

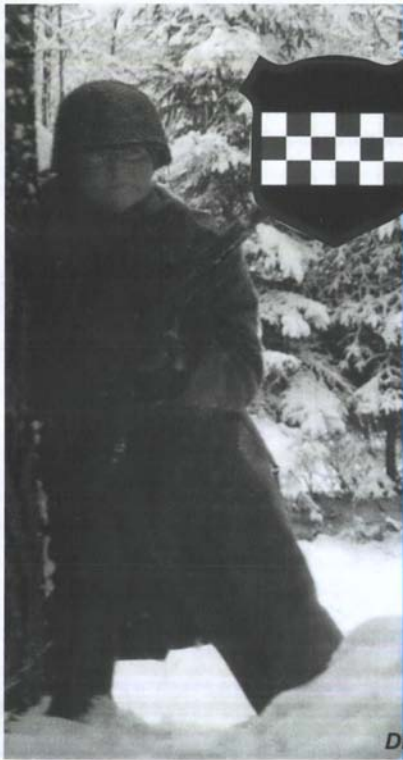
The BULGE BUGLE

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

VOLUME XXVII NUMBER 1

THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

FEBRUARY 2008



Thermopylae in the ARDENNES

How 6 battalions of
the 99th Division held
off 5 Wehrmacht
Divisions for 6 hours

By J.C. Doherty
— Page 8

A SOLDIER REMEMBERS

Some Replacements
wanted to know how to
avoid front lines.
Sgt. Lewis answered; get
killed, wounded, or
captured.

By Ron Huckaby
35th Division — Page 22

Discover COLUMBUS — Page 13

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CONTACT THE CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA.
YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID.
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO START A
CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA, LET US KNOW,
WE'LL SEND YOU NECESSARY DETAILS.

President's Message

A little introduction: Demetri "Dee" Paris took over the reins as VBOB President as of December, 2007 for the fiscal year 2007-08. He has served on the Executive Council and in many other capacities since its inception.

I was one of the four or five men who met with Clyde Boden to discuss the possibility of starting an organization of Bulge battle veterans. We met every couple of weeks at a small restaurant in Arlington, Virginia. We were concerned about being successful, never having started a veterans' organization, but Clyde's optimism gave us the incentive to continue.

There were many things to consider: a name, financing, a governing document, membership requirements. We didn't have any luck getting publicity and used word-of-mouth advertising of our efforts. When we had about a dozen men, we notified the newspapers and radio-television stations of a public meeting. Neil Thompson prepared a sign to place on the lectern in case newspaper photographers or television cameramen would attend. None came.

After introduction, our first action was to designate Clyde Boden as our "Acting President." I suggested we should have a distinctive symbol or logotype and Clyde immediately responded, "That's your first assignment!" Which I accomplished and which is the color logo lapel pin you may be wearing. More on this later.

One major problem was lack of money, I personally financed some expenses relating to the logo and a trip of the U.S. Army Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to obtain our first decals of the logo.

Boden established a committee to write bylaws and placed a man in charge whom he addressed as the "General Counsel." He was adamant in demanding his way in every matter. He insisted membership be limited to veterans who had been in the battle and not have any auxiliary or other type of membership. When all the others insisted we should include researchers, historians, those interested in supporting our cause, widows and children of Bulge veterans, he finally relented.

Based upon my experience with other organizations, I suggested we have provisions for VBOB chapters which would be grouped into regional organizations. The Bylaws Committee chairman refused to consider this and Acting President Boden upheld him.

At the second meeting after we adopted the bylaws, the "General Counsel" announced he would have to change the bylaws to accommodate a group of veterans in Wisconsin who wanted to establish a local chapter. Every couple of months, he would announce the need for another change to accommodate his initial lack of vision. But this is how the organization grew. Men heard of us and wrote to ask how they could be a part of VBOB.

The question of a name was given much thought. We

considered using "Ardennes." However, historians were starting to publish their books titled with "Battle of the Bulge" rather than "Ardennes." Pete Dounis suggested "Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge," since it could be pronounced as "VeeBob."

We must recognize that VBOB could have a limited life although we are attempting to enroll other WWII veterans' groups that are going out of business because Father Time is taking his toll of them as well as of VBOB.

I wish each of you a happy, healthy New Year. ■



Demetri "Dee" Paris
December 1944 –
St Vith, Belgium



The WWII Memorial - a majestic monument - even at wintertime



VBOB welcomes Dominique Struye de Swielande, Ambassador of Belgium, at the VBOB Commemoration Banquet, Dec. 15th, 2007

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VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE
WEB SITE: www.battleofthebulge.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I am finally getting around to writing my story concerning John McAuliffe's account of "The Invisible Soldiers of WWII," which appeared in the November, 2006, issue of *The Bulge Bugle*.

I was in the 591st Field Artillery Battalion of the 106th Infantry Division, Battery B. I was a gunner in the third section 105 MM howitzers. We relieved the 2nd Division on December 10, 1944, at Steffeshausen, Belgium, and for five days had occasional fire missions day and night at targets who were directed by our FO and the targets never returned fire during this time.

There was a battery of 155MM howitzers behind us who would fire their 155's over our position occasionally also. These were black artillery men.

We were awakened at 5:30 a.m., December 16th, by the first returning fire of the enemy. A heavy barrage of artillery including screaming Meemies. We were returning fire as fast as possible. We could hear the incoming shells and also the returning fire from the 155 battery behind us.

We held our position for two days while we were being encircled by the enemy and our battery stayed and furnished supporting fire while our 424th Infantry Regiment pulled back at dusk on December 17th at which time our battery left one of our 105's stuck in the mud and pulled back under cover of darkness and traveled in convoy on a secondary road which was the only open road out of there, moving slowly, towing our 105's with a man walking in front of each truck, guiding the driver with a small penlight.

The enemy was within 300 yards of this road. Sometime during the night we stopped and dug through the snow and spread our blankets on the ground--no bedrolls as yet--and waited for daybreak.

We joined A and B Batteries at Burg Ruel and then moved to Gruffingen and set up our guns and started firing although almost out of ammo. A truck made it through with a load of ammo.

Sgt Joe Gross, with a crew of six men, went back to our former position and retrieved our Number 2 gun which we had abandoned on the 17th. We were back in business full force.

I had forgotten about the men at Steffeshausen until reading John McAuliffe's story about them in the November issue. I was surprised to learn that they had been captured and yet we came out safely because they had been behind us. They retreated toward Schonberg where two of our regiments were captured--the 422nd and 423rd Infantry Regiments. We went to Burg Reuland--guess that is what saved us from capture. I am so glad that John wrote the story about the "Invisible Soldiers" and their 155 howitzers, it being the first that I had heard them mentioned but was sorry to hear that eleven of them had been captured and slaughtered at Wereth.

John Scherer wrote about our 106th Infantry Division in the August *Bulge Bugle* and it is true that there was hardly mention of our four artillery battalions--589th, 590th, 591st and 592nd--left fighting in support of other outfits wherever needed.

We helped take back the ground that we lost earlier and stayed on the front until March 15, 1945. Our 591st Battalion stayed in support of 424th Infantry Regiment as Combat team. Most writers never bothered to write about us but that's okay as long as we ourselves know that we were there.

Eugene Morell
106 INF 591 FA BN

THANK YOU ALL!

My father, Andy Semonco, served in the 5th Infantry Division, Company B, during World War II. He was one of many who fought and sacrificed themselves in the greatest American battle

ever fought. My father was a machine gunner who ended up having his feet frozen while fighting in this great battle.

I listen to my father intently about his field experiences which I know were not exaggerated. I know these experiences were true because I watched the tears that rolled down his cheeks or I would just simply catch him staring off at times and I knew what was on his mind.

I am an associate member of VBOB, but some issues have come up that I think need to be addressed. As a supporting member of VBOB, I hope that the following contents of this letter to the editor will bring ALL VBOB members as ONE and not a separated group of anointed soldiers. The entire front of the German offensive was over 80 miles long with MANY individual divisions: infantry, artillery, radio, mortar, supply groups, armored, etc.

So now to the meat of this letter! It wasn't JUST the 101st Airborne that took the brunt of the fight. (The very thought of that is absurd!) Every infantryman, every medic; EVERYBODY on that front took the brunt, just like everyone else starting December 16, 1944. This is not to bring any disrespect to the brave defenders of Bastogne, but facts are true and we really know what these facts are after 60 years.

The 101st Airborne was where it was supposed to be at the time. This unit did not have it any harder or suffer any worse than anyone else. I do believe the fair credits should go where it belongs, and I know that every other subscriber of VBOB would agree. For this magazine as well as the entire VBOB to survive, I think that the over accreditation of the 101st needs to cease.

I have drilled it into my two sons about the sacrifice and importance of this war. The fact is that we must realize that in the first few days, the American Army got their a-- kicked along the whole 80 mile front: Hence--"Bulge." Bastogne was not the main German objective. Antwerp was the objective because of its port and supplies. When I hear men of the 101st saying "We were down to 8 rounds per man." Let's face it! The Germans could have taken Bastogne anytime they wanted. If the Germans really knew the situation of the 101st Airborne in Bastogne, they would have taken it.

My father was part of Patton's 3rd Army who went up to relieve Bastogne, and I'm sure the 101st was glad to see them, along with the air drops the air force supplied. Supply trucks moving again, and yes--replacements! And on that note the training that the 101st Airborne received was not any tougher than what the marines took, along with the army. I am also sure that the air force took a beating as well. Statistics show how many men were killed in the air force. I, the son of a member of the VBOB, ask that ALL SERVICES that were engaged during the battle to please send in your stories and experiences. God bless the medics, the red ball express and ALL those who were involved, because without you, there will not be a VBOB much longer! So, to the 101st Airborne! Thank you!

Andrew E. Semonco
Associate Member

[Thank you, Andrew, for the appeal for more stories. It is never our intent to praise any unit more than another. We print what we receive. We often hear: "There's too much about Patton," "There's too much about the armored," "There's too much about the infantry." I believe since the inception of this newsletter there has been ONE story submitted about the Red Ball Express and we happily printed it. There are lots of the bigger units out there and they tend to submit more information. The words in these stories are not our words, they are the words of the person who wrote the story. If you were in a small group and have a story, please send it.]

WE GET ADDITIONAL CRITICISM

[Four or five members wrote in criticism of the tally of Military Veterans which appeared in November 2007 issue on page 21. We are not sure who supplied information and sincerely feel that the person simply thought the information might be found interesting with no other thought in mind. It was used simply as a filler. The information which appears in this newsletter is as was submitted by the members. We have no research staff. We have no doubt that occasionally things we publish may not be historically correct.]

THE REAL STORY HAS BEEN LOST

"Patton"--"Bastogne"--"Nuts." These three words sum up the story of the "Battle of the Bulge" for the American public. Unfortunately, over the years, the real story has been lost.

What Maurice Kunselman in the May issue (2007) wrote is exactly correct in his perceptive and concise letter about Bastogne. It is true that the city was not a strategic target for the German Fifth Panzer Army. Bastogne was off on the edge of their axis of attack and the order, by von Manteuffel, was "Forget Bastogne--go for the Meuse." They did not want to be delayed in any long-term siege action.

But the U.S. press, enamored of Patton as they were, built up the story until now the three icons of--Patton, Bastogne, and Nuts are all that is left.

The real story will always be the fighting at St. Vith, Trois-Ponts, La Gleize, Manhay and Celles where the majority of the German armor was defeated by those U.S. Army divisions that were ignored back then by the press and are now forgotten. The fight in the northern section delayed, hindered, and destroyed (Kampfgruppe Peiper for example) the panzer columns that were tasked with the job of reaching Antwerp as fast as possible.

Mr. Kunselman is also correct in his comments about the bravery and sacrifices of the men who were in Bastogne--fighting well and dying bravely. Combat is combat, and the action in and around Bastogne was just as tough as it was in the north. But still, Bastogne was not the whole fight, and Patton did not win the Battle of the Bulge.

James K. Cullen
3 ARMD 36 AIR

CATALYTIC CIGARETTE LIGHTER

Our artillery group (928th Field Artillery/7th U.S. Army/105s) was informed he would be attached to the 3rd Army during a portion of the Ardennes fighting. I am aware that General McAuliffe was reported to have told the Germans "Nuts." Somehow this word did not come across as a "military" term! I yield to the historians.

McAuliffe became the 103rd Infantry Division top commander after the pace of the Ardennes offensive was slowed. The general was in charge when we confronted the Siegfried zone of fortifications.

As forward observer with the 928th FA Bn this FO never knew where he was most of the time. Just did what forward observers are supposed to do.

I do have a request for information about the geneses of catalytic cigarette lighters that were used by some of us during 1944+/- . I had one but do not recall if it was an army issue. I have searched the information PC engines and have come up with almost nothing about this gadget. Per chance it came with the cigarettes in our "K" rations?

The only mention of this lighter I found was in an interesting article by John Edward Thompson, who was shot down in 1944 while flying a P-47 aircraft. He became a German prisoner of war. The Germans did not take his watch or his catalytic lighter.

Dr. Thompson (M.D.) passed away and his surviving family members did not know anything about this device. Perhaps some members of VBOB would have accurate information on this bit of almost lost history of WWII. Would enjoy hearing from them.

My brother, Ralph Lenke served with Patton; however, he does not recall this flameless cigarette lighter. I have no idea as to what happened to my lighter.

The Bulge Bugle is always interesting. I always look forward to its arrival in my mail box.

Kenneth Lenke
928 FA BN

[Ken's address is 6226 East Evans Drive, Scottsdale, Arizona 85254-3217. You might also be interested in inquiring about his book U.S. Army Serial Number 37531447. We will have an excerpt from his book in the next issue.]

WE DIDN'T RETREAT

Regarding Michael Connelly's statement about the 75th Division in his article on page 8 of the May (2007) issue of the VBOB newsletter, I wish to take exception.

He criticized the 75th for an error near Sadzot and went on to condemn the whole 75th Division. The fact is that this division had just arrived in France and was headed north on the 16th of December. We were immediately rerouted to the north side of the bulge.

The 289th Regiment which he referred to was attached to the 3rd Armored Division to plug a hole. Their orders no doubt came from the 3rd Armored. The 290th Regiment was also attached to the 3rd Armored Division. The 75th Division did not operate as a division until January 15th. To condemn the 75th Division is ridiculous. Our division never retreated at any time and continued to progress across Belgium to near St. Vith at which time we were sent to France to eliminate the Colmar pocket of Germans. We later went to Holland then across the Rhine River to cut off the Rhur industrial area.

John Bryan Sperry
75 INF 291 INF 1 BN

LET'S ALL LEND A HAND

I'm thinking that many of our surviving VBOB heroes, could donate a year's renewal for dear buddies in dire hardship. Or, perhaps, it behooves VBOB to issue please for enrollment of veterans' widows, baby boomers, or grandchildren to enroll in honor of their husbands, father (and mothers, and grandfathers.

The Bulge Bugle with each issue insert a form, encouraging the mentioned to become associates of VBOB in honor, or memory of a loved one. Just a suggestion! We can't let all Americans forget that horrible time of WWII in December of 1944 and January of 1945. We (VBOB) must never cease to remind our people of the heroic battles, of the Bulge and the courageous boys who did fight, die and prevail, sixty-some years ago.

Thank you, to all officers, staff, and volunteers of VBOB--a Super Great Outfit!

Vincent A. Gish
6 ARMD 25 ARM ENGR B

[Vincent kindly sent a donation with his dues payment which will be used to defray expenses incurred as a result of members who have passed away and who we continue to service as no one has advised us of their passing. Believe it or not, this is a big problem.]

EUNICE GROOMS NURSED BULGE SOLDIERS

(The following was excerpted from a story which appeared in the Post and Courier, of N. Charleston, South Carolina, December 17th, 2007. It was written by Warren Wise.

When Eunice Grooms (Moncks Corner) heard the Army needed nurses in World War II, she didn't hesitate. "I just felt like it was my duty to go," she said.

Now 97, she had no idea at the time she would live in a tent in Europe for a while, use her helmet as a chamber pot, or prepare to surrender if the Germans were successful in their final big push during the Battle of the Bulge, which started December 16, 1944.

...In March 1944, she received orders to ship out to an unknown destination. First, it was Scotland then Wales, then England, where she heard a buzz bomb fly by and later saw thousands of planes fill the sky on D-Day. Then, in August 1944, she landed on Utah Beach in Normandy, France, where the Allies had invaded Europe just two months earlier. She stayed a few days at Carentan near the coast before being sent inland to Coubert.

"We spent all day Sunday cleaning up a nasty place that the Nazis left, but they (her superiors) said it wasn't suitable, so we left to Eaubonne," a northern suburb of Paris," Grooms said.

That's where she stayed until the war ended in 1945. Tending to sick soldiers, hoping the Germans wouldn't retake the ground around her that the Allies had freed and making sure the place stayed clean and tidy were her main concerns until November, 1945, when she finally returned to Cross to care for her ailing mother, who had suffered a stroke.

"When we first got to Europe, we lived in a tent for a while," she said. "We were in an apple orchard and all the rotten apples were on the ground. The yellow jackets would fly into the tents and bite us."

As wounded soldiers came to the hospital, especially after the Germans would blow up a bridge and inflict heavy casualties, they stayed on a stretcher until nurses could get to them. Grooms gave them coffee and cigarettes. After they were operated on, the soldiers were transferred to a ward that Grooms oversaw.

During the Battle of the Bulge, she and the other nurses sat up all night on Christmas Eve waiting for the Germans to get to the hospital. "They talked about arming us at one time, but I had never fired a gun before. They said if we were captured we were to give our name, rank and serial number. Nothing else. I was not worried. I didn't have enough sense to worry. We were prepared to be captured, but I felt like we would be OK. We had on full gear, our outer clothes and a bag with all the things that women need. I sat in the living room and waited to see if a bomb would hit. They bombed Paris," which was about 10 miles away, "but they never got to us."



EUNICE GROOMS

She was promoted to 1st lieutenant and received a bronze battle star in February 1945.

...she has tried to forget some of the hardships she endured, such as the taste of chlorinated water out of a lister bag, going to the bathroom in a trench near her tent which had a roll of toilet paper on the handle of a shovel, seeing a cow carcass dangling from a tree after a bomb had blown it there and using her helmet for bathing water and for bathroom emergencies.

She still has an undated pass that allowed her to leave from 8 a.m. until midnight one day, but she couldn't go more than 25 miles. She once made it to Switzerland, where she remembers having a good time. "I always wanted to go back," she said, but she never did.

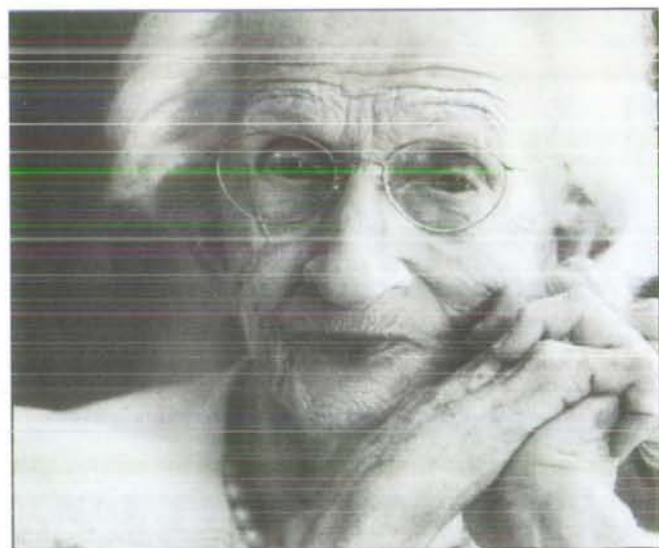
They always had plenty to eat, but one time a shipload of Brussels sprouts came in and they had to eat them until they were gone. "It was a long time before I ate another one," she said.

Grooms occasionally got cards and letters from home, and she would write home as often as she could. "It would always gripe me when I got a birthday card and it didn't say anything but 'Happy Birthday,'" she said. Her mother would read Grooms' letters to the women of the missionary society back home.

When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, she and other nurses waited to come home for weeks in a staging area in France. The more stripes one had on her sleeve, the earlier she could come home. The stripes indicated how long they had served. Grooms had three stripes. She received word on November 9, 1945, to go home and arrived in Moncks Corner on November 16, just in time for Thanksgiving.

She left the Army in February 1946 and returned to nursing. She did not marry and has no children. She retired in 1975 at the age of 65.

"I don't have any secrets of growing old," she said. "I just put one foot in front of the other. I didn't think I would live this long. It's been a long life, but it's gone by so fast." ■



Eunice Grooms, now 97 years old, served in the Army as a nurse in World War II.

GRANDSON OF "BUFFALO BILL"

Major William J Garlow
106th Infantry Division
Grandson of William Frederick Cody

[The following article appeared in The Pekan Newsletter, the newsletter of the 526TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION, dated October 2007. It states the following account is located in the history books.]

On December 11, 1944, the 422nd and 423rd Infantry Regiments of the 106th Infantry Division (The Golden Lion Division) were sent to a "quiet" sector in the Ardennes Forest for orientation. They had only been on the European Continent for 15 days, with the youngest average age troops of any American division. They didn't know their division would be forced to surrender becoming the largest surrender in the European Theater, second only to Bataan--the largest surrender in American history.

The 422nd and 423rd Infantry Regiments would become encircled and cut off from the remainder of the division by a junction of enemy forces in the vicinity of Schonberg. The division eventually suffered 641 killed and 1,200 wounded. Over 7,000 soldiers were captured and sent to various POW camps throughout Germany.

Early in the morning of December 18, Lieutenant General Joseph Puett was ordered to report to Colonel Charles Cavender's command post, 423rd Infantry Regiment. He took with him his executive officer, Major William J. Garlow. Garlow, a grandson of the famed Buffalo Bill, was a rugged young man of 30 from Wyoming who, in civilian life, often wore cowboy clothes, a habit that belied the fact that he was a graduate of Harvard Law School. Relying on bad radio communications and orders that were several days old, the men began their battle strategy.

Early morning December 19, they were all in a small open field and the German artillery was pouring in, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, standing next to Major Garlow, was killed instantly. After several barrages of German artillery and becoming surrounded, the 106th Division made the painful decision to surrender. Major Garlow handed over his .45 pistol to the Colonel, borrowed two white handkerchiefs, and took off by himself, darting on a zigzag path down the side of the hill, waving his handkerchiefs wildly.

He did not think to bring a man with him who could speak German. As Garlow entered the German position, he found himself surrounded by German soldiers. Garlow's most prized possessions--his watch, several candy bars, and a pint of bourbon whiskey--had been stripped from him. Not speaking German, he was unable to explain that he had come to negotiate a surrender of the whole division, so he was relieved to see a German officer approaching. Garlow told the officer, "I demand that your men return my property." A sharp bark from the German officer and back came the watch, the candy bars, and even the pint of bourbon!

Garlow admitted to the English-speaking German officer representing 400 to 500 men who wished to surrender. He was afraid to admit that the figure was about ten times that many, for

fear the Germans might be tempted to continue the fire. The Germans escorted Garlow back up the hill to the American position. The German lieutenant looked around him and observed the number of American troops. "Major, you told me you had only 400 to 500 men here." Garlow replied, "Well, there may be a few more." ■

MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

JOHN R. BONMAN, 419TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION, writes to see if anyone may have information concerning **ROSS W. GASKILL**, who was a paratrooper with the 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION during the Bulge. He worked in Washington, D.C., until 1973 after which time John lost complete contact with him. Any information will be appreciated. Write to John at 7001 Northview Street, Boise, Idaho 83704.

James O. McKinley is looking for WWII memorabilia to add to the items he incorporates in his talks with middle school children. Of particular need are the posters from that era and an M-1 carbine. If you have any of these items and would consider donating or selling, please drop him a line at: 824 Moreland Avenue, Perry, Georgia 31069.

A. NORBERT VERZOSA, 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 359TH INFANTRY DIVISION, COMPANY I, would like to complete his collection of *The Bulge Bugle*. He is missing the following: 1982--Vol I, #1 and #3; 1983--Vol II, All four copies; 1984--Vol III, #3; 2005--Vol XXIV, #1 and #2; and 2006--Vol XXV #4. If you can help him, write to him at: 5811 North Wasyhtenaw, Chicago, Illinois 60659-3911.

KENNETH N. RADER, JR., 177TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION, BATTERY B, would like to hear from anyone who may have served in the 177th. Please write to him at: 252 Shadow Mountain Drive #F-7, El Paso, Texas 79912.

Dan Allen writes to see if someone can provide information regarding his grandfather **WILLIAM WALLACE "WALLY" ALLEN, 868TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION, HEADQUARTERS BATTERY**, and may have been attached to **65TH INFANTRY DIVISION**. If you can help in any way, write to Dan at: 34-22 29th Street, 2nd Floor, Astoria, New York 11106.

Associate Member Guy Jacquemin would like information and photos of American field hospitals during the Battle of the Bulge. If you can help, contact him at: 6 Rue Devant Wacht; 6747 Saint Leger, Belgium.

Associate Member Julia Buckmaster would like to hear from anyone who may have served with her father, **KEITH GEORGE JOHNSON, 8TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 28TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 2ND BATTALION, COMPANY E**. If you can provide any information, please write to her at: 2428 Bellflower Lane, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46808-1872.

WARREN E. CHANCELLOR, 300 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, writes to let you know that his battalion now has a web site. So, if you have a computer, you might want to visit: www.300thcombatengineersinwwii.com. Thanks, Warren.

THERMOPYLE IN THE ARDENNES

By J. C. Doherty
Company H
393rd Infantry Regiment
99th Infantry Division

How six battalions of the 99th Infantry Division held off five Wehrmacht Divisions for 36 hours and ruined the plans of 6th Panzer Armee for a quick breakout in Hitler's Ardennes counteroffensive of December 1944.

The 99th Division moved to the Western Front in mid-November 1944. The sector assigned fronted Germany's fortified West Wall. It extended from the picturesque little town of Monschau on the headwaters of the Roer River, all the way south to the Losheim Gap, Germany's historic route for breaking into Belgium and France.

The distance covered by the 99th's front line was 23 miles--as the crow flies. But soldiers and their machines are not crows. Given the lay of the land in this eastern Ardennes region, the many obstacles on the ground, and time of the year with winter coming on, a 23 mile-long line can't even begin to suggest the actual amount of front line the 99th's three infantry regiments would be defending.

The high hills, trackless forests, marshes, and farmers' fields, and the few villages connected by poor roads or none at all were more suitable for guerilla warfare than for warfare between mechanized armies.

Nonetheless, Adolph Hitler, the absolute ruler of Germany and his armies, thought otherwise. He personally selected the sector occupied by the 99th for his favorite army, the newly created 6th Panzer Armee. It was heavy with Panzers and would have a tough time with the terrain.

Sixth Panzer Armee's 1st Panzer Korps with its attached 67th Infanterie Korps was the most formidable aggregation of armed might in the Wehrmacht's Ardennes counteroffensive of December 1944.

It brought to the front--and that front, mind you, was mostly in the area occupied by the 99th--the following power:

- Two SS Panzer Divisions, each with 20,000 men and boys and 200 tanks and other armored fighting vehicles.
- One Panzergrenadier Division, well armed with mobile, armored assault guns.
- One Luftwaffe ground division of infantry--paratroopers they were called, but weren't--poorly trained and led but large in numbers and determination.
- Four infantry divisions--called Volksgrenadiers.
- A battalion of Tiger tanks.

And all of this power on the ground supported by 1,000 artillery and Werfer (rocket throwing) tubes.

The sector in eastern Belgium held by the 99th was the gateway for the infantry and armor of 1st SS Panzer Korps' right wing to reach their first objective, the Meuse River near Liege, Belgium. They were not about to let a little enemy infantry division new to the front hold them up one single hour after they struck.

Six 99th Division battalions were particular targets for this aggression of power. They occupied respectively:

- A village south of Monschau called Hofen (for all

locations, see map at end of article).

• A vital--for the Germans--logging road through the woods to two little towns, the Twin Towns we'll call them, because they were pretty much joined together. They were located half way between the 99th's front in the woods and the Elsenborn Heights.

• And the most critical of all in the plans of 1st SS Panzer Corps, the Losheimergraben Crossroads, where two major highways came together at a custom post on what had been the German-Belgium border.

Lieutenant Colonel McClernand Butler's 3rd Battalion, 395th Infantry, occupied Hofen. The 38th Cavalry Recon Squadron was in Monschau and the village close by west of it.

Following an enormous artillery and rocket barrage that brought down many houses in Hofen and set Butler's command post afire, two battalions of the 326th Volksgrenadiers came marching in files in the glow of searchlights.

Their objective was to get through Butler's front line and into Hofen. The wave of marchers was beaten off by the mortars, machine gunners, and riflemen of the 3rd Battalion. And a couple of anti-tank gun crews on the line helped also, as did 99th artillery fire. A regiment of the 326th suffered awful casualties.

Over the next two days the 326th would try again and again to breach Butler's line. A hundred or so VG did get through the storm of the 3rd Battalion's fire to capture a few buildings in the town. They were routed out.

The story was much the same on Butler's left flank, a mile or so west of Monschau. The cavalry had lots of automatic weapons. It was reinforced by a platoon of big, mobile tank destroyers and artillery. After several sharp and costly assaults on the cavalry by the 326th Volksgrenadiers, they gave up. In three days of beating at Butler's men and the cavalry, the Germans had taken 1,500 casualties, Butler's unit, scarcely 50.

A Luftwaffe drop of a few hundred paratroops in the marshes a few miles west of Monschau was a fiasco. The brave Germans who managed to reach the ground safely were hunted down or lost in the wilderness.

Eight miles to the southeast, deep in what I called the Todeswald, the woods of death, was a logging road, muddy, gravel-covered. It went from the vital International Highway just east of the 99th front line, to the Twin Towns.

Two companies of Lieutenant Colonel Jack Allen's 3rd Battalion, 393rd Infantry, were emplaced on the left of the road. The other on the right.

On the right flank, the rifle companies of Major Matt Legler's 1st Battalion were spread around the snowy forest floor in foxholes and dugouts.

In the dark before dawn, the same horrendous artillery and Werfer attack came down on the two battalions as at Hofen.

When the fire lifted, the searchlights came on. Two battalions of the 277th Volksgrenadiers came running and screaming. 99th Division artillery hurt them badly, but they kept coming. Within an hour, two companies of the Allen-Leglar defensive front were overwhelmed.

There now followed two days of close-in battling in the dense woods north and south of the logging road. Rifle and automatic fire was everywhere as small groups of opposing fighters dodged among the trees and had it out Indian style. Mortar and artillery shells on both sides kept exploding in the trees, also.

Both battalions received small reinforcements. Allen's a company of riflemen; Leglar's,

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a scratched-together platoon of 393rd headquarters men.

By nightfall December 16, Allen and his officers had been able to pull together enough survivors to form a perimeter around his command post. It was three miles west of what had been their front line when this all started.

Leglar, too, was trying to build a fall-back defensive hedgehog based on his command post. But another battalion of 277 Volksgrenadiers had come into the forest. Having already lost the equivalent of four platoons of riflemen, dead, wounded, and prisoners captured, his 1st Battalion was in bad trouble.

The bad trouble got worse for both battalions that night (December 16-17). The commander of 1st SS Panzer Korps ordered a regiment of Panzergrenadiers (12th SS Panzer Division) riding troop carriers into the melee. He was frustrated. The attack by 277 VG on the 99th Division had not made the breakthrough he expected. His Volksgrenadiers were still stuck in the forest among the troops of the two American battalions.

Late December 16 Allen received a radio message from the 393rd regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jean Scott: Prepare to attack the enemy after daylight. Restore your lines, i.e., drive the Volksgrenadiers and Panzergrenadiers back to where they started.

Allen did as he was told. Even though his officers had to lean on their cold, tired, and hungry men to make them go. Everyone considered it a doomed effort. It was. Dogged, courageous, the company making the attack was broken apart by the Germans.

Shortly after noon December 17, even Scott knew the game was up. He ordered Allen and Leglar to break off contact with the enemy and get their soldiers out of the woods to an area behind a battalion of the 2nd Division, 23rd Regiment. It had been sent in as reinforcements early that day.

Five miles south was the Losheimergraben Crossroads. The 394th Infantry units there had formed a kind of triangle covering the good, paved roads and by-roads that were of first priority to 1st Panzer Korps. I called it the Fatal Triangle.

These roads, which passed through the triangle, formed the gateway to the upper part of the Losheim Gap, Germany's historic route of invasion.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Douglas' 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry, occupied one point of the triangle, the Losheimergraben customs post and the buildings supporting it, plus the fields and forests nearby.

Major Norman Moore's 3rd Battalion, minus one rifle company, occupied a railway station and the area around it a mile or so west of the crossroads. The second point.

Lieutenant Lyle Bouck's 25-man intelligence and recon platoon was positioned inside the Losheim Gap on a hill a mile south of Moore. The third point of the triangle.

Everywhere in the triangle space, the predawn shelling and rocketing by the guns and Werfer of 6th Panzer Armee were more intense than at any of the other target areas along the front line of the 99th.

When the crashing and slashing, and storm of metal ceased, the 12th Volksgrenadier Division struck hard at Douglas and Moore's battalions. A third enemy division, 3rd Parachute, was also on the scene. Its vanguard marched confidently past Bouck's men well hidden on a hill nearby.

The Fusiliers (light infantry) of 12th Volksgrenadier came marching up the railroad track into Moore's 3rd Battalion space. They got in a fire fight with his infantry and command post

soldiers, retreated, only to come back in force several times thereafter. Each time the Fusiliers were sent off licking their wounds.

Almost from the first moment after the shelling ceased and the 12th Volksgrenadiers' attacked, Douglas' soldiers at and around the crossroads in the buildings and in foxholes and bunkers dug out of the earth were in a fight for their lives.

A regiment of 12th VG sent combat teams straight at Douglas' company in the woods east of the crossroads. The attackers were hurt by their own artillery rounds falling short. Yet they were still able to break up Douglas' company; kill, wound, and capture about half of its soldiers; and send the rest running back to the crossroads.

Another company around Douglas' headquarters and the crossroads buildings was hit in the flank and pushed closer to the buildings. The Germans had more armored assault guns than the defenders had anti-tank guns. An 81mm mortar section of 1st Battalion's weapons company raised its tubes to a near 85 degree angle to drop its bombs on enemy soldiers about to overrun them.

Moore's battalion around the railway station, already shorthanded and suffering battle losses too, was ordered by regiment to send a company to reinforce Douglas. They took up positions on a hill overlooking the action.

By early morning December 17--it happened to be a Sunday--Douglas' principal fighters were holed up in the buildings around the crossroads. They had turned them into little fortresses. They were surrounded, had retreated to the basements, were firing at the Germans from the windows.

The commander of the besieging Volksgrenadier regiment put an end to it. He made plain that the buildings would be blown up with Douglas' men in them if they didn't surrender. They did.

Bouck's little platoon on the hill was soon discovered by the paratroops. The only message he received by radio from regiment was "Hold at all costs." Hold at all costs against a battalion of paratroops, 25 against 600.

The 600 were inept and poorly led. Bouck and his men held them off from dawn to dusk December 16. But the sheer weight of the attackers, plus a few Uteroffiziers who finally got some smarts, won out. Bouck and his surviving men were taken prisoner.

On the left flank of all this action, the 2nd Battalion of the 394th was located deep in the forest. They had orders from regiment to hurry south to help in the Losheimergraben battle. In fact, they had no orders at all. Even though one of their companies was east of the International Highway.

And the battalion was in a fight of its own. Several, in fact, when Fusiliers of the 277th Volksgrenadier, supported by assault guns, struck at leading companies along the highway. Artillery fire, controlled by the forward observers using the 99th Division artillery radio net, drove the attackers off, finally.

The 99th Division command radio net was delivering mixed messages about the situation. And the battalion's commander had fallen apart. Captain Ben Legare and other HQ officers had to takeover.

The mass withdrawal of the three battered 99th battalions from the wood west of the International Highway and the two at the Fatal Triangle around Losheimergraben, began in the afternoon of December 17. This was close to 40 hours after the 1st SS Panzer Korps' divisions attacked

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them before dawn December 16. Officers of these tired and wounded units had little information from higher commands as to what was expected of them, and what their eventual destination would be.

For the five battalions, now down to maybe 3,000 in total numbers, give or take, a dangerous new struggle was about to begin.

Their journey over the five or so miles of snow-covered fields, and icy, muddy roads and trails was a nightmare of confusion, loss, and mistake. All of which would cost more lives.

Cold, wet, hungry they all were. Few officers in the exodus knew they were supposed to be heading toward the Elsenborn Heights. This was, and is, a high plateau, about eight miles from north to south. It was six miles west of what had been the 393rd Infantry's front line on December 16. The long, flat ridge line at the top was perfect for defense, but if the ridge should be overrun, both Spa, Belgium, headquarters of US 1st Army, and Eupen, Belgium, headquarters of Fifth Corps, would be in mortal danger. (Map at end, Elsenborn is on the summit.)

Officers of the Fifth Corps HQ and the 99th and 2nd Divisions were working obsessively to build an impregnable final fallback line in depth covering the heights of Elsenborn.

No small part of the defense would be a huge aggregation of artillery and mortar tubes: 16 battalions of artillery of four US divisions; 394th, even battalions of Corps artillery including large-bore howitzers and guns; the cannon companies of 12 infantry regiments; a 4.5-inch chemical mortar battalion; the 81mm mortars of 36 infantry battalions.

As the soldiers of the 99th Division and the 2nd Division 23rd Regiment withdrew from the area east of the Twin Towns and the Losheimergraben Crossroads triangle, their Volksgrenadier enemies did not stay behind.

Soldiers of the 277th and 12th Volksgrenadier and 3rd Parachute Divisions kept pressing the 99th and 2nd Division battalions hard. These included two of the 393rd Infantry, three of the 394th, and two of the 23rd Infantry. (The latter's 1st Battalion had come up late to reinforce the 394th, fought a short, sharp fight, and was also moving west before the German tide.)

In some places, the Germans had advanced to strong points they hurriedly put in place in front of the withdrawing American battalions. Vicious and costly little fire fights followed as the 99th soldiers stumbled on these strong points by mistake or pushed to get around them.

Uncounted numbers of vehicles were in the withdrawal, adding to the impediments the walking soldiers encountered: gun carriages, trucks of all sizes, ambulances and improvised ambulances trying to get the badly wounded out, big artillery trains of trucks and guns.

The murderous enemy guns and Werfer had not gone silent. Shells and rockets kept crashing down at random on the masses of men moving over the fields and woods, and friendly artillery fire of 99th and 2nd Division didn't always stay friendly.

On the left (south) of this boiling cauldron of moving struggle and strife, not a mile away was another 1st SS Panzer Corps power rolling west: Kampfgruppe Peiper of Malmedy Massacre fame, a 15-mile long Anaconda of SS infantry and armor.

Peiper and his troops had already lapped up and made prisoners of the mixed groups of 99th Division and other American troops at the 99th rest camp along the way. His men murdered at least 20 of the scores of American troops they captured. The hugely

powerful force was now on its way to take a 2nd and 99th service and supply center at the base of the Elsenborn Ridge. Peiper would make another haul there of prisoners and of American fuel, food, and cigarettes.

One group of major actions have been left out until now.

On December 13 after daylight, two regimental combat teams of Major General Walter Robertson's 2nd Division, and the 395th RCT of the 99th, Colonel Alexander MacKenzie commanding, started to besiege the pillboxes of Germany's West Wall. These guarded a crossing of two forest roads surrounded by woods, five miles northeast of the Twin Towns.

A big force some 9,000 men, backed by many guns brought in for the operation. Combat Command B, of 9th Armored Division, waited south of the Elsenborn Ridge to move forward once the infantry had pushed through the pillboxes.

After three days and nights of awful combat for the American side--flesh vs. barbed wire, machine gun bullets, exploding enemy mortar and artillery shells, and concrete walls, gains were made but at great cost to two of the combat teams, 9th and 395th.

About noon December 17, four days after the start of the operation, General Robertson ordered it halted in place. Bad things were happening on the flanks. The three combat teams were in imminent danger of being encircled.

Also, they were needed to defend the Twin Towns. Ninety-ninth and 2nd Division headquarters and other troops there were facing a full-scale attack by 12th SS Panzer's grenadiers and armor.

Robertson believed the two little adjoining Belgium farm towns had to be held long enough for the Elsenborn Heights barrier line to be completed before 12th SS Panzer Division and the grenadiers of 277th VG got moving against it.

The 2nd Division commander now took on a heavy burden; bringing his 38th and 9th regimental combat teams south over a hilly, graveled road through the snow covered forest. All the while 6th Panzer Arme artillery and Werfer had the road under fire. And the 277 Volksgrenadier Division was also pressing the 395th RCT from the northeast.

He ordered MacKenzie to keep his men in the woods to serve as a flank guard for the 2nd Division soldiers moving south.

The 2nd Division commander was double handicapped in preparing for the defense of the Twin Towns by two decisions made at Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges' US Army headquarters.

1. On December 16 the combat command of 9th Armored Division was taken away as Robertson's support and sent south toward St. Vith, Belgium, then under serious attack. He thereby lost a powerful force that was needed for the defense of both the Twin Towns and the Elsenborn Heights.

2. And Hodges did not want to give up the operation to break through the West Wall. He refused to allow Robertson to clear the forest until the morning of December 17. This forced the 2nd Division to lose precious hours needed to race south to the Twin Towns, and prepare a defense against the onslaught of 12th SS Panzer Division.

Now it would be touch-and-go whether the tactics to be employed would be made inoperable by the speed and power of the onrushing Panzer division.

Two days of dangerous and destructive combat followed. Twelfth SS Panzer Division commanders sent wave after wave

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of armor and Panzergrenadiers at Robertson's men defending the two towns.

An unknown number of 99th infantry, medics, and artillery forward observers also mixed in the battle, as did a battalion each of tanks and mobile tank destroyers.

It turned out to be one of the most memorable tank-infantry battles of the war on the American side in WWII:

Thousands of infantry, more than a hundred armored fighting vehicles on each side, artillery and rocket fires of both friend and foe adding to the conflagrations and carnage, night and day, up and down the narrow streets of the two little towns.

By the night of December 19-20, Robertson's valients had forced 12th SS Panzer Division to change plans. They started to move out of the Twin Towns--or what was left of them--so try to keep their advance to the distant Meuse River near Liege on schedule. 12th SS Panzer would go south to the Losheimergraben Crossroads, then roll west to the Meuse--or so 1st SS Panzer Korps hoped.

However, the two-day delay and upset of this schedule gave officers of US V Corps' four infantry divisions--1st, 2nd, 9th, and 99th--just about enough time to build an impregnable barrier line on the crest of the Elsenborn high plateau. And this spelled more disaster for 12th SS Panzer when one of its Kampfgruppe attacked the 1st Division on December 21.

However, 6th Panzer Korps wasn't done with the 99th Division just yet. No sooner had Robertson's 38th Regiment evacuated the Twin Towns to move to the Elsenborn barrier line than the 3rd Panzergrenadier moved in. They used the towns as a base to mount a series of attacks directly at the 99th's positions still being built up on the heights. After three days of taking heavy losses, 3rd Panzergrenadier stood down. The tired and sorely tried 99th soldiers still showed enough gut power to fight off the Panzergrenadiers. And the masses of howitzers and guns supporting them laid on brutal punishment.

By the end of December, 1st SS Panzer Korps would have pulled all of its four armored and one armored infantry divisions out of the Elsenborn area.

The depleted Volksgrenadier divisions of 67 Korps remained to mount hopeless attacks directly at the 99th's positions still being built up on the heights.

Now loaded with replacement, all the 99th Infantry had to put up with from December 20, 1944, until the end of January, 1945, was bitter cold, blankets of snow, sleeping in icy foxholes, dodging sporadic enemy shelling and mortaring, and patrolling into enemy positions, which always resulted in wounds and death from mines, potato mashers (hand grenades), and small arms fire.

And this is not to mention three days after Christmas, when the German 67 Korps, now running the order of battle in front of the Elsenborn barrier line, sent its newly arrived 246 VG straight at the front line of the 394th and 393rd Regiments. The Germans were scattered by the massed fires of the artillery and mortars. The same fate overcame the 246th Infantry and that of the now badly injured 12th VG when these two attacked the 2nd and 1st US Infantry Divisions on the right flank of the barrier line simultaneous with the action against the 99th.

Thus ended aggressive enemy action to overcome the American barrier line on the Elsenborn Heights.

But not the killing and dying when the four US infantry divisions started the long road back in mid-January. They now became attackers. The diehard Germans made them pay dearly

for every forested hill, field, and village the Americans recaptured in late January and February.

From the first of December until the end of January, 534 soldiers of the 99th and attached units were killed in action¹.

The 99th and attached units suffered 1,700 dead and wounded between December 15, 1944, and January 15, 1945, when the fighting I described was raging. And a thousand more were taken prisoner and marched off to the miserable Stalags of Germany.

By far most of the dead and wounded were from the five battalions who fought in the woods east of the Twin Towns and at the Fatal Triangle based on the Losheimergraben Crossroads.

The stalwarts of the 3rd Battalion, 395th Regiment, at Hofen lost some 40 to death and wounds. Ninety-ninth units supporting the infantry-artillery, combat engineers serving as infantry, military police, medics, and signalmen, etc., also took hits. Enemy counter battery fire extracted a heavy toll of the 99th artillery, as did service with the front line infantry of their forward observers.

The 99th men paid in blood on December 16-17, 1944, to buy time:

- Time for officers of the V Corps and the 2nd and 99th Divisions to put together the fallback barrier line on the Elsenborn Heights.
- Time for General Robertson to get his three regimental combat teams south and west from the penetrations they had made in the forests north of the Twin Towns; put them in a blocking position in and around the towns; and engage in the horrendous infantry-armor battle that stopped a Kampfgruppe of 12th SS Panzer Division and the 277th Volksgrenadier Division from pushing west to and over the Elsenborn Ridge.
- Time for Brigadier General Cliff Andrus, CO of 1st Infantry Division, to mobilize his men and guns to beat back repeated attempts of another 12th SS Kampfgruppe to go round the southern flank of the heights and keep moving west.

The delays and obstacles caused by the stubborn fight of the 99th's infantry all of the first day after the 1st SS Panzer Korps attacked December 16 and most of the second day, made it possible for 2nd and 1st Infantry Divisions to stop 1st SS Panzer Korps' planned march over the Elsenborn Heights and on to the Meuse River near Liege, Belgium.

The plan of 6th Panzer Armee, of the Wehrmacht high command of Hitler himself was for 1st and 12th SS Panzer Divisions to move swiftly in parallel along five designated Rollbahnen, Panzer routes, west to the Meuse. Three of these Rollbahnen were in the sector assigned to the 12th SS. Elsenborn Heights cleared of American forces was necessary to the success of the Panzer mission.

After a day's delay, 1st SS Panzer Division's Kampfgruppe Peiper did break for the west; the two Kampfgruppe of 12th SS Panzer did not, a tactical setback that ruined 6th Panzer Armee's Hitler-given mission of Schwerpunkting the Ardennes Counteroffensive.

The late, renowned military historian and veteran of the 23rd Infantry Regiment in the Battle of the Bulge, Charles D. MacDonald, gave deserved credit to the soldiers of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions for the crucial role they played in the Elsenborn Ridge battle. He also wrote of the 99th Division:

(Continued)

THERMOPYLE

(Continuation)

"The Germans had expected to penetrate the 99th Division's line and commit their armor soon after daylight on the first day. Despite some disarray in command at the division level, the fighting men of the 99th had denied that expectation by many hours." (A Time for Trumpets, page 410)

The soldiers of the 1st, 2nd, 9th, and 99th Divisions in the battles made it possible for the Elsenborn Heights barrier line to be made impregnable and hold to the last paid a terrible price.

And the 99th Division infantry paid the highest price of all.

Between December 15 and January 16, the four divisions participating in what historians now call The Battle of the Elsenborn Heights, which went on for just about that much of time, suffered a total of 4,028 dead and wounded. Forty-two percent of these were in the 99th.

Before dawn the soldiers of the 99th were hit by a devastating artillery and rocket barrage from a thousand tube and Werfer. Their battalions holding Hofen; in the woods; at the Fatal Triangle were attacked by overwhelming numbers of enemy, outnumbering them three and four to one. The up-front fighters lost contact with leaders and each other. Reinforcements were late in coming. The 99th's fighters were not well served by higher commands far from the front and confused as to what was happening there. Land lines rear-ward had been torn up by the huge pre-dawn artillery barrage. There was a pervasive belief at higher echelons that the Germans had no power remaining except for feeble local spoiling attacks that had to be putdown quickly.

The only discernable orders that the CO's of the 99th battalions in the eye of the storm received were to stand fast--if they received any orders at all.

Their men did, to their triumph and sorrow.

Triumph that they stood fast against an overwhelming enemy force of infantry and armor.

Sorry that so many of their friends--from the training camps, the classrooms, and the foxhole line--lay dead, wounded or were missing. ■

J. C. Doherty is the author of The Shock of War, a history of the battle for Elsenborn Ridge in December, 1944.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM FIELD MARSHAL von RUNDSTEDT

The evening of December 15, 1944, Field Marshal von Rundstedt issued the following words of encouragement to his troops before launching the Battle of the Ardennes:

"Soldiers of the West Front!!

"Your great hour has arrived. Large attacking armies have started against the Anglo-Americans. I do not have to tell you anything more than that. You can feel it yourself. WE GAMBLE EVERYTHING!

"You carry with you the bold obligation to give everything to achieve things beyond human possibilities of our Fatherland and our Fuhrer." ■



2008 VBOB Reunion

2008 VBOB Reunion

September 9 – 14, 2008

The Ramada Plaza Hotel and Conference Center

4900 Sinclair Road

Columbus, OH 43229

Room rate \$89.90 per night includes all taxes

Free shuttle to and from the Columbus Airport

Reunion highlights:

- City tour, including the Motts Military Museum.
- US Air Force Museum – see over 300 aircraft and missiles and roar into space in the IMAX theatre.
- The Olentangy School District Veterans' Day program will honor VBOB

Complete details will be in the May issue of the Bulge Bugle.



Dec. 16th, 2007 - WWII Memorial, Washington, DC.
Frank Walsh, 705 Tank Destroyer Btl., Jerome Schwartz,
2nd Inf. Div., 236 Inf. present VBOB wreath at Memorial.

HITLER'S LAST CHRISTMAS

[The following appeared in the newsletter of the Northern Indiana Chapter and was prepared by **FRANK DUDASH, 4TH ARMORED DIVISION.**]

The holiday season in Germany is traditionally celebrated on three days--Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and December 26th. Christmas 1944 was the sixth Christmas that Hitler had spent in the toils of the titanic struggle that he had unleashed on Europe, already widely known as the Second World War.

Christmas 1944 saw the German leader in the midst of his last great gamble--the Ardennes Offensive in the West. Near Zeigenberg, Germany, Adolph Hitler commanded the great offensive from his Adlerhorst headquarters (the "Eagle's Nest"). Deep within its catacombs the self-proclaimed leader of the Third Reich carried on the battle that was to "decide the destiny of the Reich." Even here, many miles from the battlefield, the hollow thunder of artillery fire in the Ardennes was plainly audible.

That the war had taken its toll on the German leader was obvious to those who had not seen him in some time. Hitler's appearance in December 1944 was shocking. Although only 55, Hitler was an old man; his back was bent, his famous moustache was now ashen-white and his skin was pale. His left arm twitched continuously and could only be restrained by holding it with his right. He was hard of hearing and occasionally appeared to be daydreaming. Other times he rambled on in monotonous monologues about the Roman Empire, Frederick the Great (a favorite historical theme), and even dog breeding. "The longer I study men," he was fond of saying, "the more I like dogs."

Christmas Eve, *der Heilige Abend*, was something less than a "holy evening" in the Fuhrer bunker. On one hand, word arrived at Adlerhorst that the reconnaissance battalion of the 2nd Panzer Division was only three miles from the Meuse River. Regardless of the tone of this message, word that the commander of the tiny German force was without gasoline, and hiding from Allied aircraft must have cooled the ardor of the German field commanders.

In the afternoon, Hitler stood outside the Adlerhorst bunker and watched with his staff as over a thousand enemy bombers glittered in the winter sky, swarming eastward toward the heart of Germany.

By noon December 26, on St. Steven's Day (Zweite Weihnachtstag) Hitler awoke to see the worries of Christmas Day translated into a series of crushing reversals for his final great gamble. The German Seventh Army had nearly been forced back to the Sauer River it had crossed ten days before while under punishing attack by Patton's Third Army. Worse still, the 4th Armored Division, under the swashbuckling general had broken the German siege of Bastogne piercing the ring of Germans surrounding the town and relieving the U.S. Airborne garrison there. Finally, although the 2nd Panzer near the Meuse

had finally received permission to try and break out of its pocket near Celles, it was out of fuel and under a devastating attack from the U.S. 2nd Armored Division.

With the end of December 26, Christmas 1944 was over. The sixth Christmas of WWII would be Hitler's last.

"We were told we would be going on a rest break in December," Frank remembered. "We had no more than unpacked our gear out of the tanks when there was a rumor going around that something really big was happening up north."

On December 19th, the rumor came true and about one-third of the 4th Armored Division's tanks and men headed north. They drove for 22 hours, utilizing black-out conditions, which meant they drove with their lights out during the hours of darkness. Later it was said that former President Richard Nixon called that 22-hour drive, "the greatest movement made in the history of the U.S. army."

Those of us who went north were attached to the 1st Army. We made up a task force known as Ezell. The task force had a company of medium tanks, an infantry regiment from the 10th Infantry, a battalion of artillery and some supply transportation vehicles. We were heading to the beleaguered town of Bastogne.

The stage was set on December 22. The Germans had surrounded the 101st Airborne Division two days earlier in their final great offensive.

"We made it all the way into Bastogne with the Task Force," Frank said. "We saw lots of German soldiers, some dead, most of them alive, but we made it there and reported to a colonel in the 10th Armored Division."

By December 27, the battle for Bastogne had reached its climax. On the ground in the early morning, the 26th Volksgrenadier Division made a last desperate effort to capture the town. On the west side of the perimeter, the Germans launched the attack with assault gun support from near Senonchamps. However, American artillery was ready for the move and shelled the German grenadiers into head-long retreat.

Then that afternoon, the situation took a decisive turn in the Allied favor. At 4:45 p.m., a U.S. engineer on the south of the American perimeter near Assenois excitedly reported that the approach of "three light tanks, believed friendly." Although down to only 20 Shermans, U.S. tankers of Combat Command R of the 4th Armored Division broke through the German ring of the battered 26th Volksgrenadier Division to reach the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne. "Gee, I'm mighty glad to see you," exclaimed General McAuliffe. The four day siege of Bastogne was over.

"During the sub-zero temperatures we encountered at Bastogne," Frank remembered, "we had a procedure to change our socks that prevented frostbite or frozen feet. I kept two pairs of socks next to my body--one pair under my armpits, the other flat against my stomach. When we changed our socks, we took off one boot at a time and slipped on a dry sock that had been next to our body. We took that sock that had been on our feet, rolled it in the snow, getting it wet, then rung it out and put it next to our body for the next change."■



**CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL
TO SEE IF YOUR DUES ARE DUE
THE DATE IS ABOVE YOUR LAST NAME
THANK YOU--WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.**

PETER F. LESLIE, JR. CHAPTER (NJ)

Chapter 54 in New Jersey were treated like royalty by the U.S. at Picatinny Arsen in July.

Members and guest (approximately 44) were given a tour of

the Armament Technology Facility. Included were displays of WWII weapons, new Iraq era weapons, firing of a .50 caliber machine gun on the 300 meter indoor range, and a demonstration of the new Swords unit--a small remote-controlled robot used for street fighting. Entertainment was also provided.



GENESEE VALLEY CHAPTER MONUMENT

[We thought we had previously reported on this beautiful monument constructed by the Genesee Valley Chapter in Rochester, New York. Apparently, we had overlooked it somehow. Please accept our apologies.]



INDIAN RIVER CHAPTER

The Indian River Chapter Memorial Day service on the plaza of the Liberty Bell Museum in Melbourne, Florida, on May 28, 2007. Wreath layers at the VBOB Monuymnt are from left: Donald Champlain, Chapter President Al Babecki, and Frank Kolbl.



Treaties are like roses and young girls.
They last while they last.
CHARLES DE GAULLE

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

German Soldier ReCalls Bitter Fight, End of War

[The following excerpts were taken from an article which appeared in the DAILY PRESS of Newport News, Virginia, on December 16, 2007. It was written by Tamara Dietrich. The article was sent to us by Carolyn Kramer, associate member and daughter of RAY F. BOYER, 9TH ARMORED DIVISION.]

He was a battle-weary 18-year-old in a tank division grinding west at top speed to engage the enemy in the biggest, bloodiest battle that American soldiers ever fought.

It was December 16, 1944, on the Belgian-German border, and Pvt Hans Blume was an engineer with the Windhund--or Greyhound--Division of Hitler's 5th Panzer Army.

All told, four German armies, 30 divisions and a quarter-million troops were blitzing across the Allied front toward France in a last-ditch surprise attack in the closing months of World War II.

The Germans called the assault Operation Watch on the Rhine. The sucker-punched U.S. Army would call it the Ardennes Offensive. But it's best known today as the Battle of the Bulge.

The offensive caught Allied leaders--flush with military successes since Normandy and sure of ultimate victory--flat-footed and American troops in the path of the onslaught almost literally with their pants down.

"The tank division infantry was attacking the American lines, and they didn't have a chance, those poor guys," Blume, now 81, recalls. "They were just dead."

The 5th Panzers rolled first into the east Belgian city of St. Vith to find a large Army mess hall newly abandoned, the food still hot. GIs who didn't realize they'd just been overrun by the enemy emerged from houses only to be taken prisoner. "I felt sorry for the Americans at that time," Blume says.

Again and again along the battle route, German troops found American tanks and equipment abandoned in hasty retreat. Those who couldn't retreat fast enough were captured or killed.

For Blume and his fellow dispirited soldiers, these swift military successes so late in a losing war were a tonic. Panzer drivers would scramble inside abandoned Sherman tanks and play like kids. Tortured veterans of the Russian front--transferred in for this offense--rallied.

"To experience the forward movement," Blume says, "they felt excited but not victorious. It was something going on, but it would not last very long."

Blume felt the excitement, too, while it lasted.

The son of middle-class parents turned family farmers, Blume had no taste for soldiering. His boyhood dream was to study aerodynamics and aviation at university in his native Braunschweig in northern Germany.

In May 1944, when he turned 18, he was drafted into the Luftwaffe, or air force. His excellent night vision marked him for training as an officer and then as a night fighter pilot.

A month later during training in Belgium, the Allies landed at Normandy and advanced across France. Blume and his unit fled to the Netherlands.

There, the plan was to train him as a drill sergeant, but Blume had neither the aptitude or the desire and was transferred to a tank division. Assigned to an engineer corps, he was taught to build bridges and blow them up.

By the time he was rumbling toward St. Vith, Blume was a combat veteran. Just weeks earlier, he'd been fed through the meat-grinder of the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest near Aachen. That interminable series of bloody clashes, in fact, was still raging even as the Bulge began.

The Hurtgenwald battle started in mid-September, when the U.S. Army surged across the German border toward the Rhine River.

"That's where the German command said, 'We have to make a stand here. We have to stop 'em,'" Blume says. "The Americans didn't like that. There was a very bitter fight with so many losses on both sides because nobody wanted to give. The poor soldiers had to pay for it."

It was close-quartered trench warfare set inside 50 square miles of dense pine forest so dark it spooked GIs slogging through knee-high mud and freezing rain and later through bone-chilling cold and deep snow. It wouldn't end till Feb. 10 in a pyrrhic victory for the Americans. ...

By the time he was shipped to Prüm in Western Germany to prepare for the Bulge offensive, he was in survival mode.

"I was not fighting for anything, except that I was supposed to take orders and give orders," Blume says. "That was the only thing there was. And then on the other side, my own belief was don't stick your neck too far out or you get killed."

Even as Blume fought American GIs, he found them fascinating. He admired American attitudes and lifestyle.

"The easy life," Blume explains, "I mean, we as soldiers, our life was not that easy. When we got in contact with American soldiers and American units and saw how they handled everything and how easy it was and how well they were taken care of by their officers and units...." "We called them 'amis,' he says, after the French word for "friend."

When his division overran St. Vith, among the abandoned materiel were personal photographs left by retreating GIs. Blume kept two of them because he liked what he believed they said about Americans: a pretty girl with a big corsage on her dress and a young couple leaning against a big car, the woman holding a baby in her arms.

After St. Vith, Blume's division headed southwest to attack Bastogne on Dec. 21. The 101st Airborne Division and part of the 10th Armored stubbornly held that city, so the Germans laid siege. ...

U.S. planes tried to drop supplies to the beleaguered city, but German anti-aircraft shot down about half of them, Blume says. He and his comrades picked up the pilots who bailed out.

The day after Christmas, Gen George Patton's 3rd Army arrived to end the siege. By then, Blume's Panzer division had bypassed Bastogne and roared northwest toward the Belgian city of Marche, still trying to punch through the Allied line.

En route, Blume says, he saw a sight that stirred him. He and other engineers had just built a bridge across the Ourthe River when he saw a German tank splashing through the shallow water, hauling wounded soldiers on top toward an aid station.

The soldiers were both Germans and GIs, "holding onto each other and helping each other not to fall off," Blume says. "That really touched me."

(Continued)

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE (Continuation)

By then, the Allies were counter-punching hard. American units--some of which had already taken heavy casualties in the Hurtgen Forest--fought tenaciously. Allied planes bombed supply stations behind the 50 mile bulge. German supplies were running low, especially precious gasoline.

Finally, just five kilometers from Marche, Blume, says, his division literally ran out of gas.

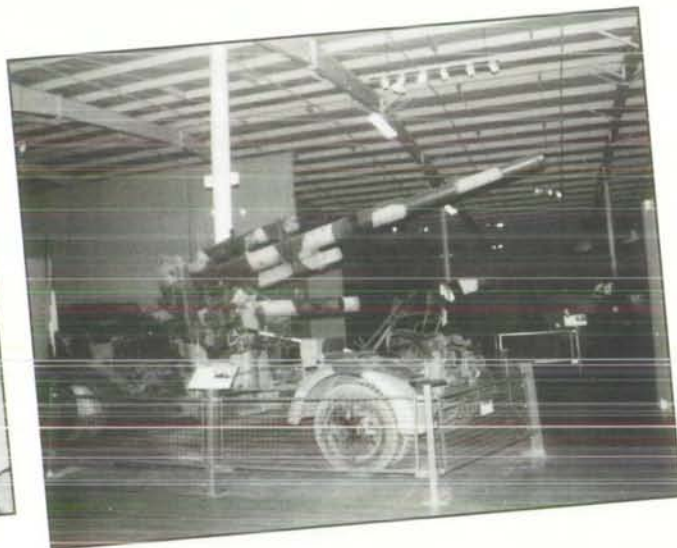
Their offensive was over.

By Jan. 7, 1945, German forces officially began a painful retreat under fire. This time it was their turn to abandon tanks, trucks and material. Blume's job was blowing up bridges in their wake to hamper the advancing Allies.

"We just (kept) retreating, retreating," Blume says. "We crossed the Rhine and had to ferry our tanks over to the other side of the Rhine. We saw the British airplanes coming and trying to sink those ferries and sink those boats. That's when I realized that's the end of it, we cannot help it anymore."■

AUBURN, INDIANA MUSEUM OF INTEREST

BERESFORD N. CLARKE, 26TH INFANTRY DIVISION, sent us some pictures regarding the World War II Victory Museum which is near his home.

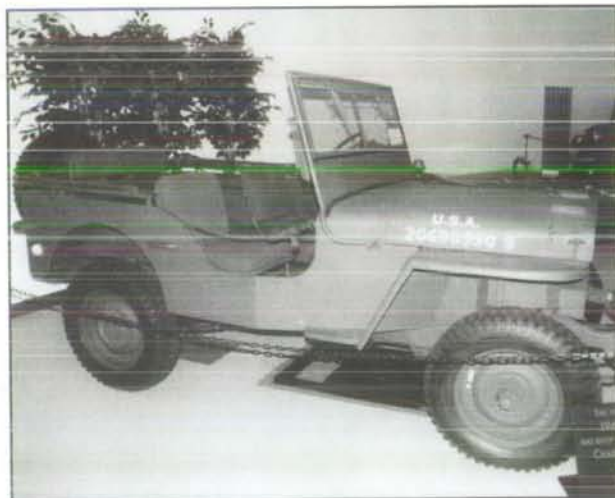


The Victory museum contains one of the world's most impressive collections of artifacts from WWII. The collection includes approximately 150 vehicles and hundreds of uniforms, weapons and smaller artifacts.

The majority of the collection comes from the former Victory Memorial Museum that was located in Messancy, Belgium, thus many of the artifacts are survivors of the Battle of the Bulge. The items were transported from the Belgian facility to its current location in Auburn.

Also situated in the town is fascinating automobile museum located in the old original factory buildings.

So, next time you're out that way, make an effort to stop by the museum, you will be impressed with the collection.■



DISCOVER COLUMBUS...

...OHIO, THAT IS AT THE VBOB REUNION Septemer 9-14, 2008

RIPPLE EFFECT

With 600,000 Americans eventually involved in the fighting, the Battle of the Bulge quite arguably was the most dangerous moment for the Allies in Europe. Flaring up along a hundred-mile front in Belgium and Luxembourg just on the western edge of the Ardennes, it would result in 100,000 Germans and 77,000 American casualties before Hitler recognized defeat and allowed his units to begin withdrawing in the second week of January 1945.

The German counteroffensive took the Americans and their allies completely by surprise. Such a massive offensive exploding from the difficult, winter-mantled Ardennes Forest at that late stage of the war seemed so unlikely that the Americans had been calling their thinly manned line the "ghost front."

Unlikely it had seemed to many of Germany's generals too. When Hitler first told Field Marshals Gerd von Rundstedt and Walther Model, along with other senior strategists, of his plan, they warned him of its risks and proposed less ambitious objectives for the war-weakened German Wehrmacht.

Hitler, insisting upon his proposed drive to Antwerp, said: "If we succeed, we will have knocked out half the enemy front. Then let's see what happens."

By battle's end, one of his Bulge commanders, General Hasso von Manteuffel, was struck by a lasting image of his doomed commander in chief. What Manteuffel saw was a "stooped figure with a pale and puffy face, hunched in his chair, his hands trembling, his left arm subject to violent twitching which he did his best to conceal, a sick man, apparently borne down by the burden of his responsibility."

The Bulge had a far greater ripple effect than the immediate issue of halting the Western Allies in their advance into Germany--or, as it turned out, failing to halt that advance. The Americans, after the initial confusion and setbacks allowing a 60-mile German penetration, reacted strongly and soon threw the Germans back, even if their victory was a costly one in personnel and war materiel.

More, the surprise initiative of the Germans was an embarrassment that did not strengthen President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's hand at the Big Three Conference just weeks later, in early February 1945. Along similar lines, the German focus on the Ardennes counteroffensive made the Red Army's advances from the east all the easier during the same period. Indeed, argued military historian J.F.C. Fuller in his three-volume *A Military History of the Western World*, "Since Hitler had committed his entire strategic reserve in the Ardennes offensive, Stalin decided to open the Russian winter campaign in mid-January; he hoped that by the time the 'Big Three' met, his armies would have overrun the whole of Poland and he would be in a position to present his allies with a fait accompli."

Opening on January 12, adds Fuller, the Russian offensive "burst like an avalanche" against the German eastern front. By the time of the Yalta Conference (beginning February 4), the Red Army had reached the Oder River at Kustrin and Breslau--Stalin had won for the Kremlin "the fleeces of Poland and several other countries."

[Story taken from Best Little Stories from World War II--based upon various sources.] ■

MALMEDY SURVIVOR STATEMENT

Theodore J. Paluch
285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion
Battery B

December 20, 1944
Sworn Statement

[The following article appeared in THE PEKAN NEWSLETTER of October 2007, which is the newsletter of the 526th Armored Infantry Battalion]

Battery B, 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion, in convoy going south three miles from Malmedy, stopped the convoy at 1300 when motor fire and machine gun fire was heard.

We got out of the truck and jumped in a ditch beside the vehicles. Some men took off when they saw we were being captured. They took watches, gloves and cigarettes from the prisoners then they put us inside a barbed wire fence.

Tanks passed for 15 minutes. Everything was alright until a command car turned the corner. At that time an officer in the command car fired a shot with his pistol at a medical officer who was one yard away to my left; then he fired another shot to my right.

At that time a tank followed the command car and opened fire on the 175 men inside the fence. We all fell and lay as still as we could.

Every tank that passed from then on would fire into the group laying there. At one time they came around with a pistol and fired at every officer that had bars showing. (One officer put mud on his helmet to cover the bars.)

The tanks stopped passing about 1445. At 1500 someone said let's go. At that time 15 men got up and started to run north from where we were laying on the side of the road.

Twelve of the men ran into a house (northwestern part of the cross road) and three of us kept going. There was a machine at the cross roads plus four Germans.

When we got in back of the house they could not fire the machine gun at us. They burnt the house down into which the 12 men ran. When the three of us were in the back of the house we played dead again because a German in a black uniform came around with a pistol looking over us. We lay there until dark, when we rolled into a hedgerow where we weren't under observation.

Laying there was a S/Sgt from the 2nd Division shot in the arm. We started to walk but stayed 200 to 300 yards from the main road. In about a quarter of a mile we met a medic who was shot in the foot and a fellow from my outfit. The four of us came into Malmedy.

All I got was a scratch on my fingers from a machine gun. ■

DID YOU CHECK TO SEE IF YOUR
DUES ARE DUE?
We need your support.

BOB 63rd COMMEMORATION 15 Dec 2007

Our Commemoration Banquet of the 63rd Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge was held by the BOB Historical Foundation at the DoubleTree Crystal City Hotel in Arlington Virginia.

On Friday evening, the 14th of december, early registrants enjoyed the hospitality room, hosted by Marty & Phyllis Feldman and the books, artifacts and memorabilia that was brought and displayed. Old and new friends met and enjoyed the comradery of each other recalling their service so many years ago.

On Saturday, the 15th of December, the group left for a special tour of the Estate of George & Martha Washington at Mount Vernon. We were allowed to explore the third floor rooms normally restricted to visitors during the year, including the private bedroom of George & Martha and the room in which he died. The Estate of our first President and Commander-in-Chief has been greatly improved with the addition of the Ford Orientation Center and The Donald W. Reynolds Museum & Education Center. These additions include 25 new theaters and galleries that tell the detailed story of George Washington's life. More than 500 original artifacts, eleven History Channel videos, and immersion theater experiences illuminated the remarkable story of the first American hero. For a virtual tour of the estate log on to their web site at www.mtvernon.org/virtual/index.cfm/ss/29 We lunched either in the Food Court or Mount Vernon Inn depending on our tastes. We then proceeded back to the Hotel to freshen up for the evening events.

The Annual 15th of December banquet was held at the DoubleTree with the Ambassador of Belgium, Dominique Struye de Swielande and the Consul of Luxembourg, Marc Godfroid attending. Colors were presented by the US Army Color Guard of the "Old Guard," (3rd Infantry) accompanied by members of the Fife & Drum.

Bob Rhodes, was the Master of Ceremonies for the event. Our guest speaker was Dr. Lewis Sorley, PhD., author and historian and Secretary of the US Army Historical Foundation. He gave a very interesting talk about the Battle and also talked briefly about the US Army Museum to be built at Fort Belvoir and the registry to register all those who have ever served in the US Army.

The Person of the Year Award was announced. Neil Brown Thompson, one of the Founding Members of the VBOB organization, long serving Membership Chairman, promoter and preserver of the history of the Battle of the Bulge and designer of the VBOB Emblem was selected for this year's award. He was unable to attend the banquet but the Award and Plaque was presented to him on the 27th of December at the Red Lobster near his home.

Special numbered plates picturing the Battle of the Bulge which were commissioned by the Belgium American Association and Mr. W. Glenn Yarborough, Jr. were presented by Mr. Yarborough and Mr. Paul Goffin, to the Ambassador, Consul, Dr. Sorley and to those Bulge Veterans in attendance that had not previously received this plate when it was first distributed to veteran attendees a few years back.

PATTON'S CONFRONTATION WITH BILL MAULDIN



Mauldin's cartoons often reflected his anti-authoritarian views and this got him in trouble with some of the senior officers. In 1945

General George Patton wrote a letter to the *Stars and Stripes* and threatened to ban the newspaper from his Third Army if it did not stop carrying "Mauldin's scurrilous attempts to undermine military discipline."

General Dwight D. Eisenhower did not agree and feared that any attempt at censorship would undermine army morale. He therefore arranged a meeting between Mauldin and Patton. Mauldin went to see Patton in March 1945 where he had to endure a long lecture on the dangers of producing "anti-officer cartoons". Mauldin responded by arguing that the soldiers had legitimate grievances that needed to be addressed.

Will Lang, a reporter with *Time*, heard about the meeting and questioned Mauldin about what happened. Mauldin replied, "I came out with my hide on. We parted friends, but I don't think we changed each other's mind." When the comment appeared in the magazine *George Patton* was furious and commented that if he came to see him again he would throw him in jail.

In 1945, Mauldin's cartoons on the Second World War won the Pulitzer Prize. The citation read: "for distinguished service as a cartoonist, as exemplified by the series entitled 'Up Front With Mauldin'. Mauldin, the youngest person to be awarded the prize, was now one of the best-known cartoonists in the United States. His book, *Bill Mauldin's Army*, was published in 1951.



"Just give me the aspirin.
I already got a Purple Heart."

Bill Mauldin,
Stars and Stripes (1944)

WHAT???? TO CALL THE BATTLE....

SUDDEN. It was so very sudden, that morning of December 16, 1944. The fog was closing in when the artillery suddenly erupted, when the big ugly panzers clanked forward, and the infantry fanned out from behind. Column upon column of armor and infantry.

The ground was hard and cold...and the fog, the overcast--all perfect for Adolf Hitler's great plan. Allied air cover was kaput, grounded.

An incredible 25 divisions had been scraped together for the last-gasp effort. Seventeen of them would attempt the opening punch through the paper-thin American front stretched along the hundred-mile, hilly, forested line in the Ardennes at the German-Belgian border. There in the fog and snow a line belonging to the U.S. VIII Corps consisted only of four divisions--two of them unseasoned as yet, the other two fully seasoned but worn and tired out by the race across Western Europe since the breakout from Normandy back in July.

All, in fact, were at the far, far end of a spaghetti-fragile supply network straining to keep up with the combat troops. And, now, in the wintry pre-Christmas weather, the exhausted Allies had paused for the moment at Germany's front door before knocking it down.

Hitler for months had anticipated this moment and had secretly assembled his forces, primed his factories, and exhorted his skeptical generals.

With the Belgian port of Antwerp and a concomitant split of Allied ranks as the ultimate goal, Hitler's strategy was to drive his armor through the center while using infantry above and below (north and south) the panzer-led thrust to protect its flanks. What Hitler got, at the expense of the surprised and thinly posted Americans on their line, was not exactly a clean penetrating arrowhead on his battle maps.

The line did bend--the cost to both sides was terrible--but the line did not break.

In Paris, the night of December 17, 1944, U.S. Army historian S.L.A. Marshall took a telephone call from an operations officer with General Dwight Eisenhower's Supreme Command. "There's a battle going on up front," said the officer.

Marshall already knew that, although the scope of the German offensive was not yet fully appreciated on the Allied side. For one thing, so many frontline units and their communications links had been wiped out that the rear echelon didn't yet know what was happening up front.

At any rate, historian Marshall was asked what to call the unfolding battle. It needed a name, even as it needed to be fought. He said, "Call it the Battle of the Ardennes."

His caller objected, "But there have been other battles of the Ardennes."

To which Marshall replied, "Wrong. In the past, much fighting in the Ardennes, but never a Battle of the Ardennes."

The caller then suggested the Ardennes Defensive, but Marshall said that wouldn't do, either. Suppose, he pointed out, that the Allies--the Americans, primarily--take the offensive before all is said and done, "and score big?" After all, despite Hitler's most fanatical encouragement to his men, they simply did not have the resources, the manpower, the energy (or, in

many cases, the will) to carry out his grand scheme. The Americans were just about certain to regroup, take the offensive, and score big, as Marshall said. "Then you will have the battle misnamed."

The caller at this point "tossed in the towel," and, officially speaking, "The Battle of Ardennes" it became.

Of course, as we know today by the sacrifice and heroics of thousands upon thousands of American troops (an incredible 70,000 killed, wounded, or missing), their allies, their supporting air forces--and many a Belgian citizen too--Nazi Germany's great offensive was turned back, with significant materiel and human cost to the enemy side as well. It would be mid-January 1945, though, before the situation was back to normal, more or less, and the Anglo-American forces could begin to roll forward again.

In the meantime, the issue of a name for the battle--one of history's greatest in physical scope and strategic outcome--had been decided. Even on that night of December 17, "Slam" Marshall could look at the maps and see "a great enemy bulge was developing and coming our way."

What he did not yet realize was that the battle's name would soon emerge, "simply because several million GIs so willed it," back in 1944, the Battle of the Bulge.

[Taken from Best Little Stories from World War II. It was first published in Military History magazine, December 1944]■

FRIENDSHIP WEEK IN LUXEMBOURG

Virgil Myers sent us a very length summary of the wonderful trip he took to Luxembourg, 2007, for Friendship Week.

We regret very much that space will not allow us to reprint it as it appears that this was a marvelous trip. We will Xerox it and send it to you in its entirety if you will send a self-addressed envelop which includes postage in the amount of 58 cents.

You call Virgil at 863-686-2121 or e-mail at virg212@yahoo.com. Virgil will be happy to provide you with complete information regarding dates, activities, etc.

Our last issue was hurriedly prepared because of the Reunion and we are trying desperately to make up for it by printing things we had left over.■

GOLDEN TRIANGLE CHAPTER ANNUAL TOAST

A wonderful idea...Harry Kirby, President of the Golden Triangle, had a wonderful idea....

On December 30th, he sent an e-mail reminder to some in his chapter and others regarding the Annual Toast to those who served in the Battle of the Bulge on January 1st at 3:00 p.m. EST.■

REFLECTIONS

By Joseph Zimmer
87th Infantry Division

[The following was presented by Joe Zimmer at the VBOB Historical Foundation Dinner, December 15, 2007.]

We meet once again at our Foundation Christmas Annual Meeting. May you not be bored with what I am saying, for it is some twenty plus years that I have been giving these reflections.

The next time you're tempted to take advice from a so-called expert, put that advice in perspective. Remember what some experts have said in the past.

- I think there's a world market for about five computers-- Thomas J. Watson, IBM Chairman, in 1943.
- With over 50 foreign cars already on sale here, the Japanese auto industry isn't likely to carve out a big slice of the U.S. market for itself. *Business Week*, in 1958.
- TV won't be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon tire of staring at a plywood box every night. Daryl F. Zanuck, head of 20th Century Fox in 1946.
- By 1980 all power (electric, atomic, solar) will likely be virtually costless. Henry Luce, founder and publisher of *TIME*, *LIFE*, and *FORTUNE* in 1956.
- 1930 will be a splendid employment year--U.S. Department of Labor in 1929.
- I don't need bodyguards--James Hoffa, President of the Teamsters Union in 1975.
- My imagination refuses to see any sort of submarine doing anything but suffocating its crew and foundering at sea--H. G. Wells, British writer and historian in 1902.

There is a line in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In the play, the fool says to King Lear; "too bad you grew old before you grew wise." As to me, the theory is, maybe I started to get wiser as I grew older.

Be wise in the use of time. The question of life is not how much time have we. The question is: what should we do with the time we have left.

Sixty plus years ago it was the fear of death or of the dark, the enemy, the warfare around us, that kept us awake at night. Today, it might be as a nation of 300 million, we have 300 million reasons to worry. This time of the year, we may, however, have the songs, carols, music of Christmas wafting on our TV, radios, tapes, cable television or what to comfort us briefly. Remember, someone said, "the sun never really sets on our million lawyers whether it is eight in the morning in London or midnight in Tokyo." Have hope and keep believing.

Isn't it good for us to be here today, we celebrated *Band of Brothers*, Tom Brokaw's *Greatest Generation*, with family and friends, reunited in common memory of the legendary Battle of the Bulge. Carrying out those long-held sacred American values of DUTY-HONOR-COUNTRY, esteemed throughout our 231 years as a nation, we met the test and emerged triumphantly during the worst winter of snow, freeze, wind and cold seen in Europe in 40 years. Twenty degrees below zero in a foxhole is no fun. Historian Stephen Ambrose wrote: "The GI's born between 1918 and 1927 saved Western Civilization. They had grown up in the Depression and the generation had paid a price.

It was a splendid generation who fought WWII, and then led us through the next 40 years of the Cold War against the Soviet Communist Regime. They brought more freedom to more people around the world than any other generation."

Grateful for the quality of our lives, let us assure that all the brave men who fought and died did not leave this earth in the snows of Belgium or Luxembourg the way a snowflake disappears, without a trace, without a single permanent imprint to mark their passing. Their indelible mark lies in the freedom now enjoyed by each of us and those two countries, Belgium and Luxembourg, represented here, the rest of Europe and other peoples seeking peace around the world.

Finally, for our tomorrows ahead, let us remember specifically, the brave men and women of our army, navy, air force, marines and coast guard in harms way, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and those also serving in over 130 countries around the globe, as sentinels of freedom and the values we stand for. May our future be bright and peace be found some day soon, through their gallant efforts and our support here at home.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



BOBHF Man of the Year Award: John D. Bowen, Historical Foundation VP presents citation to Neil Brown Thompson, Awardee



A SOLDIER REMEMBERS

[The following article was written by RAY HUCKABY, 35TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 134TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 2ND BATTALION, COMPANY G, and it was written for THE ADVERTISER-GLEAM.]

About December 18, some 400 of us GI's had crossed the channel from England as a double package of replacements. We traveled on up across France on a small train headed for the front lines to be used in infantry units to replace men killed, wounded, or captured.

We arrived at a small replacement depot at Neufchateau about the 23rd of December, a week after the Germans began their offensive. We rested there overnight and were loaded on trucks the following day and carried to Metz, where the 35th Infantry Division had been brought up from the Saar Basin.

This was part of a movement that General Patton had told General Eisenhower and General Bradley that he could move 48,000 men in 48 hours if they gave him the word. They did and he started the movement that day, and our 35th Division was one of the group.

We arrived at Metz on Christmas Eve. The whole 400 of us had been brought along under the charge of a 1st Lt Proof, who was a fine enlisted man's officer. The only person that I knew there was Joe Ben Levins. I had become acquainted with him in England.

He was from Albertville (AL). Our names were too far apart to land in the same company, so I was assigned to G Company and Joe Ben was in F Company. I was placed in T/Sgt Thomas P. Drumheller's platoon and he placed me in S/Sgt Lewis' squad.

At that time we had no platoon officers at all in the company, only a second lieutenant for Company Commander and one for executive officer.

On this Christmas Eve we knew that we had only a short time to get acquainted before we would move out to the front. Sgt Lewis told me that since I had three stripes and he had no assistant squad leader, he would assign me to that place.

As Sgt Lewis prepared the new ones of us for front line combat, we were told that we would not have duffel bags anymore. He told us to put on all the clothing that we could fit into. Every item that we could not wear we were to pitch out in the middle of the floor for someone else to fit into if they needed them.

From then on we could have nothing in our pockets or billfold that had any kind of home address. We would not be allowed to mention any town or landmark that we passed by for at least 14 days and we could not keep any type of journal, or diary as long as we were at war.

All letters that we wrote would be left unsealed and turned in to the mail clerk. Anything not allowed would be cut out and sent on by company headquarters.

I had been in service for 1-1/2 years by that time and had learned not to ask too many questions. But some of the replacements wanted to know whether there was some way a man could get out of this outfit.

Sgt Lewis, along with another squad leader, told them yes. Lewis told them that we would move out to the frontlines in the next 2 days and the 3 ways were: killed, wounded, or captured.

That sent cold chills down our spines followed by rapid heart

beats and a quick flush of feeling. Lewis added that if we didn't keep highly alert and watch what was going on, we would go one of those ways in a hurry.

A short while later T/Sgt Drumheller came in to make sure that all possible was done to prepare those of us that were new men. He noticed that I was still wearing my GI work shoes with tan canvas leggings from the camp in Texas. He told me that I would have to have something better than that because the weather was fast growing worse.



He sent downstairs to supply Sgt Casey and asked whether he had a pair of combat boots. Casey told him no, and said he could not get anymore. However, he did have 2 pairs of rubber boots in a small size that I might wear over my GI shoes. Drumheller brought a pair to me and they were a perfect fit. They buckled up on the outside up almost to my knees. That was what brought me through the Ardennes battle with no serious freezing to my feet.

That afternoon, Christmas Eve, we were told that we would not move out the next day, which was Christmas. The trucks in convoy numbers would not be ready until early morning on the 26th and we would have Christmas dinner there in Metz.

There was a jubilant feeling but also subdued because a 24-hour delay doesn't really mean much to condemned human beings, and that is about what front line infantry dogface soldiers are headed for when you move-out for that delay.

We had no light in the room so two scavengers left to see what they could find. In a short while they returned with 2 tall wine bottles of gasoline with an old discarded sock twisted down inside for a wick.

Those were fired up and gave enough light to see around the room even though they gave off tiny floaters in the air caused by gasoline burning from a wick. The following morning we all had black rings at our nostrils, but that made no difference because we were not going to any Christmas Party anyway.

December 25, 1944, was a pretty peaceful Christmas Day with final readiness checked to move out the next day.

None of us had any mittens or hoods for our field jackets in the zero weather, so we used razor blades to cut some wool blankets in 12 to 15 inch strips to use like shawls over our heads and around our necks. We loosened the head-band in our helmet liners to set them down over the wraps we had made.

Christmas Day went pretty well and everyone was checked to make sure that we had about 160 rounds of ammo and a hand grenade on each pack strap in front. They fed us all turkey and dressing, which was made by a good southern cook named Cross from up in Tennessee.

That afternoon we were told to bed down early and that we would move out at 4:00 the following morning after being awakened at 3:00 for our last hot meal until no one knew when.

We started to board 6x6 trucks and found out that someone higher up had gotten a wild idea that we might get strafed, so they ordered all the canvas removed from over the trucks. This left us open to the wind at a temperature of 5 degrees below.

As all GI's know, troops travel 50 minutes and take a 10 minute break to relieve themselves. By the end of the 50 minutes some men were so cold

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A SOLDIER REMEMBERS

(Continuation)

and stiff the driver and assistant driver had to help them off the truck beds.

Being a scrawny 120 lbs., I managed to get down by myself and spent the 20 minute break trotting around the truck trying to get warm. When we mounted up again, I picked the largest man on board to get down by so he would shield me from most of the cold wind.

By the time we had traveled several hours, some of the GI's were so cold and stiff they didn't even try to get down on the ground and a few just urinated right in their clothing which was at least 4 layers thick.

It is amazing how the human mind will ready out to the outer edges of imagination to try to find anything to survive with when you are on the outer edge of hypothermia for a long time as we were during the Battle of the Bulge.

We moved north to the vicinity of Warnach, which was about 10 miles south of Bastogne, Belgium, and stopped to rest overnight.

The following day we moved on foot northward to an area near Sainlez in preparation to move on northward as things became more stable along a line of the Bastogne-Arlon highway.

We no more than halted when we were ordered to move to positions a couple of kilometers south of the Village of Lutrebois, which was the key point for the 3rd Army as well as the German army to hold Bastogne or lose it on the south side.

We marched to a crossroad on the Bastogne-Arlon Highway, then turned eastward to a junction on the road from Lutrebois and Villers-la-Bonne Eau Harlange. We began to set up a skirmish line of foxholes along the east side of that road.

There was a slight valley that ran from Bastogne southward about 1000 yards wide and Lutrebois sat right in the bottom of it about 3 or 4 kilometers south of Bastogne. As we moved down the road a German "burp gun" fired a burst and it must have turned in our direction and sounded pretty loud. We all scattered like chickens in a hen house when a fox comes in. Sgt Lewis slipped and fell on the hard road on one knee that almost kept him down.

We all came together in a few minutes and continued on and moved off just below the roadway. They spaced us out in 2-man teams to start our foxholes close enough that no Germans could slip between them. Sgt Lewis told me to dig in with him because this was my first combat and he wanted to show me as well and as fast as he could.

As we were digging our little home away from home, we heard a German mortar shell come hissing in. Both of us ducked down together while the shell hit on top of the road bank slightly above us and exploded. Lewis told me to go up and see what had happened.

As I looked up over the top, our lieutenant was standing there looking down at one of the company runners who had been standing right in front of him when the shell landed. The runner's body had shielded the lieutenant completely.

That was the first person that I saw killed in combat. It shocked me deeply as I realized that this was truly "It."

H Company brought in a heavy water-cooled machine gun and set up about 40 feet to our left alongside of the heavy pine forest for a good field of fire.

Night soon fell. It became so dark in those pine tree lands that most everything stopped except an artillery shell once in a while. The wind would come up and snow would blow horizontal all

along during the night and the temperature gradually dropped a little lower each day and night.

When morning came next day--December 28, a ration patrol came up with K rations for each man to have one dinner ration, one supper ration and one breakfast ration. Water had been brought up the day before, but the water froze and burst the cans before it could be poured up. That was the last liquid that we saw until the morning of January 10. We continuously ate snow, which was building up all the time, little by little, with bursts of blizzard winds.

A little later on in the morning, we began to hear activity down in front to the east, and that began to build more as we saw Germans dart by the 2 light gaps in the trees about 100 yards from us. Sgt Lewis had his head up as a lookout. We had all covered our helmets with white handkerchiefs to keep from being seen against the snow. He mumbled that he was going to teach those Germans a lesson.

He set his aim on one gap and watched and I heard him mumble that one was going the wrong way. A few minutes later Lewis fired and I heard him mumble. "Well, I got him that time."

Sure enough in a couple of minutes we heard the Germans calling for a medic and things began to come alive as every gun had a finger placed on its trigger. In about 5 to 10 minutes the Germans blew several whistles and forward they came. But they had very little chance to overrun us with no tanks to help them in the heavy Ardennes Forest.

In less than 10 minutes their whistles began to sound and firing started to slack off. It was always the same--massive firing would suddenly stop, then a short burst would come and everything would stop. In about 5 minutes we'd hear them shouting for medics for their wounded buddies.

About 10 minutes later the Germans threw in a heavy mass of artillery, mortar, and rocket fire that shook our teeth nearly out just to let us know that we still hadn't won the battle. We had a few wounded to be evacuated from shell fire, but our casualties were very light and the remainder of the day was fairly quiet. The main thing was to bring up more small-arms ammo to get ready for the next head-on fight that would come sooner or later.

Just before dark 3 soldiers appeared out of nowhere while Sgt Lewis was down in our little "home" and I was on watch. Only one of the soldiers ever spoke and all 3 carried carbine rifles. I was new in combat and I didn't realize that this was strange. No one had warned us to look for infiltrators. One of them asked "Where is our machine gun?" and I said, "Right over there." They moved off to my left and I heard no more from them as dark was fast descending on the area. Sgt Lewis and I alternated up and down all night about every hour or so, but hypothermia was setting in. When that happens your muscles will quiver steadily so that even if you doze, your body will continue to shiver on and on.

You become afraid after awhile to let yourself go sound sleep for fear that your heart and metabolism will slow just a little bit more and you will never awaken. That happened to a few men. The only way that the shaking stops is for a fire-fight to come on. Then your heart pumps so much adrenaline that your body heats up enough to stop shaking.

The following morning things were stable for a while but bitter cold as we tried to open and eat our breakfast K ration. It wasn't more than hour or two until we heard the Germans start moving down in front of us.

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A SOLDIER REMEMBERS

(Continuation)

We started getting ready for more fire fights.

Shortly we heard German whistles start blowing and all hell broke loose along our solid skirmish line. The Germans soon lost out again and the firing lulled and then stopped.

Sgt Lewis and I started talking about the situation and realized that our heavy H Company machine gun had not opened up during that fire fight. After the Germans evacuated their wounded, everything got quiet and Sgt Lewis told me to ease over and see what had taken place.

I found out that both men at our machine gun were dead. One of them had been shot in the head, more like an assassination had taken place. I looked to see if one or the other had an Army-issue little Swiss watch. Neither of them had one but there was a set of GI binoculars that we sorely needed, because supplies like that for us were almost totally exhausted for front line troops. I returned to Sgt Lewis and we reasoned that the 3 soldiers we had seen the day before were more than likely German infiltrators.

By this time our own armies skirmish line had many empty fox holes and another regiment was moving in on our south flank, so they gave us orders to shift a little bit northward and close the gaps. Sgt Lewis could not stand because that injured knee was swelled to twice the normal size.

I went up the road bank behind and saw Sgt Drumheller to get a "Charlie Horse," as they called a team of medic stretcher bearers. The word "Charlie Horse" was used because the Germans had radio monitoring on us 24 hours a day and taps on our phone lines at every chance, as we also did to theirs.

When Sgt Lewis left that left me as leader of our 4 or 5-man squad.

We shifted a short distance and used the fox holes that were already there, but you usually had to improve them some. After eating our dinner K-ration, it was obvious that this night was going to be even colder than the night before.

Company headquarters back in the rear obtained a large stack of blankets, so they loaded them on a Jeep trailer and decided to risk a dash through the forest right up near us. But they happened to dump them and ran right into one of the fire lines running east and west that the Germans had clear observation on. The Jeep got away but the Germans waited for them to crowd around so they would get several each. They laid in a quick barrage that slaughtered a big group of Americans at one time.

Word was late moving up to us on the end of our skirmish line. I decided to follow the fox holes down and get extra blankets for us, but the evening light had started to dim and I was careful as I moved from hole to hole.

As I arrived at the blanket pile, it was pretty dim. I reach into the pile but I caught an almost frozen hand of a GI whose arms was sticking out. I realized that the pile was covered with dead and the blankets were blood soaked. I was so startled that I turned and returned as quickly as I could and told my buddy that we would have to make out as best we could.

We survived that night, but we had a new problem. That was bowel movement. We had solved the problem of urination with our K ration cans. We had so little water to pass that our cans would suffice. But with so little concentrated food we hadn't had a bowel movement for several days. Now the time had come.

I took off my helmet from the helmet liner and worked my clothes apart for access and proceeded, but the results was 6

"goat pills" about the size of marbles. That is how concentrated those K Rations were. They produce almost nothing in waste, when those and snow is all you have.

The soldier-to-soldier assaults slowed for a couple of days and staying alive in the cold was the main problem for us. But for the 3rd Battalion only a few hundred yards away, fighting was fierce for control of Luttrebois.

The 3rd Battalion strength had gotten so low that Headquarters attached our E Company which had been in reserve, to 3rd Battalion for enough strength to continue on.

Finally the company runners brought up a box of washed socks along with K Rations and ammo. We were able to carefully work clean socks on one foot at a time, and hope the firing didn't catch us with a shoe off.

During the next couple of days when the nights were so bitter cold, my buddy and I alternated staying awake during the night and I began to realize that this thing was bigger than me and myself both and that I needed some help if I was to survive.

I had a good Daddy and Mother and I was always close to my Daddy when I needed help or advice. I was 3,000 miles away from home, but I had gone to church all my life and I knew where to find help.

My Daddy always taught me to never pray a selfish prayer if I expected it to be answered. My Mother and Daddy had lost 2 grandfathers in the Civil War and my Daddy had served in the Army in World War I. My Mother had lost her only brother in World War I. I was their only son, with a sister serving in the Army Air Corps.

I said, "Lord spare my life and let me return home alive, no matter what condition, one arm, one leg, or whatever gone, because my Mother and Daddy don't need to suffer any more heartbreak or sorrow from war."

I knew that it takes 2 parts to make an argument, a contract, or a covenant to be true and good. I thought further and I said, "Lord, I shall walk straight and upright the very best that I possibly can and live among my fellow man in peace and quiet if you will grant me this request."

I prayed that over many times in the next couple of days, and a quiet calm came over me. That is not to say that I wasn't scared half to death most of the time, like all the rest of us on the line. But I was never too scared to do my duty as it was needed through the remainder of combat.

On December 31st higher headquarters decided that our two companies would attack the ridge to the East and at the same time 3rd Battalion would make a final attack on Luttrebois. This ridge had to be taken in order for 3rd Battalion to take and finally hold the village, which was the main point in stopping the Germans from finishing their massive surrounding of Bastogne itself on the South side.

Right after 1:00 p.m. on New Year's Day, we all started to move eastward through snow more than knee deep. The 3rd Battalion started into the west end of Luttrebois.

As G Company and F Company moved in a skirmish line across the slight valley below Luttrebois firing broke loose with everything that we and the Germans had. I was moving along the north end of our line but there was a slight bulge or rise on our end as we started up a gradual slope, unlike the south end of the line. There was a woodland extension downward at the south end but no bulge in the grade we were moving up.

About that time I heard a German heavy machine gun turn loose.

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I looked and saw many men dropping and most of the others were moving southward toward the woodlands for cover from the machine gun.

In a few minutes things began to quiet down, but things were wide open down in the village. As I came up over the rise, our company radio man, with a pack radio, came along-side of me almost within a hand's reach and asked if I had seen the lieutenant.

Just as I answered that I had not seen anybody like that, the machine gunner fired 5 or 6 rounds. The bullets went right up the radio man's body and carried him straight backward.

I dived downward in a split second. Just as I hit the deep snow, the machine gunner let loose with a short burst of no more than 2 or 3 round and I caught 2 of those in my big heavy pack that was sticking up above the snow.

As I lay there in knee deep snow, I remembered that to my right, bodies were scattered from there to the woods below. I had to decide in a hurry which was more valuable to me, my pack or my life, because there was no way that I could out-run that machine gunner with a large pack on my back.

It only took a few minutes, which seemed like an hour, to decide my life was more important. I never hooked my pack to my cartridge belt, so I would still have my belt with a canteen, first aid packet, binoculars, and entrenching tool (you wouldn't believe that much would hang on a 29-inch waist, but it did).

I loosened my pack on my right shoulder, cradled old "Betsy," my M-1 rifle, rolled over and extracted my left arm from the pack strap and came up with my feet already running to my right to the woods where the remainder of the two companies were crowded in. As I ran I expected the machine gun to let loose any second, but he never did so I presumed that he didn't think he could hit me as small as I was.

I tumbled forward into the edge of the woods. Men from both F and G Companies were crowded there together and nobody seemed in charge. I was afraid the Germans would come racing back and over-run us like cattle.

I looked around and saw a GI with corporal stripes on his overcoat sleeve. Most of us had removed all insignia and rank from our uniforms. I moved over and asked him what was going on. He told me that a machine gun was up a short distance to the left in that corner of the woods. I told him that we needed to do something quick or the Germans would counterattack and over-run us.

I asked if he had ammo and he answered yes. I told him that as many of us as were there, we could pin the gunner down and take him. He agreed. So 5 or 6 of us stood up and each one started firing at a slow, steady pace and moved toward the gun.

As we neared, the two Germans were sunk down as far as they could get. One man just beside me kicked the first man's helmet off. As the German looked up he said, "Don't shoot, Comrades" in German. About that time the GI fired right in his face and blew most of his face all away.

In that split second I stepped astride of the other German so no one would kill him. I thought of how many times I had prayed in the past few nights to God to spare my life and I could not harm this man.

I nudged his helmet off and motioned for him to rise as he begged for his life. I motioned for him to climb on up on the level ground and he did. I almost passed out when he stood up because of his size. He was a good 6 feet 2 inches, blonde-

headed and blue-eyed.

I motioned for him to place his hands behind his head so he did. I caught hold of the strap across the back of his overcoat. I pushed forward and we started moving along just inside the first row of trees. Every minute or so I would fire a round from my M-1 with the muzzle just about one foot extended in front of him and he would jump about a foot high and call out in German, "Don't shoot, Comrades."

About the third shot my M-1 rang out with that familiar sound of "whang" and I knew that I had fired the 8th round and my M-1 was empty. I was afraid not to immobilize him so I shoved forward on him and he went down like a dead tree.

In a flash that would make Matt Dillon ashamed, I drew a clip of ammo from my belt and slammed it in the receiver of old "Betsy" and I was ready to keep moving. It really scared the German, who must have thought that I was about to kill him, I motioned for him to get up and place his hands behind his head and we started moving again.

The remainder of both companies had about caught up and in a few minutes Sgt Drumheller came up and started some organizing until definite plans could be made.

We first spread out in a long perimeter until Lt Ploof of F Company could be located with their radioman. Our own radio man had been killed out on the hillside beside me. Until then battalion thought that we had to pull-back, so they gave orders to stay and hold that ridge at all costs.

Lt Ploof informed them that it might be impossible because we had nothing but M-1's and carbines to defend the ridge with. Lt Ploof also informed battalion that there was a German Tiger tank right down below us in the east end of Lutrebois. They told him that division was ready to call in 105mm and 155mm artillery if he would act as observer for them.

They said that they would send in one shell over us and he could tell artillery how far to adjust it one way or the other. They said that two batteries would be on stand-by all night, anytime, to fire three rounds for effect to protect us.

In the meantime we had started digging in--in a long oval perimeter because we were cut-off on all sides. About the 3rd or 4th shell they sent hit a tree-top right over company headquarters and a large piece of shrapnel hit Sgt Drumheller in the stomach.

He was badly wounded and we had no way to evacuate him until possibly the next day. He was evacuated the following day but he was so near frozen that he died at battalion aid.

All night long our artillery kept that Tiger tank in trouble but they never could get a direct hit on it.

A patrol with rations managed to get to us that night with enough K rations for each of us to have two instead of three for the following day. I was placed on the east side of the oval facing the Germans with another GI and we started digging as fast and as deep as we could before dark would catch us uncovered with bitter cold coming in fast.

Our gunners kept the German Tiger tank busy off and on all night. But it was pulled in close to a heavy stone wall and artillery could never get a direct hit on it. Just at daybreak some of the crew had been in a cellar by it, so they scrambled out and onto the tank as it began to pull away.

As it moved up below us it swung the big, long 88mm cannon around and we thought our day had come. But they didn't want us to fire at them as they came by below and disappeared to the east.

(Continued)

A SOLDIER REMEMBERS

(Continuation)

The morning was bitter cold and out on that ridge was much worse than it had been down in the valley, where we had the other ridge to our backs.

They told us that day (January 2) that Sgt Drumheller, who had been hit by shrapnel, begged for them to do something for him. Then he would say he knew that they could not help him, but that his wife and little girl back in Virginia were going to be lonely without him. That is the kind of situation that will pull your heart out and you never forget as long as you live. His remains lie sleeping in a grave at Hamms National Cemetery near Bastogne.

Things were fairly quiet the remainder of January 2 because it appeared the Germans were scared and we were glad of it, or vice-versa. There was a road just east of our perimeter that came up from Lutrebois and turned south just over the ridge that ran about 100 yards in front of us. The Germans had access to it from the village of Lutremange. That was how they had supplied Lutrebois and the ridge that we occupied, but we couldn't shut it off.

The Germans continued to hold out in the east end of Lutrebois, running a tank in and out every day, so all we could do was hold on to what we had.

The following day (January 3) opened pretty quiet and Lt Ploof decided to check each of his foxholes. As he moved along down low from hole to hole, a single shot came from a lookout the Germans had placed close in front of their line of foxholes. It sent a single bullet through one lung but did not puncture anything else. So they evacuated him shortly and saved his life. That left us with only our second lieutenant in charge of the whole perimeter.

January 6 opened up as a still morning but the cold was as cold as ever. Someone was showing a head in every foxhole and most were trying to open a breakfast K ration, along with eating some snow that had fallen through the night and was still clean. Most of the snow that we had to eat was in layers, with an inch or two of snow followed by a thin layer of burned shell powder and fine splinters of pine wood and bark from so many barrages.

I had started to open a can of eggs and bacon chips. My head was down and all at once I heard a crunch-crunch in the snow right in front of my face. As I looked up there was a German soldier looking down at me and he looked 9 feet tall. He was as astonished as I was. It scared me so bad that I dropped my tin of eggs, but he made no attempt to harm me. It seemed to alarm him as much as it did me.

After a few seconds which seemed more like minutes, he whirled around and leaned away and started to run. But a rifle fired to my right and the German fell forward away from me, shot through the head. I looked around and saw a buddy in the next foxhole drop his M-1 back down. He told me that he saw the German just before he arrived at my foxhole and knew that I had not seen him.

I waited about 10 minutes to make sure that no one was with him. I crawled over to his side to see if he had any kind of intelligence items on him, but he did not. He was a messenger though, because he had a broken bicycle chain in one of his overcoat pockets and his hands were oily.

On the morning of January 7 it was decided to see if we could push the Germans back to the road about 200 feet behind them. About as soon as we started, everything broke loose.

My buddy and I moved a little bit further than the rest and saw

two Germans in an outpost hole, who were preoccupied by the firing off to one side. My buddy had one hand grenade. He pulled the pin and threw it right in the hole on them and they could not get up in time so both of them were killed right there.

When everything settled we eased up to the hole. There was a telephone in the hole and a field wire leading away toward the road. About the time we finished examining things, the word was passed along to pull back to our original holes and stay put.

We stayed alert for an hour or so to make sure that the Germans would not counterattack but everything settled down.

The morning of January 8, the weather opened up a little bit more pleasant. It was about 4 or 5 below zero but the air was still and not so bitter with wind. My buddy, named Hayden, from one of the Rocky Mountain states, decided that we would try to make a chocolate pudding from a D ration bar that had been given to us the day before with our K rations.

I knew we would have to keep the fire low. I got out my small pocket knife that I had brought from home as well as my MCHS class ring of 1942 that I wore all through WWII and never took it off my hand. I started shaving up the D bar. They were made very hard to be eaten over an hour or so period of time. We had a handful of sugar lumps from several K rations and several hard tack crackers that we had also saved from rations.

I opened back the flap of our shelter half at one end of our home away from home and started a small fire with two of our many K ration bases that had accumulated over a period of days.

We had to use the other canteen cup to start melting snow for water to make up our chocolate pudding. Each of us worked one at a time while the other one kept watch for Germans. After about an hour we had melted snow, sugar lumps and chocolate bar and then began to crumble in the hard-tack crackers for the final mixing.

Mind you that neither one of us had washed our hands nor brushed our teeth since December 26 when we left Metz and we had had no warm food during all that time. I would have to say that this pudding was a gourmet dish fit for a king.

We got out our GI spoons and each one only took a small bit at a time, because we were both afraid that we might take more than our share. By that time it was showing sundown and time to get ready for another bitter night on that ridge.

The night was rather quiet except for a heavy shell here, there or yonder. I stayed up in the end of our foxhole most of the night because Hayden had come from a heavy coast artillery unit on the Atlantic coast and his hearing was very poor.

January 9 dawned stable but cloudy with no heat from the sun. Hayden told me that his feet were almost absent of any feeling and that they were swelled tight in his shoes.

He turned around down in the hole and lifted one foot into my lap and it was truly about frozen. A short time later one of our runners came up with K rations for the day to see whether we needed any ammo. I told him about Hayden's condition. He told us to hang on a little while and that he would report it to our lieutenant at the front line command post.

We never heard any word but I let Hayden lie down on his back most of the day with his feet elevated up in my lap as I sat on the step-up with my overcoat tail covering his feet. Later on that afternoon one of the runners at the front line command post came by to check on each foxhole. I told him that Hayden would have to be evacuated that evening or first thing the next morning but no one came back.

(Continued)

A SOLDIER REMEMBERS

(Continuation)

About 8:00 that night one of the runners came by, feeling his way along in pitch darkness, and told us that the Germans had pulled back all along the front and for us to pack up our gear. We were going to pull back down into the village of Luttrebois.

We followed orders but Hayden could hardly stand alone as we packed up to move. About 20 minutes or so later a small group eased along from foxhole to foxhole and whispered for us to fall in line and for each one of us to hold on to the pack of the man in front of us, because it was so dark that you could not see your hand in front of your face.

I told the lead man of our trouble and to go at a very slow pace. I then turned to Hayden's ear and told him to hold my gas mask strap no matter what happened and if he fell I would drag him like a sled in the snow.

We moved out at a very slow pace and Hayden hung on and managed to keep up with some stumbling along. It took about 20 minutes to arrive down in the center of Luttrebois and over to a large cellar.

It was the lower story of a home and barn combination that had had the upper story completely blown away. These type buildings were common in Europe as the lower part was for livestock and feed.

The front faced the southeast and GI's had covered the opening with shelter halves to keep out part of the cold. They had two 5-gallon buckets with some fire burning so that the temperature was just above the freezing point but it felt like the Waldorf Astoria to us. They also had two long-necked wine bottles with gasoline and an old sock twisted down to the bottom for a wick. This gave some light even though it was dim with smoke.

Several medics were there and they began to ask each one of us about our condition and I told them I was afraid Hayden would lose both of his feet unless they could perform a miracle.

They told us that there were several cans of water and that we could have some if we wished, but to be careful and drink it at a slow pace or it would come right back up. We received a little bit, because we had had no liquid water since December 27 and our bodies were badly dehydrated.

There was a lot of straw over along one side that their animals had slept in, and most of us lay down for some rest until daylight. At daylight on the morning of January 10, they began checking the ones like Hayden to see what they could do for them.

They had to cut the boots that he was wearing to get them off his feet. As they did his feet began to swell so much that it was hard to believe.

In a short while they radioed regiment to send an ambulance up, because at least four of them would have to be evacuated at once. When they arrived, they had to carry five of the 13 away in the ambulance. That only left eight of us who were front line GI's in the company.

I walked outside once or twice to look around and I decided to go upon the side of the ridge where I had rolled out of my pack on January 1 and look for my pack. It had all of my earthly belongings except for my pocket knife and my 1942 MCHS class ring.

As I moved along in the deep snow and neared the upper section, I began to see small mounds scattered all along. As I moved along I tried to guess about where I was when I rolled out of my pack straps to try to outrun that German machine gunner. I scraped away snow from one of the humps to a pack

below and gave it a hard pull, but on further looking it was on the back of a dead soldier. Then I realized that each of those mounds was the body of one of our company.

I vowed on the way down that I would never retrace my way over a battlefield that I fought on as long as I lived and I never did. I have had many chances to return to Europe, but I have never gone.

Of the group that remained in our makeshift shelter, we felt our hands and feet start tingling every time they began to get warm, because they had been so nearly frozen up on the ridge above.

About noon the mess sergeant came again with hot food in mermite cans for our dinner. He also brought several men that had just returned from the rear hospitals. Some had light flesh wounds that had healed. Some had been sick with more than 100 degree fevers. They looked so odd with clean clothing, haircuts and shaves while we looked like bums because we were so dirty and bedraggled.

I lay around most of the afternoon on the straw and slept because my body was finally getting warm and that brought on a condition for some real rest and sleep. Late in the afternoon the mess sergeant brought supper chow and a few new replacements who had never been on the front before. Some of them were truly shocked to see us and our conditions. That night things were quiet with only a door guard to rotate every hour or two through the night.

January 11 opened up with pretty good weather except for the bitter cold to contend with. After breakfast chow I and a man who was new to the front decided to look around the village. His name was James D. Detheridge and he hailed from Indiana.

As we walked around we found a German command car that didn't have any damage to it. We were afraid that it might be booby trapped. We sent word through our command post to the Ordnance Recovery Unit because we used many of their vehicles, as they used ours. They found that the fuel had been drained out, probably to pour in one of their tanks in order to save the tank.

Around January 14 the 134th regiment was attached to the 6th Armored Division to give them more rifle infantry troops. Most of their armored infantry had been destroyed and tanks have to have infantry troops when they stop and also to clear large areas of woodlands or any other inaccessible terrain. We rode the tops of tanks until again we got so cold that we could slide off the backs but could not climb off the sides.

That afternoon we were told as we dug in for the night to rest all we could because our mission, the following day would be to skirmish-line clear about 1,000 yards of woodlands that had been occupied by the Germans. After fighting more than two weeks in a 1,000-yard valley of mostly woodlands, I can tell you that I rested but slept very few naps that night.

The next morning we finished chow and boarded the tops of many tanks with a few men on each one to head out to our objective that day. We were held in reserve though until January 18. At first we set up a long line of defense positions along a highway southeast of Bourcy.

The order came on January 21 for us to attack southeast but the Germans had picked up stakes and fled toward home. Our worst problem in clearing the woodlands was the snow that was as much as three feet deep in some places.

We had to use first one group in lead and then change every once in a while to another group. By nightfall we had no access to a road closer than a mile away.

(Continued)

so "Weasels" were brought in to supply us. The "Weasel" was a wide track version of the Jeep that could travel over the snow. They really proved their worth there.

It had become a blessing to be attached to an armored unit because most of the travel was on tank tops even if we did nearly freeze some times. Our battalion moved about 5 miles to an area around Hoffet and Weiler in Luxembourg. We started up the next day and moved about 4 miles to a position about southeast of Basebellain.

On January 23 we were relieved by the 17th Airborne Division to the complete delight of us "dogface" infantrymen. Our 2nd Battalion reassembled with the 34rd Battalion at Hachiville for a short rest. We moved the next day about 6 or 7 miles to the east to relieve part of the 90th Division on the heights of the river that made the border between Germany and Luxembourg.

One tank slid on the icy roads and tumbled down a 10 foot embankment but all escaped. Our 2nd Battalion moved in around Grind-hausen with the regimental command post at Boxhorn.

The 1st Battalion had the last bloody assignment--to take the Town of Weiswampach across open snow-covered fields. They had to wait until after dark to enter the town, but cleaned it up during the night and that put the Germans back in their homeland where the Battle of the Bulge started.

The battle had cost our 134th Infantry Regiment 1,449 casualties in a little more than 32 days. For this our regiment won a presidential unit citation. We were relieved from attachment to the 6th Armored Division on January 31 with a fine commendation from Major General G. W. Grow.

In closing, I hope and I pray that our Lord will watch over and protect our troops now as bountifully and gracefully as he has seen fit to bless me in all of my 79 plus years. ■

3RD MARINE DIVISION, July 30-August 3, 2008, Iselin, New Jersey. Contact: Bill Krueger, 7622 Highland Street, Springfield, Virginia 22150-3931. Telephone: 703-451-3844.

80TH INFANTRY DIVISION, August 13-16, 2008, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Contact: Eugene O'Neil, 4718 Colonel Darnell Place, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772. Telephone: 301-627-1793.

501ST PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT, June 18-22, 2008, Albany, New York. Contact: Ann McKendry, 16 Overhill Road, Melville, New York 11747.

771ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION, May 1-4, 2008, Hunt Valley, Maryland. Contact: Chris Christofferson, 4020 - 36th Avenue Court, Moline, Illinois. Telephone: 309-762-37881.

PLAQUE IN FANZEL

Doug Andonian, the son of a 750th Tank Battalion tanker who served in the Bulge, sends us the wording for a plaque which will be displayed in the entry hall of the town hall in the Village of Fanzel. We show the English verbiage for you:

FRANZEL

EREZEE

December 1944 - January 1945

In tribute to the gallant soldiers of the
750th Tank Battalion, 1st US Army,
who fought, suffered and died
for the liberation of our villages during the
Battle of the Bulge

"He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again"

--William Shakespeare

December 2005



Members of the 55th Signal Combat Camera Co, active duty soldiers from Ft Meade and VBOB Parade Members.

VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE CERTIFICATE

Have you ordered Yours?

Over 6,500 certificates have been purchased by Battle of the Bulge Veterans. If you haven't received yours then you might want to consider ordering one to give to your grandchildren. They are generally most appreciative of your service now. They make excellent gifts for that buddy that you served with in the Bulge. The Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Assn. is proud to offer this 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 insignia depicted. You may want to add one of your original patches to the certificate, when you receive it. Please allow approximately 3-4 weeks for delivery, they are normally printed at the end of the month. 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 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 cost of the certificate is \$15.00 postpaid.**

We no longer have frames available but if you have an A. C. Moore Craft Store near you they sell a 16 X 20 Inch Floating Glass Frame which these certificates fits into nicely and are quite attractive. They also sell an 11 X 17 Inch frame with a slim plastic black border which can also be used. The 16 X 20 Inch frame normally sells for \$20.00 but is sometimes on sale for \$15.00.

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. I have enclosed a check for \$15.00 for the Certificate. Please include the following information that I would like on the certificate:

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Serial Number _____

Rank: _____ Unit: _____

Organization: usually Company, Battalion and/or Regiment, & Division

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I certify that I have received the Ardennes Credit

MAILING INFORMATION:

NAME: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

VBOB Member: ☐ Yes ☐ No (not a requirement). Make checks out to VBOB for \$15.00. Orders should be mailed to VBOB Certificate, PO Box 101418, Arlington, VA 22210-4418. Questions can be directed to John D. Bowen, 301-384-6533, Certificate Chairman. Or by e-mail to: johndbowen@earthlink.net
10/18/2008

CONTRIBUTIONS OF USO

[The following information was extracted from an article by Ron Cohen, TRNEWS, Summer, 2007.]

For more than 66 years the United Service Organizations (USO) has provided morale-boosting programs and services to enhance the quality of life for military personnel and their families around the world. It is a non-profit, charitable organization which relies on donations from private citizens and corporations.

Bob Hope was the most notable of those who provided entertainment for the troops. He was acknowledged by the U.S. Congress and designated "an honorary veteran for his humanitarian services to the U.S. Armed Services." The only person in history to date to receive this distinguished, well deserved honor. He performed his first show in Alaska in the summer of 1944 and his shows continued until 1990.



Remember?

During WWII there were 3,000 clubs where entertainers like Bing Crosby, Judy Garland, Lauren Bacall, Frank Sinatra, and many, many others. Of course, there were the Andrews Sisters: Maxine (the brunette), Patty (the blonde) and LaVerne (the redhead) with their ever-famous "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy."

USO...keep up the good work for all the troops who are serving today! ■

ALL VETERANS CAN NOW SALUTE

U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) announced passage by unanimous consent of his bill (S.1877) clarifying U.S. law to allow veterans and servicemen not in uniform to salute the flag.

Senator Inhofe said, "I look forward to seeing those who have served saluting proudly at baseball games, parades, and formal events. I believe this is an appropriate way to honor and recognize the 25 million Veterans in the United States who have served in the military and remain as role models to other citizens. Those who are currently serving or have served in the military have earned the right, and their recognition will be an inspiration to others." ■

2008 ST PATRICK'S PARADE

Sun, 16 March 2008

11 :30 AM

Washington DC Mall

VBOBers Invited to March

Get your marching shoes shined! Our National Organization and all Chapters have been invited to march in our Nation's St Patrick's Parade, down Constitution Avenue from 7th to 17th Streets NW, in our Nation's Capital.

We will gather outside the old Smithsonian Castle, on the Mall Side (Jefferson Drive). Look for the VBOB Flag and WWII vehicles and uniforms. Please wear an overseas cap and your medals or ribbons.

Vehicles will be available for the walking wounded, furnished by the Military Collectors Society, however as many of you as feel up to marching are asked to show the younger generations how it is done.

We especially would like to have marchers to show the crowd that you Bulge Veterans still have a lot of kick. The march is about one mile, down Constitution Avenue NW. Nothing like those five mile or twenty mile hikes that you so enjoyed. It is a particular pleasure to march in this parade because we salute « Those who Serve, » as you once did. Each year that we have marched we have had continuous applause from the crowd along the whole parade route, something no other unit other than our active duty troops has sustained. We have now won five trophies.

So get your marching shoes on, your caps and medals out, and if you can still get into your uniform, please wear it, as it really is a crowd pleaser.

Please contact our Secretary, John Bowen, at 301-384-6533, or johndbowen@earthlink.net for further information about marching and the parade and getting to the parade.



Hallelujah!

Outgoing VBOB President Stanley
Wojtusik addresses the gathering
at the WWII Memorial Dec. 15th, 2007

VBOB QUARTERMASTER ORDER FORM

FEBRUARY, 2008

Please ship the following items to:

Name: _____
(first) (last) (phone #-will call only if there is a problem)

Address: _____
(no.) (street) (city) (state) (zip)

Item Description	Price Each	Quantity	Total Price
VBOB Logo Patch - 3"	\$ 4.50		\$
VBOB Logo Patch - 4"	\$ 5.50		\$
VBOB Logo Decal - 4"	\$ 1.25		\$
VBOB Windshield Logo - 4"	\$ 1.25		\$
VBOB Logo Stickers - 1 1/4" (in quantities of 10)	10 for \$1.25		\$
Baseball Cap w/3" VBOB Logo Patch - Navy only	\$ 10.00		\$
Windbreaker w/4" VBOB Logo Patch - Navy only Please circle size (they run a little snug): S M L XL XXL XXXL (XXL and XXXL - see prices)	\$ 25.00 (S, M, L and XL) \$ 26.00 for XXL \$ 27.00 for XXXL		\$
VBOB Logo Lapel Pin - 1/2"	\$ 5.00		\$
Miniature VBOB Logo Medal w/Ribbon (pin on type)	\$ 8.50		\$
VBOB Logo Belt Buckle - Silver tone or Gold tone (Please circle choice)	\$ 16.00		\$
VBOB Logo Bolo Tie - Silver tone or Gold tone (Please circle choice)	\$ 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		\$
BACK IN STOCK 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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Please add \$1.00 to for all items shipped outside the USA.

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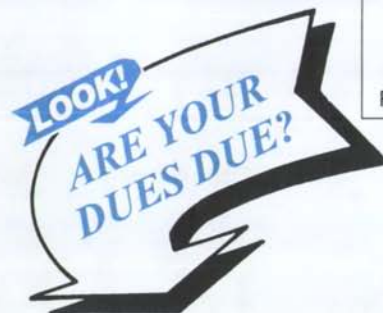
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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

All new members, please provide the following information:

Campaign(s) _____

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

Regiment _____ Battalion _____

Company _____ Other _____

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

Applicants Signature _____

RECRUITER (Optional)