaged engine from having made a furious trip the previous day. The engine valves were burned and the truck could only do ten miles per hour. Arriving at Lienne Creek bridge the demolitions crew under Corporal Fred Chapin began setting up charges and wiring them. The men had mixed emotions about blowing a bridge that they had built in September. But the men also knew that they could build a new bridge, a Bailey or a treadway-pontoon, in a few hours or days.

The sun set on that dark cloudy day at 1635 hours but the explosives--2500 pounds of TNT---were set and wired by then. As a precaution, a back-up charge was set and wired to a second detonator. Corporal Chapin stood with the detonator in an old German sentry box from where he had a good view of the bridge and its eastern approaches.

And where were the Germans? Two Belgian farmers spotted the Germans three miles east of the bridge and ran across

country to warn the engineers at the bridge. At 1645, after sundown and before it was completely dark, Corporal Chapin saw the lead German tank, a monster Tiger Royal with a long--barreled 88mm gun creep around the bend in the road. The Tiger fired its main gun at a mine laying crew near the bridge. The engineers scattered. Watching the German tanks near the bridge. Chapin turned the detonator key and saw "a streak of blue lights, the heaving blast of dust debris and knew he had a good blow." With a thundering detonation the timber trestle bridge was reduced to scrap wood and saw dust.

Earlier that day the three bridges at Trois Ponts had been blown in Peiper's face as he advanced with his vanguard. Now at Lienne Creek, for the fourth time that day, Pieper was denied access to a bridge that might have gotten him to the Meuse. Charles MacDonald wrote of the Kampfgruppe leader's anger after the bridge had fallen: "Joachim Pieper reputedly pounded one knee with his fist in sheer frustration and muttered: 'The damned engineers! The damned engineers!'"

Books with more details on ETO bridge are: Stephen Ambrose, Pegasus, Cornelius Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, and David E. Pergrin, *First Across the Rhine*. ■

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(Continued from Page 12)

## WAR STORIES...

Fortunately for Abel he was liberated after only ten days in the prison camp.

Bombardier Reg Abel has been described by the economist John Kenneth Galbraith as a statistical aberration. He flew 79 bombing missions in the fabled B-17 and survived unscathed. Stationed in Africa at the beginning of the war, he flew fifty missions over Sicily, Greece, Austria, and France dropping bombs on ball bearing plants, railroad stations, storage depots and strategic sites. When he completed 50 missions, he was sent back to the States to work as an instructor which he soon tired of. "I wanted to get back in the air, so I wrote to General Marshall requesting an assignment in England. After several letters and a long wait, Abel was reassigned and back in the war. He soon gained a reputation as a man with a charmed life. "Some of the pilots wanted to fly with me but others didn't. They were afraid I would eventually run out of luck." When asked how he was able to handle fear, he said "I don't know the answer. When you are in combat and you have a job to do, there is such an intense concentration on what you are doing that you don't have the time to worry about what might happen." Then he laughed, "I thought I was invincible, and it turned out I was right."

Abel paid tribute to the men in the infantry. "You were the men that had it really rough. I went back after every successful flight and partied."

The sun had set before the speakers finished, but the audience sat mesmerized until the last word was spoken. The afternoon was a lesson in living history that will long be remembered as a tribute to the "finest generation" whose contributions to the premise of a free world will be remembered and revered forever. ■

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# A DAY IN THE ARDENNES

## ...JANUARY 12, 1945

By Charles Woodman  
75th Infantry Division  
291st Infantry Regiment  
Company B

This is one those days I will always remember. The 75th Infantry Division had relieved the 82nd Airborne Division near Vielsalm, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge. I was a member of Company B, 291st Regiment of the 75th, and on this morning a group of us had gathered behind the hill on the high ground where we had our foxholes to build a small campfire to have some coffee. The weather had been miserably cold but this morning was bearable and I had removed my shoes in an effort to dry them out over the fire.

We had received mail earlier and some of us were reading letters from home when Freddie McCarthy came over the hill to show me a picture he had just received of a very attractive girl in a nurse's uniform. After I congratulated him, he asked if I wanted to go on an easy patrol with him, Harvey Pendergrass, Mickey Dutton, and one other man whose name I do not remember. He said this was like a stroll in the park and the mission was to find a decent spot to cross a stream which was east of our position for a large patrol planned for later in the day. Since my shoes were off and the water for the coffee was heating up I told him I would see him later when they returned.

This "walk in the park" turned out to be a disaster.

Perhaps a half hour later we heard a fire fight erupt in the direction that the patrol had taken. It didn't last long and the man whose name I cannot remember returned to say they had been fired upon by enemy troops before they reached the stream. The other three members of the patrol had all been hit.

We had a medic we called "Pop," who went into the open field on our side of the stream to help the wounded. "Pop" was much older than most of us and my guess is that he could have been over 40 years old. I believe he was from the State of Connecticut. He found Pendergrass had been killed, McCarthy was hit in the neck but was still alive and he could not find Dutton.

While two stretcher bearers went to get McCarthy, the rest of us took up positions on the top of the ridge from where we could see a house on the other side of the stream. This appeared to be the point where the enemy fire originated. As I lay there watching the house and waiting, the medics carried McCarthy up the slope, and when they got to my position they set him down for a moment to rest. I had a chance to speak to him but he did not answer. One of the medics put some snow on his lips and he was able to lick it. It was at this time that we opened fire on the house not knowing if we were hitting any of the enemy but relieving a lot of frustration and hoping that some of those rounds found a target.

Three days later, about three in the morning, we moved from that position to start the attack that would end the German advance into Belgium. The name of the town that we moved to was Grand Halleaux. The attack started with a fifteen minute artillery barrage and then we were off heading south across an open field, but this is another story.

The troops attacking to our west, which I believe was A Company, found Mickey Dutton's body in the creek which we later learned was called the Salm River. They also discovered the remains of several dead German soldiers in the house that we had fired upon. McCarthy is buried in Henry Chappelle Cemetery and I have visited his grave four times starting in 1991. Harvey Pendergrass and Mickey Dutton were eventually returned home for burial as was true of 60 percent of the men who were killed in Europe. Pendergrass came from Mississippi, Dutton's first name was Carl and he came from Ohio. McCarthy was from Elmhurst, a part of Queens County in New York City. I did write to his mother and told her that when I saw him on the stretcher he was not in pain. She wrote back and told me that he was an adopted child and that they naturally would miss him. That is what I remember of one Black Day in the white snow of the Ardennes Forest when we lost three very good men. ■

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## A SOLDIER AND A PERFECT STRANGER

### And a Day in History That Will Live Forever!

December 16, 1944

By J. David Bailey  
106th Infantry Division  
422nd Infantry Regiment

It was 60 years ago on December 2004, that my regiment of the 106th Infantry Division was plundered in the Battle of the Bulge. As one of the few survivors of 5,000 men of the 422nd Infantry Regiment, I had lost directions as I wandered into a small Belgium village called Anthistes (Providence of Liege.)

Being homeless, without rations and needing shelter, it was only natural to seek help in this remote European village in friendly territory. I knocked on the closest entry I could find. On that December morning during the Christmas season, a young nineteen year old Belgium girl named Adele Orban opened her door and heart to me. Indeed, I truly believe that in this life someone guides and watches over us, and their protective spirit is "always" present.

Yes, it was my guardian angel who had pre-arranged this unusual encounter between David and Adele. We both came from two separate worlds; however, we did indeed share a mutual concern--The Ravages of War! Our friendship has lasted over a half a century and with such a strong bond we consider ourselves now to be more like brother and sister.

As a young soldier I had the memorable experience of participating in the most decisive battle on the western front during World War II. Also, I was able to share that reality with my new Belgium friends, recently liberated from German hands by our own Army. It was a remarkable experience that happened during my lifetime and a reminder that indeed--truth sometimes can be stranger than fiction!

The Battle of the Bulge lasted longer than any battle in our nation's history with the largest number of casualties. The official historian of the U.S. Army, Charles MacDonald, stated that it was the greatest battle in American history.

America's World War II generation did save the world, not for glory, not for honor, and not for lasting tribute. For my buddies that did not return they deserve our blessings. ■



# The Battle of the Bulge Where Was The Air Force?

By Paul R. Priday, Former Pilot  
556th Bomb Squadron  
387th Bomb Group (M)

*[Note from the Author: As a relatively new member, I have only received the last two issues of The Bulge Bugle, which have provided interesting reading. I would guess that many members of the ground forces had questions about where was the Air Force during the early days of the battle. [Following are] my recollections of the experiences of my medium bomb group during that period and remaining days of the battle.]*

As the Army ground forces were bearing the brunt of massive German counter attacks in the Ardennes region on December 16, 1944, the Army Air Force units in the area were unable to respond. At a base in Northern France only 70 miles south of Bastogne, Belgium, the air crews of the 387th Bomb Group (Medium) were experiencing extreme frustration. Low ceilings and limited visibility grounded us from the 16th through the 22nd of December. During this period missions were scheduled and briefed each morning. Impatient air crews remained near their assigned aircraft, receiving repeated one hour delays until late afternoon when the mission would be officially scrubbed.

Our group, equipped with Martin B-26 aircraft was one of several medium bomb groups of the 9th Air Force, which had been specifically organized to support allied ground forces following the invasion. The 387th was the first of the Medium Bomb Groups to relocate from its British base to one near Cherbourg in late August of 1944. As the ground forces moved forward we were issued tents and mess kits and moved forward also to other former Luftwaffe bases, which had been over run.

The fighter and medium bomb groups of the 9th Air Force had attained a high degree of mobility and our group could fly into a new base, set up tents and renew operations the following day. We had transferred to our base in Northern France, adjacent to the Village of Clastre and near the City of St. Quentin in November of 1944.

Soon after the German attack had been launched, rumors of paratroopers being dropped into the area caused base security to be heightened. Sentries were posted near the hardstands where the aircraft were parked and around the tent areas. A procedure for abandoning the base was also issued. As a worse case scenario the air crews were to make instrument takeoffs, home into a radio station in England and, if visibility precluded an instrument landing, the aircraft would be pointed toward the Atlantic Ocean and the crew would parachute out. The non-flying personnel would load up in six by six trucks and head South.

Fortunately, our embattled Ground Forces had blunted the German thrust and it was unnecessary to implement the procedure. On the 23rd of December the skies cleared and both the 8th and 9th Air Forces could join the fray.

Missions assigned to the medium bombers were to "Interdict the Battlefield"--that is cut the transportation routes between the enemy combat forces and their sources of supply and reinforce-

ment. Flying at lower altitudes (ten to fifteen thousand feet) than the heavy bombers, the medium bombers (twin engine) were theoretically able to drop bombs more precisely on smaller targets such as bridges and road junctions.

Beginning with morning and afternoon missions on the 23rd, the 387th Bomb Group (M) launched missions on the 24th, 25th, and 26th of December. Targets in Mayen, Prum, Nideggen Irrel, St. Vith, Konz, Karthaus and Nonweiler were attacked. The bridges and transportation hubs were bitterly defended with some of the most intensive and accurate flak that we had experienced.

When the weather cleared the Luftwaffe also became active. The 387th Bomb Group lost five aircraft to enemy fighters on our mission to Mayen on the 23rd. At night, individual JU-88's would drone overhead and we spent several sleepless nights, reacting to "Red Alerts" broadcast to our tent areas over the loud speaker system.

On about the third night most of us chose to ignore a particular persistent intruder and the associated "Red Alert." The German pilot apparently sighted our runway in the moonlight, cut his engine and glided silently down to within firing range before simultaneously advancing his throttles and squeezing his gun switch. The roar of his twin engines and the sights and sounds of the 20mm shells ricocheting off the runway brought all of us out of our tents in a wild scramble for a limited number of fox holes. Shovels became much in demand. When the dawn arrived the fresh snow was marked with freshly dug soil. A single night intruder had accomplished what a long standing order on our Squadron Bulletin Board had failed to accomplish.

As our ground forces assumed the offensive in the Ardennes and the Germans began their withdrawal our B-26's were active in attacking their escape routes. On January 23rd, the 387th was one of two groups scheduled to bomb the Dasburg Highway Bridge spanning the Our River. The bridge was severely damaged, resulting in major traffic congestion of German vehicles attempting to make a crossing. Fighter-bombers, bombing and strafing the stalled vehicles, claimed 1,177 destroyed and another 536 damaged.

During the period of December 16, 1944 until January 28, 1945, the 387th suffered the loss of 15 aircraft, plus a number of crew members KIA or MIA.■

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## REUNIONS

**526TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION**, May 31-June 3, 2006, Sacramento, California. Cocontact: Sherrie Morrison, PO Box 456, Yalo, California 95697. Telephone: 530-662-8160.

Our apologies to the following associations for not publishing their reunion notices in a timely manner. There is no excuse. Just in the rush, we overlooked them. We are always happy to publish reunion notices as it enables our members to have contact with their units.

**80TH INFANTRY DIVISION**, Contact Walton W. Spangler, telephone 740-474-5734.

**644TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION**, Contact William Walker, telephone 863-646-6324.

**774TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION**, Contact Art Pelkey, telephone 843-497-0527.



## RUNDSTEDT INTERROGATION

*[The following article appeared in January/February, 2005, issue of The Marcher, the newsletter of the Maryland/DC Chapter of VBOB.]*

The following are excerpts of the interrogation of General Field Marshall von Rundstedt (C-in-C West) captured BAD TOLZ 1 May 1945 by two British Army Officers (BAO). The information is obtained in ML Series 2125 files. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 407, Box 24231, College Park, MD. Information was received 18 July 1945.

RUNDSTEDT: I did not suggest this Ardennes offensive--I told the American officers that I dislike the expression 'RUNDSTEDT OFFENSIVE.' On the contrary I proposed quite a different solution and that was turned down.

Close to my headquarters, a quarter-of-an-hour away, there was a sort of 'Bunker' and when things got a bit stuck, in the Ardennes offensive that is, I went there to kick up a fuss. For if, as the Fuhrer put, I am to exert our utmost effort, by throwing in everything I could still bring up in the way of troops and artillery, etc., then I would not take such a--pardon the expression--fool like Sepp Dietrich (laughter all around), a former 'Wachtmeister,' but I would have taken the best person, such as little Manteuffel, who commanded the one 'Panzerarmee' which was kept the weakest. We said "it must be the strongest." No.

So then I went there, kicked up a frightful row and blew up--as one says I went off like that and hit the Fuhrer on the hand and said: "Oh Sorry!"--20th July--you see. And then when I went there afterwards the Fuhrer said: "Please take a seat!" and then a chair was fetched, and I had to sit down, and fat old Goring had to stand on the other side. Those days were, I can tell you, frightful.

### II The Ardennes Offensive

BAO: And what was your plan in December 1944 if the Ardennes offensive had been successful?

Rundstedt: The Ardennes offensive bore my name quite wrongly. I had nothing to do with it. It was ordered from above down to the smallest detail. Every protest on our part, including those from the late Feldmarschall Model, was turned down. If it had been my concern at all, I should have confined myself to a smaller objective, roughly speaking I would have attacked the Aachen pocket from two sides and, if possible, destroyed it. For a far-reaching operation such as the Ardennes offensive, aimed first at the Maas, and possibly still further, the forces were much, much, much too weak, and the possibility of driving inland with armored 'Divisionen,' with no GAF (German Air Force) was out of the question. Reinforcements and supplies with their railheads back on the Rhine, took longer and longer and it was impossible to get up that kind--I'll compare it with the one we made in 1940 from Trier in the direction of Luxembourg and Calais. We had that vast number of troops chiefly to cover the flank on the right and left and protect the spear head. The forces in the Ardennes offensive were far too weak to do that, as you saw from Bastogne and up near Stavelot--Malmedy. If I do anything like that I must have many, many more forces. But those suggestions were not heeded and things turned out as I'd expected. The root of the whole troubles air power, air power!

### Battle of the Ardennes

*Interview with Lt. Col. Karl Von der Heydte, in charge of the Paratroop dropping during the Ardennes Offensive, 31 Oct. 1945 at London District Cage, London, Interrogator: Captain R.K. Merriam, (NOTE: This very brief interview outlining the key points of the von der Heydte drops is supplementary to a complete account of the drops which he is preparing for this section. Information found in MI, Series 1068 Box 24206 RG 407.*

The original von der Heydte group consisted of 1,200 men of whom 150 were left behind at the time of the drop. These latter troops were to go forward with the ground forces and were mainly service and supply troops.

Because of the bad drop the approximately 1,000 men were widely scattered and actually only about 300 men were assembled around the road junction south of Eupen. Actually on the morning of 17 December, immediately following the drop von der Heydte had only about 25 men with him and the rest of the 300 filtered in during the day. Because he had such a small reconnaissance groups which actually went into Stavelot, Malmedy, Verviers and even so far a distance as Werbomont and these groups brought back very valuable information of American troop movements. However von der Heydte was unable to communicate this information to the Sixth Pz Army because his radio had been smashed in the drop. He had asked Dietrich for carrier pigeons to relay messages as he had seen the American paratroops with them in Normandy. Dietrich only laughed at this suggestion and said that a radio would be sufficient.

Von der Heydte stated that he addressed a message to Gen Taylor of the 101st Abn D because his was the only General's name von der Heydte could recall at the time and because his patrols had told him that paratroops were moving in the area near Werbomont. In view of the fact that paratroops were in the vicinity von der Heydte felt that Taylor's troops might also be around and so when he sent this message he asked to give up some of his wounded men he addressed it to Taylor.

Von der Heydte himself went to Monschau about four days after the drop. He went there because he knew that on the plans for the attack that Monschau was to be captured on the first day and although he saw American Artillery units west of Monschau he went into the town and was captured. About 150 of his men were successful in making an escape and went back through the American lines, he later discovered.■

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## DONATION MADE TO WORLD WAR II MUSEUM

The Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge recently donated \$1,000 to the World War II Museum in New Orleans for the specific purpose of establishing an exhibit recognizing the Battle of the Bulge. As stated by George Fisher, Vice President for Chapters: With the passage of time, World War II is rapidly becoming a distant memory with decreasing budgets and academic indifference. The story must be told, and re-told to each generation.■ *[Incidentally, if you would like to visit the museum, the address is 945 Magazine Street, in New Orleans, Louisiana.]*

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# "THE LITTLE-KNOWN FRONT" TELLS LITTLE-KNOWN STORY

By Mitchell Kaidy  
87th Infantry Division  
345th Infantry Regiment  
Company D

Appearing 60 years after the events it describes, *The Little-Known Front*, by the Belgian Eric Urbain, casts light so brilliant and detailed that it renders nearly all other accounts of World War II infantry combat as Boy Scout folderol.

Though written in shaky, unidiomatic English, it does something that other books don't do: it focuses on, dwells on and quotes the surviving infantrymen about their real day-and-night living-and-dying hell.

And by doing this the book can't help but rip away the self-glorifying, larger-than-life aura that has engulfed Gen. George Patton over the past 60 years.

The troops that Urbain focuses on belonged primarily to three divisions of Patton's Third Army, the 87th Infantry, 11th Armored and 17th Airborne Divisions. The book concentrates on late December and January, 1944-45 a few days after the City of Bastogne was almost surrounded by German troops during the Battle of the Bulge.

Urbain convincingly demonstrates that these green troops were thrown helter-skelter against experienced German formations in prepared positions and forced to survive freezing weather as well as their opponents' superior weapons with both inadequate American weapons and more amazingly, unsupplied with vital tactical information, coordination, and clothing.

A main accomplishment of the book is that in reconstructing the individual infantry battles the author asks and answers the crucial questions: Did it have to happen this way? The answer, according to both the author and the fighting infantrymen, is a resounding "no."

Wearing dark overcoats that contrasted against the snow the first battalion, 345th Infantry Regiment, 87th Division, was precipitately committed to battle on Patton's orders on December 29, 1944, in the Belgian Village of Moirycy. With no time to reconnoiter, no time to coordinate with other units, and really no time to plan within their own squads, companies, and battalions, the attack proved bloody hopeless.

But just as excruciating was that the young troops were committed with no opportunity to connect with other major units and functions. Artillery was practically ignorant of the infantry, its capabilities and whereabouts and neither branch knew what the under-armed tank units' tactics and capabilities were. And, although the attacks to liberate Bastogne were crucial, apparently little consideration had been given to coordinating with tactical Air Force, which faced weather obstacles in attempting to operate.

Facts on the ground underscored another sad and shameful contrast—that between American and German weapons. German tanks, German artillery, and German machine guns were clearly superior to their American counterparts. Only one American weapon, the Garand rifle proved superior to its German counterpart.

As a Belgian Urbain can be pardoned for being unaware of the

structural deficiencies of the U.S. Army that stemmed all the way back to basic training in the Southern states. At that time, it never occurred to the generals that their soldiers might have to fight in cold, snowy weather. As a result, infantrymen who were trained in warm weather waded into the frozen snows of Europe wearing canvas leggings, Army shoes, and dark clothing.

As excruciating as enemy shrapnel was more infantrymen were evacuated because of cold-weather injuries than from wounds. Moreover American infantrymen were bereft of simple, life-saving white cloaks much more than their German opponents.

Throughout *The Little-Known Front*, Urbain strives to keep abreast of the war's impact on the local population, a welcome approach initiated by the Belgian Victor Dermience in his 2001 book, *Bataille des Ardennes* initially published in French and translated into English.

There is much to recommend *The Little-Known Front*. Too often, military histories are recorded in the distant third-person or from a high-level perspective. In this book, the infantrymen, some of whom became POW's, act and speak for themselves, lending power and immediacy to their accounts which are consistently enlightening.

Much of the *The Little-Known Front* was derived from After-Action Reports at the National Archives as well as from interviews with the survivors. It is a testament to the author that he journeyed from Europe and spent substantial time to reform this laborious and rewarding research.

The result is a book not about self-serving decisions and grand chess player moves, but about those young American infantry men who really deserve the glory. Tens of thousands died, were wounded or froze their feet in the drive, ultimately successful, to liberate Bastogne and drive the Germans steadily backward to victory in May, 1945.

Whether they were gloriously killed in battle or survived and died at home during the past 60 years, may they all rest in God's sublime peace. ■

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## WWII STUDY GROUP NEEDS YOUR HELP

This organization would very much appreciate receiving any WWII-related items and/or history books that you may wish to donate. They are also interested in interviewing Battle of the Bulge veterans for their Oral History Project. You can contact them at: Second World War Study Group, Museum Committee, 1985 Stonecrest Court, Vista, California 92081. (Phone: 760-072-4355. e-mail: [pacificwarstudygroup@gmail.com](mailto:pacificwarstudygroup@gmail.com)) ■

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## OLDEST "BUFFALO SOLDIER" LAID TO REST

[Long ago, the Executive Council adopted the policy of not including obituaries in this newsletter; however, we thought because of historical significance the following might be of interest.]

Retired 1st Sgt. Mark Matthews was 111 years-of-age when he was laid to rest in Arlington Cemetery on September 19, 2005. ■

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# VBOB 25TH ANNUAL REUNION

September 28-October 2, 2005  
Holiday Inn Pittsburgh Airport  
Coraopolis, Pennsylvania

By Marty Sheeron  
53rd Field Hospital

•Wednesday, September 28, 2005, was devoted to registering attendees at the Headquarters Hotel. Registration was open each day. A Wine and Cheese Reception was held in the evening at the hotel, compliments of Holiday Inn. Dinner was on your own. Snacks and liquids were available in the VBOB Hospitality Room. WWII Army clothing, equipment and various publications on WWII were on display. Members and friends gathered in the room to renew old friendships and acquaint themselves with new arrivals. Ralph Bozorth, Associate Member, presented a video presentation of over 400 individual VBOB members, pictured in their WWII uniforms.

•Thursday, September 29, 2005, there was a bus tour of the old and new City of Pittsburgh. Members and friends rode in "Molly's Trolley," a site-seeing bus. Our guides were informative and entertaining. Our tour began with a ride on Grandview Street, over-looking the City of Pittsburgh. First stop was at the Duquesne Incline. From the observation deck, members had a spectacular view of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle and the three rivers--The Allegheny, the Monongahela, and the Ohio. Handicapped members returned to the trolley to meet the group at the bottom of the hill. The other members descended the incline on a tram-like car, seating 20 persons, to the road below, to meet our trolley.

From the Duquesne Incline, we boarded the trolley for a tour of the business and cultural districts of the city. Our informative guide pointed out the various high-rise corporate buildings such as the PPG Building, One Mellon Center, the Westinghouse, and the U.S. Steel Building. Other places of interest were Station Square, Freight House Shop, Allegheny Court House, the modernistic Convention Center, Warhol Museum, Heinz Field (home of Pittsburgh Steelers), PNC Park (home of the Pittsburgh Pirates), and the Gateway Clipper Fleet dock.

Our tour ended at the Grand Concourse Restaurant for a super fine lunch, with a choice of sauteed lemon chicken or fish and chips. The restaurant is set in the Edwardian splendor of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Terminal built in 1901. The historic landmark features cathedral ceilings, original Tiffany stained glass windows and a grand staircase.

After lunch we bused to the Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center, associated with the Smithsonian Institution. After this visit we returned to the hotel.

*Trivia Question: How many bridges and tunnels are in the City of Pittsburgh? Answer will be furnished later on.*

In the evening we had a buffet Italian Dinner at the hotel. Dinner was followed by a Broadway show--"Broadway Moments to Remember," produced by Jude Pohl Productions. A trio of vocalists sang tunes from "Camelot," "My Fair Lady," "South Pacific," "Sound of Music," "Man from LaMancha," and other Broadway shows.

(Continued)





## VBOB REUNION

(Continuation)

\*Friday, September 30, 2005, members and friends traveled a short distance by school buses to the Moon Area High School, Moon Township, Pennsylvania. At the school we attended a student Patriotic Assembly as honored guests. The ceremony began with patriotic melodies by the high school band. President George Chekan made introductory remarks and Pat Murphy, 78th Infantry Division, led the assembly in his special patriotic rendition of the Pledge of Allegiance. Vice President John Dunleavy recapped a brief history of the Battle of the Bulge. Mr. Mike Hauser, Principal of Moon High, gave welcoming remarks. Miss Alexis Nolfi, Student President, addressed her remarks with "Thanks to all our veterans." As a special treat, the Girls' Choir gave a rendition of the Andrew Sisters singing "The Bugle Boy from Company 'B'." President Chekan presented to Principal Mike Hauser, a VBOB Certificate. The ceremony ended with the singing of "God Bless America." As students left the auditorium, VBOBers shook hands and thanks the students for their attendance.

Members returned to the hotel and the Hospitality Room. A bus-load of students were welcomed to the Hospitality Room and treated to snacks, sodas, and lunch. Students were invited to view the WWII Army clothing, equipment and various publications on WWII. Students were given the opportunity to talk with the veterans about their experiences in the Bulge.

In the afternoon, the General Membership Meeting was held in a ballroom. President George Chekan opened the meeting. George stated our next National VBOB Reunion would be held in Louisville, Kentucky, dates to be announced in an issue of the *The Bulge Bugle*. Past President Lou Cunningham, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, announced the slate to serve on the Executive Council for the fiscal year 2005-06. Membership approved the nominations (as appeared in the August, 2005, issue of *The Bulge Bugle*) unanimously.

Past President John Dunleavy reported on the financial situation relating to the 60th Anniversary tour to Belgium and Luxembourg in December, 2004. John stated that Chairman Earle Hart had all funds collected for the tour placed in a bank account that solely designated himself as the only one who could disburse these funds. There are outstanding bills from the Belgian hotel, other Belgium businesses, and personal refunds to those who made the trip. Dunleavy asked the membership what action should be taken against Chairman Earle Hart. By a unanimous vocal response, members suggested that the Executive Council should take legal action against Chairman Hart. Recording Secretary John D. Bowen announced the procedure for voting on the design of the new VBOB memorial to be erected in Arlington National Cemetery. There were four designs submitted for consideration from: (1) Mark Hambleu, North Mississippi Stone and Memorial; (2) Solon Granite Works, Solon, Ohio; (3) Tony Moody, Long Island New York Chapter; and (4) Charles DeChristopher Bros., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. prior to the voting, the "floor" was open for discussions by the membership. The discussions generated many questions: "hot" and "testy" pro's and con's. Only paid-up members were permitted to vote. The winner was Charles DeChristopher Bros. followed by Tony Moody, Solon Granite Works, and Mark Hambleu.

In the evening the Annual VBOB Military Banquet was held in the Westinghouse Ballroom.

(Continued)





## VBOB REUNION

(Continuation)

President Chekan called for the Presentation of the Colors by the Civil Air Patrol, Squadron 603, from the 911th Air Wing, from Pittsburgh. Master of Ceremonies was George Fisher, 26th Infantry Division. The *National Anthem* was sung by all. Pat Murphy, 78th Infantry Division, led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance. John D. Bowen, Assistant Chaplain, gave the invocation. MC Fisher called for the Colors to be retired. A toast to the Belgian and Luxembourg guests was made by Marty Sheeron, 53rd Field Hospital. *Taps* were played by Bugler Ed Ruffennach, 99th Infantry Division.

After dinner, BGen Danny Van de Van, Military Attache, Embassy of Belgium, thanked VBOB members for liberating the Belgian people and the country. Jacob Land, 13-year-old grandson of President Chekan, gave an inspiring and outstanding salute of thanks to all grandfathers for their service in the BOB. Jacob received a standing ovation for his speech. Past President Dunleavy introduced the guest speaker--Senator John Pippy (Pa), who also thanked the veterans for their service. President Chekan presented Senator Pippy a VBOB Certificate.

After dinner, the famous "Pittsburgh Barbershop Choir" provided the entertainment. The choir sang such tunes as "What a Wonderful World," "Hello, Mary Lou," "It's Always Been You," "East Side, West Side," "Harrigan," "Amazing Grace," and "Alexander's Rag Time Band," and a military tribute to each branch of the military. In closing, the choir led all in singing "America."

Bob Rhodes, photographer, presented a short video of members who participated in the December 2004 European tour.

*Answer to Trivia: In the City of Pittsburgh there are 730 bridges (auto, train, and pedestrian); seven (7) tunnels.*

•**Saturday, October 1, 2005**, members and friends boarded "Coach USA" deluxe motor coaches for a trip to the Soldiers and Sailors Military Museum and Memorial in the Oakland part of Pittsburgh where the University of Pittsburgh is located. This Greco-Roman style building was built in 1908. This memorial was originally founded to remember the sacrifices of the Allegheny County Civil War soldiers and sailors. Today, it honors the services of all men and women who have served our country, from WWI to our current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The museum is divided into the West, North, East and Front Halls. The name "Front Hall" is used due to the GAR's continued discontent toward the South even well after the Civil War ended, extracted from the Soldiers & Sailors Museum Guide.

After visiting the museum, members assembled in front of the building for a wreath-laying ceremony. Ralph Bozorth, Associate Member, conducted the ceremonies. Wreath presenters were George Linthicum, 26th Infantry Division, and Dan Santagato, 5th Infantry Division. Ralph concluded the services with a prayer.

From the museum, members were bused to the "Teutonia Mannerchor" (translation: Men's Choir) a German Club, Gegrundet (founded) in 1854 in Pittsburgh. Here, we had an authentic buffet lunch. The motif was an authentic German Rathskeller, murals on the walls were painted by a German immigrant with drinking aphorisms or proverbs, example: Wer nicht liebt, trinkt and singt, es nie zur wahren Freude bringt

(Continued)



Photos by Midge Mariotti



## VBOB REUNION

(Continuation)

(translation: He, who does not love, drink and sing, will never know true pleasure). From here, we were bussed back to the hotel.

In the evening we boarded school buses for the Gateway Clipper Cruise docked at Station Square. Our vessel was the *Majestic*, flagship of the fleet. This vessel was originally a fishing boat on Lake Erie. It was completely renovated and transformed into a replica of a paddle-wheeler that cruised the Mississippi River. Underway, we enjoyed a buffet dinner with a band for our listening and dining pleasure. After dinner, members were free to roam the decks of the vessel to view the amazing sites of the city. The cruise touched based with the three rivers, which make up Pittsburgh dynamic Point. Where the Allegheny River and the Monongahela River form the Ohio River. After a relaxing cruise, the vessel returned to the dock and we were again bused back to the hotel.

•Sunday, October 2, 2005, members and friends enjoyed a free private buffet breakfast at the Holiday Inn. Breakfast was provided through the courtesy of VBOB. Now we take our leave for another year, farewell to our friends and old-timers.

**To the Reunion Committee: A big thanks for an enjoyable time and an excellent schedule of events.**

God willing, we will see you in Louisville, Kentucky, for the 2006 reunion. Dates will be announced later in *The Bulge Bugle*.

*Acknowledgments: Some of the informative remarks in this synopsis were derived from various brochures I picked up during our visits to the museums and other places of interest. □*





## MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

Kay Kelly writes to see if anyone can provide information regarding her father, **ALVA A. (ANDREW) FRENCH**, who served with the 231st Armored Field Artillery Battalion. She was less than a year old when he died on January 17, 1945, and knows little about where and when he died. Any information will be appreciated. Write to her at: 4533 Hunters Ridge Road, Durham, NC 27707-5212.

Angela Christian of Chesterfield, England, writes that her father, **PVT GILBERT MANNY BUSH**, died as a result of poisoned German whiskey while toasting V-E Day with a young, Russian soldier. He had served in the following units: **29TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 175TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, COMPANY M; 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 313TH INFANTRY REGIMENT--BOTH COMPANY H AND 313TH ANTI-TANK COMPANY**. When with M Company he took part in an organized boxing match for the company. Perhaps you remember. She never knew father and would appreciate any information you might be able to provide. You can reach her on e-mail at [angelachristian@hotmail.com](mailto:angelachristian@hotmail.com) or write to her at: 10 New Road; Chesterfield; Derbyshire S43 4HZ, England.

**HUGH J. MARASA, 75TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 290TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, COMPANY D**, wants to know if someone can provide him with the name of the concentration camp liberated by his company. Write to Hugh at: 434 Brackenwood Lane S., Palm Beach Gardens, Florida 33418-9016.

**ED "ANDY" ANDERSON, 5TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 11TH INFANTRY REGIMENT (RED DIAMOND), COMPANY C**, wants to know if anyone ever heard of a reunion for his group. He served as a BAR man. Write to him at: PO Box 1202, Bonsall, California 92003.

**BILL JASPER, 87TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 312TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, COMPANY B**, writes on behalf of a Belgian lady who is looking for three soldiers who served in Libramont, Belgium, in January 1945. They were likely in a signal corps because their truck had many different phones and electronic gear. There's a good chance that the soldiers were members of (or were attached to) the **87TH INFANTRY DIVISION**. If you can provide any help write to Bill at: 28801 Birkdale Court, Tehachapi, California 93561.

**GUSTAV "GUS" SWIERSZ, 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 112TH INFANTRY REGIMENT**, was approached by a lady who was helped (as a little girl) by a soldier from the **10TH ARMORED DIVISION**. She was a 14-year-old girl who had just been liberated from Dachau Concentration Camp and the soldier helped her by getting new clothes to replace her tattered rags. If you know of that incident, please write to Gus at: 5420 Maisel Way, San Diego, California 92115-2245. Gus would also like to contact any veterans who served in the 10th Armored.

## THE GHOST OF A SOLDIER

Submitted by **Lester R. King**  
**643rd Tank Destroyer Battalion**

Visualize if you will the ghost of a GI somewhere in Belgium on Christmas Eve of 1944 as he clutches his M-1 rifle with frostbitten fingers. He stands with frozen feet knee-deep in the snow, weak from lack of food, fatally wounded by constant enemy artillery and heartbroken from the eternity away from his loved-ones.

He is sickened by the death and carnage of war.

He looks at us through lifeless eyes, inflamed with anger and disgust.

He tells us through clenched teeth:

"I died for your birthright bestowed by your forefathers in the Constitution and now you allow school boards to graduate your children too illiterate to comprehend its meaning.

"I fought in the freezing hell of the Ardennes for your freedom to vote and you stay home because the line is too long or the weather is bad.

"I left my family alone and heart-broken to guarantee your freedom of speech and you remain silent on controversial issues because you're afraid to offend.

"I orphaned my children to ensure you a government of the people, by the people, and for the people and now you have allowed it to steal your democracy from you.

"It is I, the soldier, not the president who tolerates your freedom to choose your soul-mate.

"It is I, the soldier, not your Congressman, who grants you freedom of expression.

"It is I, the soldier, not the Attorney General who demands that your protection granted by the Bill of Rights be honored.

"It is I, the soldier, not the priest or rabbi who provides your right to worship whomever, however you wish.

"It is I, the soldier, not the political activist, who allows you the right to demonstrate.

"And it is I, the soldier, who follows the flag, who fights for the flag and whose dead body is embraced by the flag, who permits the protester to burn the beloved flag.

"And it is, for damn sure, just about time you did something about it!" ■





# Monument Dedicated at Ft. Hood

## Battle of the Bulge Veterans Honored

Fort Hood, Texas  
October 25, 2005

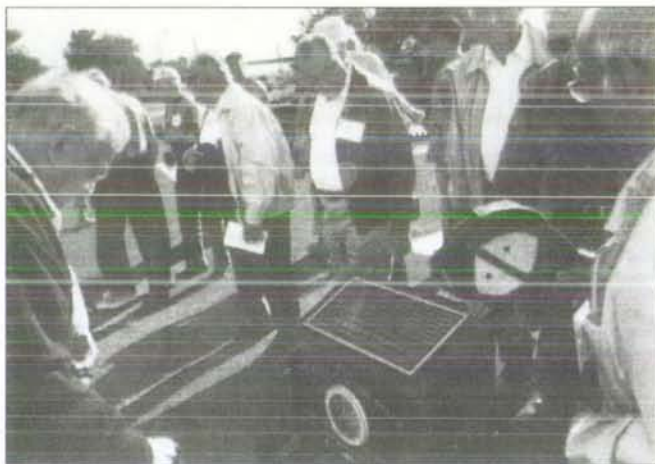
*[Portions of this article are extracted from the October 26, 2005, issue of Temple Daily Telegram. The article was written by Harper Scott Clark.]*

"Fort Hood--Some 25 World War II veterans gathered at the west end of Cameron Field Tuesday along with about 50 soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division to dedicate a monument to the Battle of the Bulge.

"The event honored the 33 divisions that repulsed a German offensive that began at dawn of December 16, 1944. It also paid tribute to all the veterans of World War II. The 3-foot high marble monument was donated to the 4th Infantry Division by the 78th Infantry Division Cohort veterans.

"Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Thomas Preston set the tone for the proceeding in his invocation when he said the service of soldiers who gave their lives for freedom in one of history's most momentous battles would be remembered by all who gathered here.

"We are proud that their wishbones were not where their backbones were," Preston said. "That they didn't choose the path of ease and comfort but accepted the challenge of freedom's call."



*George Rivett (right) and fellow veterans of the 1944 Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge look at a new monument paying tribute to the veterans. (Photo by Andrew Nenque)*

The monument was the inspiration of VBOB member Alvin Rosenzweig who wrote to Retired Brig. Gen. Jack W. Hemingway, Sr., suggesting Fort Hood as the memorial site.

"Hemingway said he knew just the right place since the 4th

Infantry Division fought alongside them. ...he wrote Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division. He said Thurman came back with the response, 'Sure, let's do it.'"



*Left to right: Al Rosenzweig, Major Gen. Thurman, Ralph Ellis (78th Division vet)*

"Rosenzweig, 80, said he was only an 18-year-old corporal when the division formed up in the Ardennes region only four days before the battle began. He said he remembered the fog and intense cold--a brutal winter the troops were not properly equipped to handle.

"We fought the weather as much as we fought the Germans," Rosenzweig said. "It was the coldest winter Germany or Europe had ever had. Our troops that were getting killed were found with rifles frozen to their hands."

"He said he went with about 500 people in December 2004 to Luxembourg with the Battle of the Bulge Association for a 60-year anniversary and received a warm response from the government officials and locals.

"Young people of Belgium are very proud of Americans," he said. "Their children five, six and seven years old know more about our history of the Battle of the Bulge and World War II than our students do."

"Celso Torres, 79, who fought with Company K, 309th Infantry of the 78th Infantry Division, said he was just a spring chicken when he served as a 19-year-old sergeant in the battle. He remembers it as being cold and horrible.

"There were times when I thought I wouldn't reach 20," Torres said, beginning to tremble. "There is no way I can explain to you how I feel. I get so emotional. I lost so many friends. But some of us had to go."

"The reason we have a great nation and a great military today is because of the veterans from World War II," Thurman said. "I want you to know that I thank you for your service to this country because without you we would not be the nation we are today." ■



**THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**  
*Invites You to Join Your Friends for the*  
**"EVENTS OF REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION"**  
**OF THE 61<sup>st</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE**  
**December 14, 15 and 16, 2005**  
**Metropolitan Washington, DC**

The Marriott Fairview Park, I-495 (Capital Beltway) and VA Route 50 (towards Fairview Park), Falls Church VA has again been selected as the site for activities commemorating the 61<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, December 14 - 16, 2005. This hotel, just off the Beltway will provide easy access and accommodations, for a reduced rate of \$94.00, single or double occupancy plus taxes. Parking is free. This rate is available for any night(s) between December 13 and December 17. For room reservations please call the Marriott Reservations (1-800-228-9290) or by December 1, 2005. Mention that you are attending the **BATTLE OF THE BULGE** events for the special rate.

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2005**

2:00 PM – 6:00 PM Registration (Hospitality Suite, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor), receive name badges, Banquet/bus tickets, make Banquet table selections. (If you are only attending the Banquet, you may pick up your tickets at the Marriott Fairview Park by 6:00 PM Dec 15<sup>th</sup>.) This year you will be able to select your Banquet Table seating at the Registration Desk. Plan ahead with your friends to be seated at the same table (rounds of 10 per table).

3:00 PM – 10:00 PM Hospitality Room/Exhibits, scrapbooks. John Bowen & Bob Phillips, Battle of the Bulge Historians will be the hosts. A private area in the Hotel restaurant has been reserved for supper from 6:30 – 8:00 PM for the Battle of the Bulge Veterans (payment is on your own). A time to renew friendships & visit w/old friends.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2005**

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM Registration open/Receive name badges, Banquet/bus tickets, Table selections (Hospitality Suite).  
 9:00 AM Charter buses depart hotel.  
 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM Guided tour of Downtown, Washington DC & stop at the World War II Memorial.  
 12:30 PM Depart for Union Station, Washington DC.  
 1:00 PM -- 3:00 PM Lunch on your own at Union Station/Mall. Time to do unique Christmas Shopping & view fascinating exhibit of model railway from Norway. Leave at 3:00 PM to Marriott Fairview Park.

**BANQUET AT JUNIOR BALLROOM MARRIOTT FAIRVIEW PARK,**

6:15 PM Social Hour/Cash Bar.  
 6:45 PM Seated for Dinner.  
 7:00 PM Color Guard/Members of the Fife and Drum Corps/Ceremonies.  
 7:15 PM Dinner served.

**BANQUET ENTRÉE**

*The choice of entrée for the Banquet is:*

*Seared Chicken Breast*

*OR*

*Mustard Herb Loin Pork*

Program:

Greetings from Dignitaries.  
 Speaker: Mr. John Metzler, Superintendent-Arlington National Cemetery, who will share with us the plans for the upcoming facelift of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers.

After Banquet Hospitality Room open, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, at Marriott Fairview Park.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2005**

9:00 AM Bus from Marriott Fairview Park to Arlington Cemetery  
 10:00 AM Ceremony of Remembrance, World War II Memorial, Washington DC  
 11:00 AM Impressive ceremony and placing of wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington Cemetery.  
 11:30 AM Ceremony of Remembrance, Battle of the Bulge Memorial, across from Amphitheater.  
 12:30 PM Buffet Luncheon, Hosted by VBOB, Marriott Fairview Park  
 Swearing-in of new VBOB officers.  
 Comments by VBOB President.  
 Farewell.



# RESERVATION FORM

## "REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION"

### OF THE 61st ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

**December 14, 15 and 16, 2005**  
Metropolitan Washington, DC

Return form and check by **December 1, 2005** to:  
**Battle of the Bulge Historical Foundation**  
**PO Box 2516,**  
**Kensington MD 20895-0181**

Questions:  
 Dorothy Davis 301-881-0356  
 E-Mail: johndbowen@earthlink.net

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Battle of Bulge Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

RESERVATIONS:	<u>Number Attending</u>	<u>Cost/Person</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registration Fee	_____	\$15.00	\$ _____

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2005**

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM: Marriott Fairview Park Restaurant \_\_\_\_\_ **on your own**  
 Please indicate the number that will be attending so that we can advise the hotel.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2005**

Chartered Bus, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

**9:00 AM Guided Tour of Washington DC & Visit to WWII Memorial**  
 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM Lunch, On your Own at Union Station/ Washington DC. Shopping, Union Station Mall  
 View fascinating model railway exhibit from Norway on first level vestibule.

Commemorative Banquet, Marriott Fairview Park \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_

6:15 PM - 10:00 PM Junior Ballroom (Lower Level)

**Please make your Main Course selection(s):**

- ☐ Seared Chicken Breast \_\_\_\_\_ (Name \_\_\_\_\_)  
**OR**  
☐ Mustard Herb Loin Pork \_\_\_\_\_ (Name \_\_\_\_\_)

Banquet table seating will be selected at the Registration Desk. Plan ahead with your friends to be seated at the same table.  
 Tables are Rounds of 10.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2005:**

9:00 AM	Chartered bus to Wash DC & Arlington Cemetery	\$15.00	_____
10:00 AM	Ceremonies at WWII Memorial;		
11:00 AM	Ceremonies: Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers and VBOB Monument	No. Attending:	_____
12:00 PM	Bus Return to Marriott Fairview Park		
12:30 PM	VBOB Luncheon & Installation of Officers	No. Attending:	\$10.00* _____

\*Total Cost of Luncheon is \$26.00 of which VBOB will fund \$16.00 for active VBOB National Member & Guest.  
 VBOB Membership # as shown on your last page of Bulge Bugle \_\_\_\_\_

**GRAND TOTAL** (Enclose check made out to BoBHF Commemoration): \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES & REMINDERS:**

Banquet Dress: Business suit/black tie (miniature medals encouraged) or military dress uniform  
 Room reservations must be made with the Marriott Hotel directly, by December 1, 2005 (Telephone (1-800-228-9290)).  
 Return completed Reservation Form for events to BOB Historical Foundation by 1 December 2005, (Telephone 301-881-0356).  
 No cancellation refunds after December 9, 2005.  
 Please indicate in all places the number & names attending so that we can be advised of the proper number to plan. Thanks!  
 \*\*\*PLEASE BRING A PICTURE ID (Drivers License, Passport, Mil ID)\*\*\*



## YOUR HELP IS NEEDED...

*[The following speech was given by Mathile Schmetz, who with her husband, Marcel, co-own the Remember Museum in Thimister/Clermont, Belgium.]*

We want to thank you warmly for being here with us today. You, the WWII veterans, came overseas 60 years ago and suffered so much for our freedom. You were lucky in a certain way because you went back home, but for the ones who gave their life we will never be able to know what they endured and we will never have the chance to look them in the eyes and say simply "thank you." Thank you for spending countless hours, days and months away from home and loved ones often in dangerous and extreme conditions. Thank you for fighting for our freedom and thank you for paying the ultimate price.

We are talking about the boys who are forever resting in the American Overseas Military Cemeteries, because we need your help. You may know that my husband and I live only two miles away from the Henri-Chapelle Cemetery and that cemetery is one of the few "open" cemeteries in Europe. That means that this cemetery is not protected especially in the evening and during the night. The support for this cemetery by the surrounding communities is very good but much has to be done concerning the education of the younger generations in the meaning and the purpose of this site. When this site was built, strong memories in the local population justified building this "open" site. With the veterans and civilians who welcomed the GI's in 1944 fading away so is the memory of the sacrifices and so is the respect that this place deserves. When teachers have kids picnicking and playing soccer on the lawns, it's obvious that the meaning of this place has changed for many people.

In our opinion time has come to study a way to close this cemetery after duty hours. The trashing of the "overlook point" increases with the days becoming longer. The cemetery is also during the wintertime, due to the large amount of snow, transformed almost into a ski resort. The lookout point has also become a gathering place for all negative elements of our area after the closing hours. Now that many drugs, like marijuana have been allowed, finding little plastic bags is a daily event. The local police doesn't intervene because it's on private property. The desecration of this cemetery will end when gates are installed. We are more and more convinced that the cemetery must be fenced in in order to make unscrupulous people understand that this is a cemetery and not a playground.

You may know that Marcel and I adopted six graves of young men who are buried in that cemetery and we are in touch with the families. We are also in touch with many war orphans and next of kin of soldiers resting at that beautiful well-maintained place. We are just trying to make you understand why the cemetery is so important to my husband and me.

The best way to help us to write your Congressman.

There are many WWII veterans coming back to Belgium. We think it's something they need to do; it fulfills a need. They feel as they owe it perhaps to their buddies who died to go back and simply remember them. We think that most of them feel like they left one part of themselves overseas. Without all of you and especially the real heroes, the ones who gave their lives, most of us, the Belgian people wouldn't be there anymore.

As our way to showing our gratitude and in memory of that,

Marcel and I made the "Remember Museum." We dedicate the museum and our labor of love to every woman and every man soldier or civilian, who in any way helped to free us from the Nazis. If someday you may have the chance to come to Belgium, we want you to know that you are welcome to stay in our 300 year old home as we host free of charges, not only the WWII veterans but also the war orphans, the children who lost their friendship, his kindness and his generosity. We wouldn't be here today without that generosity. ...God bless America and Belgium. ■

*[You can help by writing your senator seeking enclosure of the cemetery.]*

## N O S W E A T

... More 'n More



"I think Sgt. Squeegie's new recovery method may completely revolutionize the rescue pick-up system!"

### Anti-war song

We're sick to death of this bleeding war,  
So back to our homes we'll go once more.  
Down with Adolf, down with Benito,  
Down with England, *basta, finito*,  
All we want is *dolce far niente*  
With a trim little piece who's sweet and twenty.

—Exploding Star

**REMINDER**  
**ARE YOUR DUES DUE?**





## A PICTURE IN CLERMONT

Submitted by Bill Clements  
1st Infantry Division  
1st Engineer Combat Battalion

As members of the 1st Engineer Combat Battalion of the 1st Division on September 11, 1944, our lieutenant was called on to make an advanced reconnaissance of the area around a town named Clermont, Belgium. He took four men from our squad with him. In the jeep were Tait, Clements, Clark, McFalls, Lt. Rosorek, and his driver. When we went into Clermont, we pulled over beside a house and two women came out. Within minutes all the other houses opened up and men, women, and children came running to the jeep to see what American soldiers looked like. About 35 people came with wine and homemade cookies. A man with a camera took some pictures of the group, but knowing that we would be leaving and would never get to see the pictures I forgot all about them. When the lieutenant was finished with his report we bid them farewell and drove back to our quarters.

On December 14, 1944, several people thought the war was about over and we may get home for Christmas and New Years. The 1st Division had been on the front lines since D-Day so we were taken off for a Christmas and New Years rest. Three-day passes were given out so I took one for Spa, Belgium, which wasn't far away. While walking down the street in Spa, a man walking by looked at me and came to me saying, "You look familiar, I think you're in a picture I took, wait here and I'll get them." When he came back he gave me the pictures and they were the ones taken in Clermont.

On the 16th of December 1944 we received word that the Germans had dropped American-speaking soldiers in American uniforms into the area, and what we called "The Battle of the Bulge" had started. Everyone went back to our outfit. Instead of being in a rest area, we spent every night in no-man's land with white sheets on us to match the snow, laying mines. We did this for over a week, and our colonel told us we laid 30,000 anti-tank mines to help halt the German advance. He said that this was the largest mine field ever laid. The first chance I got I mailed the pictures the man gave me to my folks at home to go into a scrapbook someday.

After being wounded twice, I did go home after the war ended on May 8 1945, and so I did put the pictures in my scrapbook with other clippings and things my folks had collected.

Every September, our 1st Engineer Combat Battalion has a reunion. In 1998, John Tait, Jr., came to our meeting looking for help in finding out information about his father who had died. I was in the 1st squadron, 2nd Platoon, and so was John's dad. I got in touch with John, Jr., and sent him names of the men in our squad and a couple of pictures I had that his dad was in. One of these was the picture taken in Clermont.

On June 30, 2002, I received a letter from John, Jr., telling me that he had been on a trip to Europe, and went to Clermont. While there he mentioned his father being in the 1st Division and they invited him in for lunch and gave him a tour of the "Remember Museum." He said they were wonderful people, and they would like to hear from me. They have been looking for that picture of the jeep and the names of the soldiers in it for 58 years. Just think that those pictures had been hidden away in my

scrapbook for such a long time. I sent them the picture and the names of the men in it. John, Jr., told me that a 12-year-old boy in the picture still lived in the same house. His name is Marcel Schmetz and he and his wife Mathilde own the "Remember Museum" all about the 1st Infantry Division.

I am now the only living soldier in that picture. Mathilde called me on the phone because she wants my wife and me to come back to Clermont to stay with them, and they can show us the Museum and the war sights around Belgium. Because of medical reasons, we are unable to go there for their 58th reunion, but are going to plan a trip in the spring. I would like very much to go back and meet this very gracious and generous couple the GI's called M&M.

### A Liberator Returns to Clermont

Posters advertising his return in windows all over the town hinted that Bill Clements was not an ordinary American soldier to the people of Clermont, Belgium. In early May, 2003, Bill returned for the first time in 59 years to the town he had originally entered as a liberator on 11 September, 1944. This time he brought his wife, Flora, and his son, Phil, with him on a seven day trip. He was invited to Clermont by Mathilde & Marcel Schmetz, who operate the Remember Museum, a museum dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the American soldiers who fought to free Belgium during WWII.

Though there were many special events, Saturday May 3, was the biggest day of the trip. A parade of military vehicles, with Bill and family in the lead jeep, made its way out to the 1st Division monument at Henri-Chapel where a wreath was laid accompanied by Belgian and American color guards. Afterward, Bill and the man who had taken the photo 59 years ago, Joseph Baguette, laid wreaths at the Town Hall's War Memorial. Bill and Flora then ascended the stairs to the hall, and Bill was presented with a plaque and a platter and was asked to sing "God Bless America."

The trip was filled with many other memorable moments visiting various towns and monuments in the area; signing the "Gold Book" in Herve (a special guest book of VIPs); visiting the Herve fire department and being hoisted 75 feet into the air on their new hook and ladder truck; celebrating Josef's 86th birthday at his home in Spa; and visiting with school children at the Remember Museum.

On Bill's last day there M&M paid him a special honor. In the reception center of the Remember Museum is a supply truck that has been signed by hundreds of G.I.s who have visited over the years. Bill also left his signature on this truck, but his is the lone signature on the truck cab. It is set apart from the other signatures, forever indicating that Bill Clements is a special name to the town of Clermont.

*Photo below shows survivors of original photo. Bill Clements is in the jeep and photographer, Josef Gaguette, is front and center.*





## A HEROIC STAND AT THE BULGE

Submitted by Stanley F. Hoglund  
296th Engineer Combat Battalion

*[The following interviews appeared in The Hartford Courant at the Connecticut Yankee Chapter of VBOB on December 15, 2004. The article was prepared by Jesse Leavenworth.]*

Connecticut veterans of the U.S. Army's greatest battle gathered this week to dine on scrod and steak, listen to some mildly dirty jokes and trade stories among their dwindling fraternity. Seated in a rear dining room of a Wallingford restaurant, they wore sweaters and woolen sport coats and drank coffee from glass mugs. They were warm and comfortable again.

And yet, when a winter fog descends, Sebastian H. "Sebbby" LaBella returns to December, 1944, and the unrelenting, inescapable cold of the Ardennes region of Belgium.

"I will never, ever, ever be as cold as we were then--never," LaBella said.

Today, LaBella and all survivors of the harsh and bloody winter of 1944-45 mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Ceremonies in Europe are to include a vigil tonight in Bastogne, Belgium, the town where airborne and armor troops made a heroic stand, and a gathering in Brussels of U.S. and Belgian veterans, hosted by the NATO military alliance.

Called "Hitler's last gamble," the six-week clash focused more than a million combatants in the heavily forested, hilly region of southeastern Belgium and Luxembourg. The battle claimed about 19,000 American lives among a total of 80,000 casualties. The number of German soldiers killed, wounded and missing is estimated at 80,000 to 104,000.

Members of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Connecticut Yankee Chapter, say they were lucky or God was watching over them, or they were spared by some combination of divine intervention and roll of the dice.

On December 16, 1944, soldiers in the five U.S. divisions manning a loose string of foxholes along the Ardennes front needed all the luck and religion they could get. Despite early warnings that the Germans were massing forces in the region, no one in charge of the Allied armies foresaw an attack. The word among commanders and ordinary GIs was that the Germans, heavily bled on two fronts were played out.

"We were living in a chateau (in Belgium). I even had a Christmas tree," said Lou Celentano, of New Haven, a veteran of the 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion. "We were ready to go home. We thought the war was over."

Hitler, however, still had little respect for the Americans' fighting ability and held out hope that the Nazi state, pressed by relentless attacks on its eastern front, could forge a separate peace with the Americans and British.

His plan was to mass a force opposite the thinly guarded Ardennes front and punch through to the port city of Antwerp. The attack, he believed would drive a physical and political wedge between the British and the Americans.

"These states are already at logger-heads and their antagonisms are growing visibly from hour to hour," Hitler said in a speech

to his generals on December 12, 1944. "If Germany can deal a few heavy blows, the artificially united front will collapse at any moment with a tremendous thunderclap. In the last resort, wars end when one side or the other realizes that victory is impossible."

John Moran, of Hartford, was on the line with the 99th Infantry Division when the Germans launched their artillery barrage early on December 16. The company commander, Moran said, had forced the men to dig proper foxholes with log covers. The men had complained about it then, he said, but had since changed their minds.

When the shelling stopped, the German infantry came on and "we just emptied our clips," Moran said. All along the line of the attacks, the Americans were amazed at the German infantry's sacrificial tactics. Like their U.S. counterparts, many of the Germans were teenagers and combat initiates.

"The GI's were appalled at how the enemy infantry came on, marching down the middle of a road their weapons slung, without outposts or reconnaissance of any sort, without armor support, with no idea of where the American strong points were located," Stephen Ambrose wrote in his book, "Citizen Soldiers."

*WWII Veteran Richard Egan sounds taps at a funeral. He helps provide military honors at funerals. His uniform is the one he wore during winters in the war. Photo by Stephen Dunn, The Hartford Courant.*



But the Germans had a heavy advantage in infantry and armor and their rapid advance overwhelmed many American units including the 106th Infantry Division which had about 7,500 men captured.

Moran narrowly avoided spending the rest of the war in a prison camp. Captured early in the battle by a German patrol, he and a small file of other Americans were marched to a waiting truck. A German officer told them, "The war is over for you now," Moran said. But it was dark, and Moran said he managed to slip out of the line. He hid under a German tank and then ran away when some nearby enemy soldiers walked far enough away. He made it back to friendly territory.

The veterans remembered scenes of chaos in the first hours of the battle. Soldiers became separated from their units and the roads were jammed with retreating columns of men and vehicles. But several authors who have written about the Bulge say the key story of those early days were the small American units that fought valiantly to delay the Germans' advance. (Continued)



## A HEROIC STAND...

(Continuation)

Celentano and his small unit were ordered to hold the Germans up at Stavelot, Belgium. They had two 76mm guns, converted from Navy use, which they positioned in a street and a park so that the trajectories crossed.

When a file of four "Royal Tiger" German tanks rolled into the town the 825th opened up, disabling the first and last tanks in the column, Celentano said. They then attacked the two tanks that were bracketed in the middle. A fifth German tank crew, however, killed eight men from the unit he said.

"I was still scared the next morning," Celentano said. "I was still shaking."

The surprised Americans made desperate stands up and down the line. The most famous was at Bastogne, a crucial crossroads, where the 101st Airborne and 10th Armored divisions held out against repeated attacks. It was there that 101st Airborne acting commander Gen. Anthony McAuliffe made his famous reply to the German commander's surrender demands: "Nuts!"

Al Calvi, Sr., of Meriden, still has a copy of McAuliffe's Christmas message to the troops.

"What's merry about all this you ask? We're fighting--it's cold--we aren't home," the general wrote. "All true, but what has the proud Eagle Division accomplished with its worthy comrades of the 10th Armored Division, the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion and all the rest? Just this: we have stopped cold everything that has been grown at us from the North, East, South and West."

The German attack on Bastogne was determined. Calvi was wounded during an aerial bombardment and went to get patched up at a makeshift hospital. Just five minutes after he left the hospital to join his buddies, it was blown to pieces by a direct hit.

Rolling up from the south lead elements of Gen. George S. Patton's 3rd Army relieved Bastogne on December 26. Calvi remembered old "Blood and Guts" himself, riding triumphantly into town aboard a tank and calling out to soldiers on the street.

"He said 'Hey, girls,'" Calvi recalled. "Another soldier said 'Hey, we held Bastogne!'"

And [Patton] said, 'You're right soldier. You're right.'

When they weren't fighting the Germans, the GIs were suffering through Europe's coldest winter in decades. The temperature regularly dipped below zero, and many men had to be taken off the line because of frostbite. Dick Egan, who heads the Connecticut Bulge veterans chapter, said he is still amazed by homeless people who choose to live outdoors during bitter cold weather.

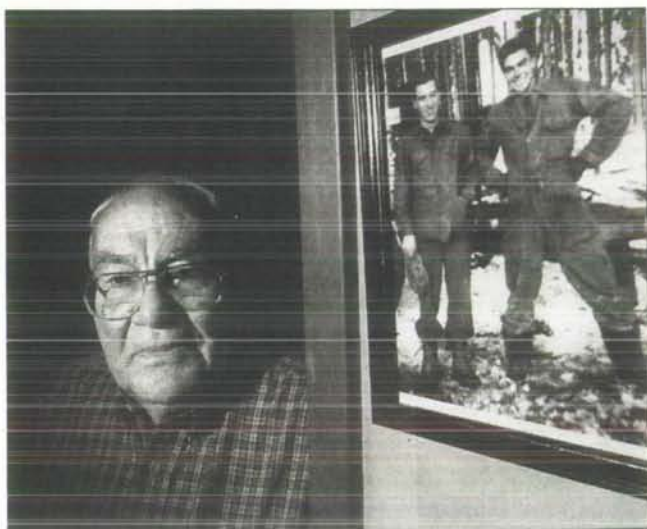
"I sit there and look at them and wonder how the hell they can do it," Egan, of Meriden, said.

In the end, Hitler's last hope failed because of a variety of factors—including a lack of fuel and the Americans' ability to stream reinforcements into the area. The point of the Bulge never got close to Antwerp, and the Allies had pushed the line back to the starting point by the end of January. The battle came at a great cost to both sides but the Americans were able to absorb the losses while the Germans could not.

Now, as the number of World War II vets steadily falls the Connecticut men who survived the Bulge meet every three months. Before lunch was served at the gathering Tuesday, the Rev. Stanley Hoglund, a Bulge veteran, thanked God "for watching over us" and prayed the soldiers in Iraq would be protected as well. Before him was a muzzie-down M-1 rifle with a "steel

pot" helmet resting on the stock, the sign of a fallen soldier.

The Connecticut veterans say their buddies who lie in Belgian graves are the true heroes of the battle but they're also happy to be with each other, happy to be alive and out of the cold.



*Sebastian LaBella, shown with photo of himself and best friend, Joseph Palermo, which shows the first snow of the season in the Ardennes. Photo by Stephen Dunn of The Hartford Courant.*

Many of them, including Hoglund, LaBella and Egan, fought with the same outfit, the 296th Engineer Combat Battalion, a New England unit that included more than 200 Connecticut men. The Connecticut Yankee group, 92 strong now, is always looking to expand its membership, and welcomed a handful of new guys at the lunch on Tuesday.

"We love you like brothers," 296th veteran Bob Williams told them. "We are a band of brothers. And we hope to see you for the next 20 years, at least." □

## DON'T FORGET OUR NEW YEAR'S TOAST

**In tribute to all who served in the Battle of the Bulge, let's all drink a toast again this year (the ninth year). The choice of beverage is yours. Again this year the time will be: Noon-Pacific time; 1:00 p.m.—Mountain time; 2:00 p.m.—Central time; and 3:00 p.m.—Eastern time on New Year's Day.**

**It's our special way to be together again, even it is only in our thoughts. We shared so much so many years ago, we should remember those we were with and be grateful for each and every one.**

**Comments from our members indicate that many of you join in this special observance. Let us hear from you.**

**A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO EACH OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES. □**



# VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE CERTIFICATE



The Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Assn is proud to offer a full color 11" by 17" certificate, which may be ordered by any veteran who received credit for the Ardennes Campaign. It attests that you participated in, endured and survived the greatest land battle ever fought by the US Army. You do not have to be a member of the VBOB Assn in order to order one but you must have received the Ardennes credit. This beautiful certificate is produced on parchment-like stock and is outlined by the full color WWII insignias of the major units that fought in the Battle of the Bulge starting with the 12th Army Group followed numerically with Armies, Corps and Divisions and the two Army Air Forces. We wished that each unit insignia could have been shown but with approximately 2000

units that participated in the Bulge it was impossible. However any unit which served in the Bulge would have been attached to or reported through one of the unit insignias depicted. You may want to add one of your original patches to the certificate, when you receive it. Units were researched in the Official General Order No. 114 for Units Entitled to the ARDENNES Battle Credit and will be the basis for sale of this certificate. The unit insignias shown are also those used in the design of the Battle of the Bulge Memorial Conference Table dedicated and on view in the Garrison Library at Ft Meade, MD (open Mon & Wed 12:30-3:00 PM). The requests to date have been overwhelming, therefore we would request that you allow approximately 3-4 weeks for delivery.

A Special Certificate is available to spouses or children of those who made the Supreme Sacrifice in the Battle of the Bulge or who died of wounds received in the Battle of the Bulge. The individual request should have the date and place of death and be certified by the family requestor or by a buddy who was present. Multiple copies of the same certificate may be ordered if you have a number of children/grandchildren. Rank or command during the Bulge is preferred. It will be abbreviated to the WWII or three character standard. The certificate will be shipped rolled in a protective mailing tube. Please be sure to **place your name, service number and unit as you would like it to appear on the certificate.** The unit name should as full as possible as you want someone reading it to understand what unit you were in. We will abbreviate it as necessary. It is important that you type or print this information. The unit must be one of the 2000 units authorized for the Ardennes Campaign credit. **The cost of the certificate is \$15.00 postpaid.**

**Unfortunately we do not have any more frames available at this time. John Bowen is presently trying to arrange with other suppliers who will produce these special sizes in quantities of 100. This may result in a higher frame cost. Our previous order had to be for 500 frames which took over three years to sell and resulted in the non use of a garage where they were stored. We will keep you posted.**

## VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE CERTIFICATE ORDER BLANK

I request an 11" x 17" Certificate and certify that I received credit for the Ardennes Campaign during my military service. I have enclosed a check for \$15.00 for the Certificate. Please include the following information that I would like on the certificate:

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Organization: Company, Battalion and/or Regt, Division _____					Rank (Optional) _____
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				<input type="checkbox"/> POW _____	dates _____
Camp _____					
MAILING INFORMATION:					
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not a requirement					
Make checks out to VBOB for \$15.00. Orders should be mailed to VBOB Certificate, PO Box 11129, ...ngton, VA 22210-2129. Questions can be directed to John D. Bowen, 301-384-6533, Certificate Chairman.					



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VBOB Logo Lapel Pin - 1/2"	\$ 5.00		\$
Miniature VBOB Logo Medal w/Ribbon (pin on type)	\$ 8.50		\$
VBOB Logo Belt Buckle - <i>Silver tone or Gold tone (Please circle choice)</i>	\$ 16.00		\$
VBOB Logo Bolo Tie - <i>Silver tone or Gold tone (Please circle choice)</i>	\$ 16.00		\$
VBOB License Plate Frame w/Logos - White plastic w/Black printing	\$ 5.00		\$
VBOB 100 Sheet Notepad w/Logo - "This Note Is From... A Veteran of the Battle of the Bulge" - White paper with Blue printing	\$ 3.00		\$
<b>BACK IN STOCK</b> Large VBOB Logo Neck Medallion w/ribbon Ideal for insertion in medal shadow box	\$ 25.00		\$
VBOB Tote Bag--SOLD OUT			\$

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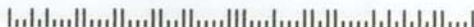
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All new members, please provide the following information:

Campaign(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Regiment \_\_\_\_\_ Battalion \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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