

# The BULGE BUGLE

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

VOLUME XXXIII NUMBER 2

THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

MAY 2014

**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of**

## **THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL**

*See page 6.*



★ Please join us for the ★  
**33rd Annual Reunion**  
See information  
on pg. 16

### **Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc.**

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Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc.

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[www.battleofthebulge.org](http://www.battleofthebulge.org)  
or [www.vbob.org](http://www.vbob.org)





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Douglas C. Dillard (Col. Ret.) 82nd Airborne Division



As we clear the snow away and prepare for the belated Spring, all thoughts turn to the anticipated European Trip to Belgium and Luxembourg. Planning continues with both John Bowen and I attempting to put the pieces together. John and I met with the new Belgian Ambassador on 17 March to apprise him of the VBOB plan to visit Belgium and Luxembourg in December. We presented to him and the Assistant Attache, also present, a copy

of a proposed itinerary that included a request for air and land transportation to be furnished by the Belgian Government, as well as a request that the King meet the veterans at some point in the tour. Assistance from the Government of Luxembourg was requested at an earlier meeting. We have requested a second meeting with the Luxembourg Deputy to the Ambassador that is to be scheduled.

Although the itinerary has not been finalized, we know the Attache's office, with the blessing of the Ambassador, is communicating directly with the King's General regarding our plans and requests. It seems the King's General has taken on the direct responsibility for such coordination. In Belgium a task force was formed by members of the Belgian Government, The US Ambassador's staff, a writer for the *Stars and Stripes* and associated Belgian and Luxembourg officials and volunteers to aid in our tour efforts. Coordination has already been made with the villages and towns that are on the itinerary. As soon as the plan is finalized,

we will provide details to the membership. (Turn to page 26 for additional information.)

Another subject of interest, of course, is the annual reunion in Columbia, S.C. in August-September. Details are in this issue, starting on page 16. Also of interest is the Battle of the Bulge Historical Foundation's plan to sponsor an event at Fort Meade in May, date not confirmed as yet. This event will include a visit to the VBOB Museum and a wreath ceremony at the Memorial. The Belgian/Luxembourg Ambassadors will be invited. Details of this event are in the process of development.

Best regards to all,  
Doug Dillard

## WE NEED YOUR BULGE STORY!

### Here's How to Submit an Article for Publication in *The Bulge Bugle*:

Please submit all Veterans' Stories, Letters to the Editor, Chapter News, or other articles of interest in typewritten format, instead of handwritten, whenever possible.

You can mail typewritten articles to:

Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc.

PO Box 336

Blue Bell, PA 19422

Or by e-mail to: [ralph@battleofthebulge.org](mailto:ralph@battleofthebulge.org)

### QUESTIONS?

Please contact Ralph Bozorth, 484-351-8844,  
or by email: [ralph@battleofthebulge.org](mailto:ralph@battleofthebulge.org)

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### VBOB WEBSITE KUDOS

Dear Sir,

Thank you for posting my story "The Combat Engineer" on our website. My family and I were very pleased when we saw it on the website. Everything that you and your staff do to keep alive the time when we were young and soldiers is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,  
**Wilfrid R. Riley**  
188th Combat Engineers

### 284TH COMBAT ENGINEERS WEBSITE

My father was in the 284th Engineer Combat Battalion. Through the help of his mementos and by finding guys from the unit, I've put together a website to honor these men and the work that they did in the ETO. If you have served in this unit, are a family member, have a general interest or have information about the unit, please check out the website: [www.284thcombatengineers.com](http://www.284thcombatengineers.com).

Sincerely,  
**Mikel Shilling**  
401 Springside Dr  
Holly Springs, NC 27540  
814-203-0438

### BETTER THAN MICKEY MOUSE

To My Fellow VBOBs:

On December 16, 1999, the city of Orlando, Florida dedicated a memorial to the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge. This memorial was the result of a lot of hard work by many VBOBs in the area, especially a retired swim coach and high school teacher, the late Harry Miesel. Harry was a VBOB and the prime mover in getting this memorial complete. We thank Harry and his wife, Jeanette, for their efforts.

The memorial is a statue of a G.I. in combat gear. Around the base of the stature are the logos for all the divisions and other units that were at The Bulge. On the ground around the statue are bricks with names of some of the people who were there in December 1944 to January 1945.

Every year in December, the city of Orlando has a memorial service in honor of all veterans and many attend. At this exceptional ceremony speeches are given, high school bands play, and refreshments are served. I have annually attended these memorial services and unfortunately each year the crowd gets smaller, as so many are not with us any longer.

This letter is to inform you that the next time you or your family come to visit Mickey Mouse, Shamu, and/or Harry Potter, please take some time to visit this memorial. The memorial is at the Northeast corner of Lake Eola, an Orlando downtown park. Lake Eola is considered Orlando's "Central Park."

This will also give you an opportunity to get off the beaten path and possibly meet some of Orlando's residents not directly connected to our tourism industry. I am sure you will find them very courteous and generous.

Sincerely,  
**Arnold Cascarano, 75th ID**

### BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

There is an incident that I should have brought to your attention before:

On March 21, 2011, a memorial service was held here in Buckfield, ME for my husband, Earl F. Turner, who passed away on March 14, 2011. Edward Deverell, as president of VBOB Tri-State (VT-NH-ME) Chapter 17, made the trip all the way across part of NH and ME to attend. There is not an East-West direct highway, so it is a time-consuming journey! I did not realize that another VBOB member had informed Chapter 17 of Earl's demise.

I was grateful for Ed's presence, and I do believe it was "beyond the call of duty." And to make it more interesting, as Ed was about to head homeward, an unexpected snow started falling. So over two years later, my thanks still go out to Edward Deverell.

Sincerely,  
**Florence C. Turner, Associate**

PS. Believe that Edward Deverell is an associate member and that his father was a BOB vet.

### SEEKING PHONE INTERVIEWS WITH VETS

I am a graduate student in history and I am putting together a compilation of stories from WWII (an oral history.) One section of my thesis is focusing on survivors from the Battle of the Bulge. I would love to speak with them and hear their stories. Due to my limited funds, I mainly conduct phone interviews with WWII vets. If you are interested, please contact me.

Kind regards,  
**Victoria Hagerty**  
3754 N. Pioneer Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60634  
847-899-9300  
e-mail: [info@worldwartwostories.com](mailto:info@worldwartwostories.com)

### DID ANYONE KNOW EDWARD L. PANGBORN?

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who knew my husband's brother, Edward L. Pangborn, H&S Company, 1270th Combat Engineer Battalion. He reached Europe on November 2, 1944 and was released from the service on August 21, 1945 at Fort Sheridan, IL. Thank you.

**Beverly Pangborn, Associate**  
1660 Lakeside Dr PMB 362  
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### OUR FATHER, CARL LAVIN

Your organization and newsletter played a vital role for our father. His service in World War II and in the Battle of the Bulge shaped his view of the world and added to his determination to serve his community. Dad died in January at age 89, and his memory will always be a comfort to his friends and family. Dad did not often tell war stories, but we treasure his letters home from Europe. His later years were enhanced by his memories of his war service and the newsletters from the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge. He was a proud member. [Ed. Note: Read one of his letters on page 13.]

**Carl Lavin, Jr.**

# THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL WWII MEMORIAL, WASHINGTON, D.C.



In December 2013, during our 69th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of the Bulge, we placed a VBOB wreath at the Atlantic Victory Pavilion at the Memorial.

How time flies! Ten years ago, during our annual reunion, we attended the dedication of the National WWII Memorial.

The Memorial honors the 16 million who served in the armed forces of the U.S. during World War II, the more than 400,000 who died, and the 40 million who supported the war effort from home. Symbolic of the defining event of the 20th century, the Memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people to the common defense of the nation and to the broader causes of peace and freedom from tyranny throughout the world. It will inspire future generations of Americans, deepening their appreciation of what the World War II generation accomplished in securing freedom and democracy. Above all, the Memorial stands as an important symbol of American national unity, a timeless reminder of the moral strength and awesome power that can flow when a free people are at once united and bonded together in a common and just cause.

## THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

Since its dedication in 2004, more than 40 million people have visited the Memorial. Unfortunately, we continue to lose our World War II veterans at a significant rate of 600 a day. Of the more than 16 million Americans who served during World War II, just over one million are still with us today.

On May 24, 2014, hundreds of World

War II veterans will once again gather at the Memorial to celebrate its 10th anniversary in what will be, most likely, the last large gathering of our World War II veterans at their Memorial. The National World War II Memorial



Engaving at the Memorial, looking towards the Lincoln Memorial in the background.



A bas-relief sculpture panel depicting The Battle of the Bulge, created by sculptor Ray Kaskey, is set into the balustrade of the North (Atlantic Front) ceremonial entrance wall at the National World War II Memorial.

10th Anniversary Commemoration, like the Memorial itself, will honor those who served and pay tribute to the spirit of unity and shared purpose, which defined the character of our country during the war years.

For more information on the 10th Anniversary event, go to: [www.wwiimemorialfriends.org/10th-anniversary-commemoration](http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org/10th-anniversary-commemoration)

## THE WORLD WAR II REGISTRY

The memory of America's World War II generation is preserved within the physical Memorial and also through the World War II Registry, a listing of Americans who contributed to the war effort in uniform and on the home front. Names in the registry are forever linked to the memorial's bronze and granite representations of their sacrifice and achievement.

The WWII Registry combines four distinct databases that can be searched for names of those whose service and sacrifice helped win the Second World War. The names of the approximate 19,000 who were killed during the Battle of the Bulge, which lasted for 40 days, are listed in the Registry.

The online "Registry of Remembrance," is a voluntary public acknowledgment of any US citizen who helped to win the war. Anyone who served our country during World War II is entitled to have their name (and photo if desired) displayed. Of the 56 million eligible to be enrolled in the Registry, only 1.4 million are. Are you, or your loved one, on it? It is up to you, or a family member, to get the ball rolling.

Visit the web site at: [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com), then click on: "World War II Registry," and you will be instructed on how to enter an honoree into the Registry of Remembrance.



# ANTWERP X AND THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

by Forest E. Brown, 83 ID, 329 INF, 125 AAA



Upon reaching the outskirts of Paris, the Americans were stopped. The Free French by General de Gaulle were to be the first to enter Paris. The Germans had left Paris without any organized resistance. They left very little damage to the city. However, there were some snipers still present August 25, 1944. The British went forward to liberate Brussels, Belgium.

We went east to Nylan, Belgium and to Antwerp, Belgium. Getting supplies to the troops became more difficult. Trucks were bringing supplies over land. The truck convoys were called "The Red Ball Express." The roads were not good in Europe, and rain often made the roads very muddy. Also, the distance became so long, we needed another port to receive supplies. Antwerp became a very important supply route. The British fought to secure the port and we were to set up Artillery (the 125th) outside Antwerp to defend it from the VI Buzz bombs that the Germans sent. The operation was known as "Antwerp X." It was a highly secret mission. The US Government did not allow any information out about this mission until 50 years ago, after WWII was over. During this time (September 1944) a Buzz Bomb Rocket hit a recreation theater in Antwerp. The children were watching a western movie that afternoon, and 500 died. Russ Elliot and I helped carry many of the children out. The success rate for destroying the VI rockets was 90%. But the V2 Rockets were so fast that radar couldn't pick them up, and there was no defense.

World War II continued in 1944 and for a rest after Antwerp X, we were sent to the Bulge area located in Ardennes, Belgium. Winter was on the way. It was said that this was the coldest winter on record for many years. The snow was so deep we could hardly walk. Many of the men had frozen feet and needed amputations. My left foot was frozen, and I was told gangrene would set in if not removed. I kept asking for one more day. By the morning of the next day, circulation began to reappear. We were to have winter clothing and boots, but for some reason the boots were for summer and not waterproof, and no winter clothing was given.

Our unit was started at St. Vith. We were assigned to keep the Germans from coming to the crossroads from Houffalize and prevent the Germans from going further west. Thankfully, we had raincoats. We would sleep in our wet clothes, and most of the time in an army blanket. During this time we could not put up a tent, as there wasn't time. We were always moving and most nights we spent in foxholes in the snow. When we had a chance, we would get into an old building.

The Ardennes forest was so dense they had to have tanks to knock down the trees to get the large artillery through. The large artillery was set up behind the line and would shoot over the line to the Germans. A B-17 crashed near us while on a bombing run. We picked up several men. All were deceased. One was a general, but at the time we didn't know that. In combat no stars or badges were worn. If taken prisoner, you didn't want the Germans to know your rank. Later the story was written up in The Stars and Stripes.

The weather stayed bad for days or weeks—I don't remember

which. But I do remember all the frozen feet and sleeping in the snow. Christmas Day 1944, a German jet was strafing us. It was a brand new model (ME262) jet. The attack caused multiple injuries and fatalities to our men. In the Battle of the Bulge, there were 600,000 Americans and 650,000 Germans. It was the largest land battle of WWII. Three American armies and six Corps, 81,000 GI wounded, 19,000 killed. When the weather finally permitted planes to fly, the 101st in Bastogne had supplies dropped by air.

General Patton's 3rd Army and tanks were received with much joy, and the battle began in our favor. General Patton was held up from arriving sooner because of the weather and no gas for his tanks. My unit, the 83rd Infantry Div. 329th Infantry, was sent toward the East (Rhine River), crossing it into Czechoslovakia. The Germans knew the Americans were coming and near the town of Pilsen, the Concentration Camp of Nordhausen was liberated. The Germans guards left or wore civilian clothes so as not to be known as guards. The prisoners in the camp were not able to move, because most were too weak or too sick. Approximately 1/3 of them survived. Near the end of the war was the discovery of the Dachau Concentration Camp. Pilsen was the capital of Czechoslovakia and the prisoners were used by the Germans as slave labor. Where the underground VI Missile flying bomb assembly plant was located, the underground factory had multiple miles of tunnels. When the camps were freed, the Occupational Army took the refugees to another camp to be clothed and fed until they were healthy and able to make decisions for themselves. It was found if they were left alone they would eat and eat. Not mentally able to make a decision until the body became healthy.

After leaving this area, we went on to the Elbe River, going through the Hurtgen Forest. The combat lasted about a week to 10 days. Upon reaching the Elbe River (March 13 or 14, 1945) the crossing was made on a pontoon bridge and small boats brought by the engineers. The engineers were great craftsmen. We were about 35 miles from Berlin. We waited for the Russians, who came on April 13, 1945. The wait was necessary, for President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill had promised Stalin (the Russian Ruler) that the Russians could take Berlin. The Germans surrendered May 8, 1945.

## 5TH BELGIAN BATTALION OF FUSILIERS (CO COLONEL C N VERIER)

A few days after the liberation of Belgium in the Tresignies Barracks of Charleroi on 7 October 1944, it was learned that all the men in the barracks were war volunteers. The enlistment had taken place in Mons on 23 September 1944 after the call of the Belgian government arrived from London. The 5th Belgian Fusiliers Battalion was the first unit of the Belgian Army formed on the national territory since 1940. The Tresignies Barracks had been occupied by the German Army from May 1940 until the liberation in the earliest days of September 1944. Most of the officers, NCOs and men were ex-Resistance fighters originating from the province of Hainaut. Some Belgian instructors landing in Normandy with the Allies completed the number of officers.

Rapid but intensive training was conducted in the Tresignies Barracks and on the fields around the coal mines around the town of Charleroi until 13 December 1944, date of the *(Continued)*

transfer of the battalion to the 1st US Army. On same day the battalion was sent to the Ardennes in Spa, Verviers, Malmédy, areas, which became the theatre of the Battle of the Bulge (North sector) three days later. From the 16 December 1944 the 5th Belgian Battalion of Fusiliers became mixed in the Allied operations against the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge.

The unit operated in the areas of Verviers, Remouchamps, Stavelot and Malmédy and was included in the patrols along the front line, protecting the American anti-tank posts rapidly deployed. While passing Malmédy (Baugnez) on 17 December, a few minutes before the 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion convoy, a platoon of the 5th Belgian Fusiliers escaped the massacre of the American convoy by Kampfgruppe Peiper. The Belgian platoon was in charge of the protection of the installation and convoys of the 200th US Quartermaster Company supplying gas for the tanks on the front line. The same platoon escaped again from the Germans around 0300 hours on 22 December in the forest east of Saint-Hubert, and a section of this platoon reached Bastogne with a small gasoline convoy for the 101st Airborne Division.

This section then succeeded in avoiding the German encircling through the road to Neufchâteau in the dark of the night. A Company of the 5th Belgian Fusiliers patrolling along the Vesdre railway captured German paratroops. Germans wearing American uniforms are also captured by the 5th Belgian Fusiliers between Remouchamps and Stoumont when the Kampfgruppe Peiper arrived in this area. On several occasions during the first days of the Battle of the Bulge the 5th Belgian Fusiliers operated on the first line before being relieved by American units. This happened namely between Stavelot and Malmédy during the evacuation of the gasoline dumps under enemy fire, also between Remouchamps and Stoumont when Peiper broke through, and in Cour and Andrimont where two sections of Fusiliers set up a defensive post when the enemy entered La Gleize. In Stavelot late in the morning of 18 December a platoon of 5th Fusiliers set fire to the first gasoline dumps along with soldiers of the 526th Armored Infantry Battalion and 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion on the old road to Francorchamps when Kampfgruppe Peiper penetrated Stavelot.

There are then lengthy periods of guard duty and patrols in the cold and snow; these are hard times for the unit until 25 January 1945. There will be dead, wounded and sick. After a short rest period and reorganization in the Verviers, Pepiniste and Aubel areas, the 5th Belgian Battalion of Fusiliers penetrate into Germany in the first days of March 1945, cross the Rhine on a pontoon bridge at Königswinter between Bonn and Remagen at the end of March. The unit was in charge of protecting the communications lines of the 1st US Army in its rush to the East.

The Belgian Fusiliers are primarily used for security along a portion of the south flank of the Ruhr pocket where a German army is trapped. The 5th Fusiliers maintain their progression with the 1st US Army taking many German prisoners. When the war in Europe ended 8 May 1945, the Belgians were spread along the Fulda and Werra rivers southeast of Kassel where the Russians have arrived on the east bank of the Werra river. The 5th Belgian Battalion of Fusiliers returned to Belgium at the end of June 1945, and the unit demobilized on 30 November 1945. Most of the members return to civilian life.

Source: [www.WWII-eto.com/forum/index.php?topic=1812.0](http://www.WWII-eto.com/forum/index.php?topic=1812.0)

## THE DAY WAS ABOUT THE 20TH OF DECEMBER 1944

by Thomas Chambers, 9th AD, Trains HQ



The day began in Saeul, Luxembourg with a bustle in all directions. It was confirmed that the Germans had launched a major attack into what had been until the 16th of December a quiet sector in the line. It was still not known just what the German forces objectives might be. Reports had come to us from Division Headquarters that the situation was “fluid.” That could be described as the understatement of the year. All personnel and all equipment were on a

high alert. Everyone was prepared to move on a moment's notice.

In the course of the day in question I, with two other Recon Jeep crews, had to provided cover for the Trains Commander, Colonel Roberts from our village of Saeul, Luxembourg to Luxembourg City to General Omar Bradley's Headquarters. Ordinarily, Colonel Roberts carried a 45 caliber automatic pistol on his belt. On this morning he had supplemented this with a 30 caliber carbine which was slung muzzle down from his shoulder. So far, so good.

Just before setting out to Luxembourg City, Colonel Roberts call all of the Jeep Crews together and said, “Men, there has been a report of German paratroopers jumping behind our lines. I want you to keep on the lookout for paratroopers and keep me covered.” My reaction to the command “I want you ..... to keep me covered” drew this emotional response from down deep in my gut, ‘Colonel Roberts, if paratrooper start falling all around, I just hope that you are checked out and that damn carbine. I will probably be busy trying to save my own skin and I think that you should do the same.’ Fortunately, we encountered no paratroopers that day.

The meeting in Luxembourg City, more specifically, General Bradley's Headquarters, lasted until about 3:30 p.m. and we headed north once again with our destination being Mersch, just a little over 12 miles. We found the road from Luxembourg City to Mersch to be choked with tanks and infantry on foot on either shoulder of the road. The tank column was moving at about 25 miles per hour and the infantry columns were doing the standard 2-1/2 miles per hour.

Colonel Roberts decided the tank column was too slow, so he ordered us to jump around the tanks and to move on to Mersch at top speed. Easier ordered than done. With nightfall approaching very rapidly, it was difficult to see the dough boys on the side of the road — there was a great danger of hitting one of them. So, with the tanks in the middle of the road, and only five or six feet the to dough's columns, we hugged in next to the moving tank's as closely as we dared. We were moving along within three or four inches of the tanks moving tracks. A little bobble on either of our parts would have resulted in a crushed Jeep and crew. We'd managed to pass two tanks and after about another five minutes of trying on the third, we gave up for fear of hitting a man on foot. All the while, snow flurries were coming down and this added to the problem of limited visibility.

We reached Division Headquarter in Mersch and bedded down in the Grand Hotel's dining room. It consisted of a single room that was about 15 feet wide by maybe 18 feet long. Tables and chairs had been removed, so there was *(Continued on page 10)*





# Members: In Memoriam

Please notify us when you hear that any member of VBOB has recently passed away, so that we may honor them in a future issue of *The Bulge Bugle*. Also, kindly notify us of any errors or omissions.

Please send notices by mail to:

VBOB, Inc.

PO Box 27430

Philadelphia, PA 19118-0430

by email to: [tracey@battleofthebulge.org](mailto:tracey@battleofthebulge.org)

by phone to: 703-528-4058

**We have received word, as of March 31, 2014, that these members of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc. have also recently passed away:**

Bonney, Joseph L.	28 InfD	Huckabee, DeWitt T.	81 AbnD
Bridges, Walter G.	106 InfD	Julson, Robert C.	106 InfD
Brown, Forest E.	83 InfD	Lavin, Carl H.	84 InfD
Buell, William H.	4 InfD	Lawrence, Troy O.	78 InfD
Caltabiano, Frank A.	5 InfD	Mayer, John E.	314 InfD
Carpenter, Earl	94 InfD	Mercado, Armando	26 InfD
Carrico, Elmer L.	82 AbnD	Moss, Samuel I.	101 AbnD
Cistolo, Felix J.	80 InfD	Mullins, Jack	752 FA Bn
Colegrove, Marjorie E.	Associate	Parker, Robert	87 InfD
Cruise, John T.	6 ArmdD	Planas, Emanuel	84 InfD
Edwards, Carlton L.	78 InfD	Reinauer, Fred R.	771 FA Bn
Flynn, Frank M.	1 InfD	Rowe, Gregory L.	87 InfD
Fry, Arthur D.	11 ArmdD	Sellers, Norman G.	84 InfD
Gittemeier, Linus J.	2 InfD	Sendker, Francis T.	34 Sig Light Const Bn
Goodwin, Nancy P.	Navy Waves	Stegmeier, James L.	106 InfD
Gordon, Henry N.	285 Engr Cmbt Bn	Stellmacher, Floyd A.	9 ArmdD
Goss, Lloyd L.	148 Ord Bn	Wibby, James E.	104 InfD
Hofstein, Arthur I.	10 ArmdD		

**20TH OF DECEMBER 1944** (Continued from pg. 8)

abundance space on the floor for the group that night. There were about seven men from the Recon Platoon plus Colonel Roberts' driver. The floor was hard, but so were we. The hotel still had electricity and the room was equipped with blackout curtains, so we had light to do the many necessary things that a soldier has to do before he could call his day complete. When these were finished, perhaps at about 8:30 p.m., lights went out and we prepared for sleep in a warm, dry and comfortable building.

Shortly thereafter, a tremendous American cannon a short distance from the hotel began a program of interdiction fire. It was not laying down a barrage, but just making life hell like at some distant point for the Germans. So as to not reveal its position from its muzzle flashes coming too often in the night sky, it was fired every twenty or twenty five minutes. My estimation is that it was about a 240 mm howitzer or rifle. It went off with a tremendous boom. So great that it shook the frame and stucco structure of the Grand Hotel. The windows in the dining room rattled and I was afraid they would break. Every time there was another shot, I would roll over and curse. Then it suddenly occurred to me that this giant cannon somewhere to my rear was the only thing between me and the Germans out to the front. So, the next time it boomed, instead of cursing the cannoneers, I blessed them. Such is life, your perspective changes along with your changed understanding of the facts.

The following morning, we went to check our vehicles and found them filled with snow. As we proceeded to clean them out and get ready to move again, a column of infantry came walking into town. This was part of the force that caused us so much consternation for fear of hitting one of them as we tried to pass the tanks. At some point in the night this column had bivouacked in barns or any other place of shelter with some of them laying down in the snow in an attempt to get some sleep. For those men it was an exhausting night.

The next morning, this column came into the town in which we were bivouacked in the Grand Hotel. It was led by a 2nd Lieutenant, was barely dragging one exhausted foot in front of the other. But, even under these very trying circumstances a bit of G.I. humor cropped out. The 2nd Lieutenant was trying to read a map as he was leading the column and was turning the map this way and that to get it oriented. Suddenly, a G.I. just a step or so behind him said, "Don't feel bad, Lieutenant, if you don't know where we are, that's alright. Maybe the Germans don't know where we are either." Cold comfort in more ways than one.

Later, at my Freshman Year at Center College, one of my classmates was one of those men on that march. He acknowledged that there was no sleep for him that night, just keeping warm was the great task. That was impossible lying in the snow.

## ASSENOIS, BELGIUM, DECEMBER 1944

by Leo Barron, Associate

For the citizens of Assenois, the arrival of the German forces was the worst Christmas present imaginable. Assenois had little appreciable military value. It did not sit atop high ground, nor was it a highway hub like its neighbor to the north, the town of Bastogne. Its location was astride a road that linked Bastogne with the town of Remichampagne, which was south of Assenois. Other than that, it was meaningless.



One of the matriarchs of Assenois remembered those dark days. Her name was Madame Denyse de Coune, and she owned a chateau along the northern outskirts of town. With several arched gables and thick stone walls, the great house looked more like a quaint castle. Since it was a large building, it had several cellars, and as a result, when the fighting drew closer to Assenois, many area families sought refuge under its stone walls. The shelling had started on Wednesday evening, the 20th of December, and for the next twenty-four hours, the battle saw-sawed back and forth, but by the morning of the 22nd, the Germans were in control of Assenois and had pushed westward. For all the fighting, the cost was to the town was minor: only one civilian lay dead.

On the 23rd, a German feldwebel (sergeant) from Vienna had approached the matriarch and asked her if they could set up an office within the chateau. Thirty minutes later, he and his staff section were gone, but another unit replaced them. As it turned out, the staff of the 39th Fusilier Regiment also wanted a comfortable locale for their headquarters. With its dense walls and subterranean vaults, the German volksgrenadiers had decided that it was a great spot to command and control their regiment. Oberstleutnant Walter Kaufmann, the commander of the 39th Fusilier Regiment, and a Oberleutnant Specht, the commander of its 1st Battalion, agreed, and they moved in once the phone lines and radio transmitters were active.

Unbeknownst to the Madame de Coune, the 39th Fusiliers were part of a much larger operation. For several days, the 39th, together with the rest of its division, the 26th Volksgrenadier, had been locked in combat with the 101st Airborne Division, (Continued)

## ASSENOIS, BELGIUM *(Continued)*

trapped inside Bastogne. The Germans needed to capture the town to dissipate the traffic jams, which were clogging up their supply lines. So far, the 101st successfully had resisted every German attempt to seize the vital road net. More important, the Germans were running out of time because Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third Army was pushing its way north towards Bastogne. In fact, Assenois was one of the towns that were between Patton and Bastogne.

By the 24th, the Germans were everywhere inside the chateau, as if they had been living there for years. Even worse, the growing presence of German vehicles and troops outside the house made it a tempting target for the American P-47 Thunderbolts, flying above them like birds of prey. As evidence, one group of fighter-bombers strafed the building on Christmas Eve day, but thankfully, the sturdy walls were too much for the bullets, which bounced harmlessly off them like rain drops. Walls, though, would be useless against bombs.

That night, while everyone in the Christian world celebrated Christmas Eve, the German soldiers stole some of the chickens from the de Coune farm for their own Christmas feast. Another landser (German term for soldier), out of kindness, brought American biscuits to feed the hungry children. No doubt, the soldier had found them, since the German soldiers had little food from their own supply chain. To keep up morale, the refugees then sang Christmas carols to each other while the parents regaled their children with stories of the Comtesse de Segur, who was a Russian born, French novelist.

The following Christmas morning started out well. Mrs. Augustus de Coune baked some bread and served it with roasted chicken. As the morning dragged on, more and more refugees arrived, and they were not the only ones seeking shelter. By midday, more German soldiers showed up, demanding sanctuary from the American bombs and artillery. Hearing this, Madame Denyse de Coune shook her head in dismay because she knew the corridors were overcrowded. Someone had to go, and the German soldiers ejected her and the rest of the civilians.

Like Babylonian exiles, they grabbed whatever they could carry. Most only brought a blanket and some bread, and they left for nearby sand dunes, which had been a hideout for the resistance during the long German occupation. When they arrived, they discovered that the shelters were gone. For the next thirty hours, the refugees would be homeless. At least, thought Madame de Coune, the frozen pine trees looked like Christmas trees. That night, they slept under the stars like the shepherds outside of Bethlehem. Nearby, the Germans had set up an artillery battery, and it was firing at the American forces in Bastogne. The paratroopers replied with their own counter battery, and the rounds from the American artillery fell dangerously close to the refugees.

Meanwhile, the tankers and infantrymen of Combat Command Reserve of the 4th Armored Division prepared themselves for combat. They had been fighting almost non-stop since the 22nd of December, and now they were closing in on the prize – the town of Bastogne. While Madame de Coune and the other banished families huddled in the freezing cold, Lieutenant Colonel Creighton W. Abrams, the commander of the 37th Tank Battalion, was leading a combined-arms task force. Several hours earlier, Abrams' men had captured the town of Remoiville, which was three kilometers south of Assenois.

The following morning, the 26th of December, Abrams began

the final drive into Bastogne. First, they overran a German panzer-grenadier company in Remichampagne. By noon, Abrams' forces were just to the south of Clochimont. Only the town of Assenois was between his tankers and the beleaguered paratroopers in Bastogne. Alas, most of the inhabitants of the small village were recent arrivals from the 39th Fusilier Regiment, ensuring that the ride through Assenois would be fraught with danger.

Outside of the town, Madame de Coune watched the beginning of Abrams' historic assault. In preparation for the final push, P-47 Thunderbolts swept over the town, plastering it with napalm while showering the German defenders with lead from their eight, blazing .50 caliber machine guns. Explosions rocked the forest where the refugees were hiding, causing the trees to tremble and shed their snowy blankets.

After the Thunderbolts, the twenty-six exiles next watched a procession of C-47 transport planes pass over them. Then, like manna from heaven, hundreds of parachutes began to appear, as aircraft crews delivered supplies to the surrounded paratroopers. Luckily for the families, which included seventeen children, many of the para-packs were stuffed with biscuits, cheese, and best of all, chocolate. For the hungry refugees, the food lifted their morale.

The feast did not last long. Towards the end of the afternoon, Madame de Coune watched as a column of American tanks and halftracks lined up south of Assenois. Then, with guns blazing, the column snaked its way through the narrow village streets and broke through to the other side. She described the vehicles as "spitting fire." Next, she saw the American forces push the German defenders eastward and into her neighbors' homes. Now, it was the Americans' turn to surround the Germans. Some fought, but most of them eventually surrendered.

By early evening, Madame de Coune reckoned the fighting was over, and she led the exiled families back into Assenois where they discovered that her home had not escaped the fighting unscathed. Four artillery shells had penetrated the roof, leaving gaping holes for the rain and snow, and the same shells shattered many of the windows. Despite this hardship, the families of Assenois were once again free. The tankers and infantrymen of the 4th Armored Division had liberated them.

## MY FIRST DAY OF COMBAT

by Charlie Hohl, 4th AD, 35th TB, Co C

Boy what a day! I had driven about a 1/4 mile in from the beach, when we were radioed to stop and get in formation to wipe out some German Long Tom's 88s still in position for anti-aircraft fire. Thinking this sounded easy, our five tanks in our platoon spread abreast with our tank on the right flank, on the beach side.

I was in second gear going about three-five miles per hour. We were buttoned up as usual, using our periscopes for viewing, when we were hit with an 88 which was lowered to fire about three feet above the ground. The armored piercing shell hit our tank dead center in the transmission at point blank range with a terrible blue flash inside the tank. It lifted the front of the tank about two feet off the ground blowing out the escape hatch, which was in the bottom of the tank behind the bow gunner. The shell went through the transmission and out through the engine doors in the rear of the tank, of course stalling the engine and catching fire.

There is nothing more dangerous than being in *(Continued)*



## MY FIRST DAY OF COMBAT *(Continued)*

a tank that is not moving. The bow gunner was looking for his fingers, which were blown off, but I could not get out until he went first. After convincing him to get his ass moving as his fingers were not important at the present time, we both got out and crawled under the tank toward the rear and into a trench the Germans had dug for themselves not knowing at the time the second shot went through my seat and the tank would be burning for about eighteen hours with all the sea biscuits I had exchanged on the LST with a navy seaman from Salisbury, Maryland.

Not knowing where the bow gunner had gone, I found a two foot culvert of galvanized pipe and crawled into it, at the same time one of our tanks rode over the end of the pipe almost mashing it closed. I did manage to get out and found a way to some farm houses about four hundred yards away. I hopped over a fence in the back of a farmhouse almost on top of our gunner who turned his tommy gun on me and fired, but his gun jammed.

We both found our way back to our maintenance crew thinking we were safe. They were making coffee on a Coleman stove, but the sound of the stove sounded like artillery coming in and I dove over the stove and took it with me. This was getting to be a long day. I was asked later to drive another tank as the other driver was wounded. Everything was okay until later that night while gassing up the tank, German bombers came over and almost wiped us out. This was my first day in combat.

Little did I know how the next six months was going to be. It was six months of pure hell, every day not knowing I would be shot out of two more tanks and having to go through that famous blue flame and hot metal flying around inside our tanks, before the Battle of the Bulge.

## THE WATCH

by Eugene (Gene) Wright, 489<sup>th</sup> AAA AW Bn, SP

Our unit was attached to CCR of the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division.

New Years Eve 1944. When we first got to France in July, I sent a letter home and asked if someone in the family could find a watch with a florescent face. Being on guard at night I needed to know when my duty time was up. We all slept in a row in bed rolls and when one's duty time was up he just woke the next person and went to sleep. One of my brothers knew a Jeweler and was told it would be hard to find. After a couple of weeks the jeweler called and had one, the cost was \$85.00 The watch was mailed to me but I did not receive it for over a month. My mother kept writing asking if I had the watch. I quit writing home as I did not want to tell them I had not received it. One day the mail clerk came to the Motor Pool area and said I have a small package for you so quit yelling at me for a package. The package was the watch.

Now go forward to New Years Eve 1944 in Leglise, Belgium. Our Officers went door to door and asked the people if some of our men could sleep on the floor in their home. Anyone who was there knows it was very cold. Two homes were opened to the Motor Pool. The Chaplain's assistant, 4 others and myself were in another home with a father and daughter. We used their kitchen to clean up. I had been working on the brakes of a 2 1/2 ton truck all day and needed to clean up. I took the watch off and put it in my pocket. I had to make a trip to the outhouse and as I dropped my pants I saw a FLASH. With my flash light I looked down and there was my watch in a

fresh pile of you know what. I got a couple of welding rods and tried to retrieve it and all I did was making it go in more. I went back in the house and told my two friends of my problem and said they had to hold my feet so I could reach it. Each one held a leg and I went in after the watch. I washed it and cleaned it up and I still have the watch and I wear it every New Years Eve.

Our Battalion has had reunions until 2010 and someone would bring up this incident and have a good laugh. One or the other of my friends would say they should have dropped me.

## AFTER 50 YEARS, A FEARFUL INCIDENT TURNED HUMOROUS

by Sam Ballinger, 3rd Army, 26th ID, 328th IR, Co E



It was Christmas Eve at midnight, 1944, when we started out across a snow covered field to take the town of Eschdorf to relieve the pressure on Bastogne. Our squad walked up a road on the right side of town when all hell broke loose. Heavy and light German tanks painted white started running among us like fire engines looking for a fire. Three of us ducked into a barn filled with cows. The rest of my squad went to the left and took cover behind

an old wooden barn. A tank's machine gun fired right through the barn killing all nine men of my squad.

We were unnoticed in the barn until the afternoon when the three of us were moving in the barn past a large open doorway. Two white clad Germans were approaching to enter the barn. We saw them first and brought them down and dragged their bodies inside where they couldn't be seen. From then on, all we thought of was an attack on our barn. Surely they would miss those two soldiers, but it was deathly quiet the rest of the day and through the night We survived by drinking milk from the cows and moving around to keep from freezing.

The next morning, my buddy came running to me saying, "Hurry Ballinger, they're coming!" We all ran to that side of the barn and peered out through the cracks. There was a hedge just beyond the barn, and there they were, white forms moving down along the other side of the hedge towards the (Continued)

The barn



## FEARFUL INCIDENT TURNED HUMOROUS *(Continued)*

barn. They seemed to be coming after us in full force. Fear struck me, but I didn't panic. My body was numb and my mind was frozen with the thought of being among the casualties, because they weren't taking any prisoners. The field outside was littered with dead GI's. I kept peering through the cracks when I saw red parts moving also. After a few seconds, I gave a sigh of relief. Being a farm boy, I realized those white forms weren't the white clad Germans, they were white leghorn chickens scratching for food. I could have shot my buddy, Gonzales, for scaring the hell out of us.

Soon after this, a battle broke loose at the other end of town. The sky cleared and the P-47's of the 9th Air Force were bombing and strafing anything that was a target I decided we'd better make a run for it while the enemy was busy and before they bombed our barn. We ran about 1,000 yards across a cow pasture with barb wire fences to distant woods and safety.

Of course there is more to this story about the Battle of Eschdorf, but after reading many books, I still don't know what really happened to the rest of my Company that Christmas Day. I left the line with trench foot and spent 2 1/2 months in a hospital, and was then assigned to limited service.

## LUCKY TO LIVE THROUGH IT

by Carl Lavin, Jr.

In a letter written the week he was about to turn 21, in April of 1945, the young soldier Carl Lavin, 84th ID, wrote to his parents:

"Right now I'm sitting on the front porch of a house, at a chair and table from inside. They were moved out to give us enough sleeping room last night. It's a Spring day out here. There's a cherry tree blossoming in front of me, and a row of them to my left. In back of me on the road German civilians are carrying bedding and food; slave laborers – Russians and Poles with a smattering of French, Dutch, Belgians, and Italians – are walking to the rear, many still wearing their original uniforms; a few prisoners are still coming by; but dominating them all are the military vehicles taking over the road. Groupings of Jerry equipment lie in the ditches and in the barns where they were fired on and surrendered, or thought it over and surrendered. And their bodies, too, lie in those places, with white faces and huge tears and crushes. The buildings here are mostly unharmed. The advantage or disadvantage if you will of a fast war. That is, they are unharmed directly by the war. Indirectly speaking, when we move into a house to spend the night, we really move in – and the house moves out. But that isn't all that I see from here as I write this. There's another side to it. In back of that cherry tree I told you about, lies an open field. And in that open field are the bodies of nine Americans. They were shot a day ago."

It was a rare glimpse of the war's violent side from a soldier who wrote more often about his appreciation of American candy bars and his observations about the everyday aspects of life constantly on the move. He was proud that a friend had found printing equipment and that he was able to send home a letter on paper with letterhead: "Company L 84th Railsplitters Division / 335th infantry / East of the Rhine."

Even though he regularly wrote home that "I knew nothing would happen to me," as a BAR man and a Battle of the Bulge veteran, he often said, in the years to follow, that he was lucky to live through it.

## VBOB AND "SPIRIT OF '45 DAY" IN PHILADELPHIA

In 2010, both houses of Congress voted unanimously for a national "Spirit of '45 Day" to honor the legacy of the men and women of the WWII generation. Spirit of '45 Day is now being observed each year in hundreds of communities and during Major League Baseball games on the second Sunday in August.

On February 6, a "Spirit of '45 Day" event took place at the 30th Street Railroad station in Philadelphia, PA. The purpose of the event was to:

- Promote the release of the movie "Monuments Men"
- Honor the 1,307 workers of the Pennsylvania Railroad who were killed during WWII
- Honor VBOB



Individuals from VBOB, Bugles Across America, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Dignity Memorial, and Amtrak were among those in attendance at the Spirit of '45 Day event at Philadelphia's 30th Street Station.

Four members of VBOB were present: Carmen Guarino, 75th ID, 291st IR; Mike Ciquero, Navy Seabee, Pacific Theater; Kevin Diehl, Associate; and Ralph Bozorth, Associate.

During the proceedings, Kevin took pictures, interviewed the veterans and videotaped the event. People stopped to talk with the veterans—one young mother brought her three young children over to meet the veterans and had their picture taken. At the conclusion of the proceedings, the veterans presented a wreath and saluted while a bugler played Taps. The VBOB logo was displayed on a large poster. The WWII veterans were impressed and grateful.

Along with VBOB, people from the following organizations were also present: "Spirit of '45 Day," Bugles Across America, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Dignity Memorial—the largest network of funeral services providers, and Amtrak.

The VBOB poster was given to Warren Hegg, a driving force behind "Spirit of '45 Day," to be used at events across the country. During March, the VBOB poster was displayed in San Antonio, TX at one such event.

Go to our website for more about the special day, along with additional photos: [www.battleofthebulge.org](http://www.battleofthebulge.org).

—Ralph Bozorth, Associate

## VBOB CHAPTER STATISTICS

Chapter	Chapter Members			
	Chap#	WWII Vets	Others	Total
Gateway, MO	25	125	129	254
Delaware Valley, PA	4	150	100	250
Southeast, FL	62	237	0	237
Lehigh Valley, PA	55	40	110	150
Maryland/DC	3	40	80	120
Northwest, WA	6	20	87	107
Golden Gate, CA	10	60	40	100
Florida Citrus, FL	32	40	30	70
Southern California, CA	16	35	25	60
Rocky Mountain, CO	39	30	30	60
Lamar/Soutter, MA	22	55	5	60
Peter Leslie, NJ	54	15	45	60
Hudson Valley, NY	49	41	14	55
Central Indiana, IN	47	17	37	54
Long Island, NY	63	47	3	50
Reading, PA	64	22	0	22
South Carolina, SC	7	25	25	50
Northeast Kansas, KS	69	40	5	45
Golden Triangle, FL	48	26	23	49
Southern Arizona, AZ	53	22	20	42
San Diego, CA	51	6	14	20
Gen Patton, AL	11	20	20	40
Fort Monmouth, NJ	56	20	20	40
Northern Indiana, IN	29	23	7	30
Duncan Trueman, NY	59	20	15	35
Fort Dix/McGuire, NJ	60	8	25	33
Crater, VA	43	14	19	33
Mississippi, MS	33	14	14	28
Arizona, AZ	26	21	3	24
Cumberland Valley, PA	6	15	0	15
Mohawk Valley, NY	28	11	1	12

## VBOB Videos— We Want You!

View them on our website at [www.battleofthebulge.org](http://www.battleofthebulge.org):  
click on “Veterans’ Video Stories.”

Tell us if your chapter would like to arrange a visit  
to record your members’ 5-minute stories.

**For more information regarding VBOB Videos,  
contact Kevin Diehl at the VBOB Office:  
703-528-4058 or [kevin@battleofthebulge.org](mailto:kevin@battleofthebulge.org)**

## CHAPTER 30 PRESIDENT BARRY VEDEN TAKES THE STORY OF THE BULGE ON THE ROAD



**Barry Veden, President of VBOB Northern Indiana Chapter 30, giving a Bulge lecture.**

From the time Barry Veden was elected to the presidency of the northern Indiana chapter of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, he has been speaking to numerous groups about the battle that occurred in the Ardennes during that coldest of winters seventy years ago.

“I began making presentations to organizations such as the Lions Club, local Rotary Clubs, Church groups, retiree associations and AMVETS conventions,”

Veden said. “The presentations have been received nicely. It’s amazing to me how little is known about the battle, or even about World War II for that matter. As president of our local chapter, I feel that is my responsibility to educate as many people as possible about the Battle of the Bulge so that there is a better understanding of what my dad and the thousands of others like him accomplished during the largest land battle ever fought by the United States Army.”

After sending out letters to Assisted Living facilities in the tri-county area of LaPorte, Porter and Lake Counties last year, and receiving a good response, he began speaking to residents in those facilities. “The residents living in those facilities are basically from the World War II generation, and they enjoy hearing about that time in their lives when the world was at war, and how we were victorious,” Veden said. “I’ve been invited back to speak to some of them two and three times.”

In November of last year, Veden was the keynote speaker at the first meeting of a veteran’s organization at the company from where he had retired ten years earlier. “There were about forty veterans in attendance at that inaugural meeting. Most of them had fought in either Iraq or Afghanistan; some of them in both wars, and they were very receptive to my talk about the battle. I’m going to continue my mission of speaking to as many groups about the Battle of the Bulge as I can. I owe that to the men in our chapter,” he said.

Barry Veden is the son of Edward Veden, a staff sergeant with the 112th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division. Edward was on the Siegfried Line on the morning of December 16, 1944, and faced the initial assault by the German Wehrmacht that day. During the ensuing 41-day battle, he was seriously wounded and spent the rest of the war in a hospital in England recovering from his wounds.

—Submitted by Doris Davis, Vice President/Chapters



## BELGIAN CHAPTER (38) ATTENDS BASTOGNE MUSEUM DEDICATION

Every US veteran, soldier or relative who has ever visited Bastogne, has surely gone to the Mardasson monument. Neighboring the Mardasson monument, a WWII museum was also to be found. The City of Bastogne, supported by local, regional and EU funding, has taken the task to renew the museum. It was closed for almost two years. Work included a general overhaul and extending the existing building and a complete new scenography, dedicated to the entire cyclus of WWII.

Over 800 people were invited to the inauguration of the new "War Museum" in Bastogne on Friday, March 21st. The "Greatest Generation" was also present, as three WWII US Veterans and the Belgian VBOB Chapter, led by Marcel D'Haese were special guests.

Everyone was welcomed by the mayor of Bastogne, Benoit Lutgen, followed by a short but powerful speech of Mark C. Storella, Deputy Chief of Mission U.S. Embassy Brussels. After the speeches, Mayor Lutgen, Mr. Storella and other VIPs officially opened



(l-r) Mrs Frans Marique, Christiane D'Haese, Marcel D'Haese, President of VBOB Chapter 38 (Belgium), and Frans Marique, Vice President of VBOB Chapter 38.



VIPs officially opened the Bastogne War Museum with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

the Bastogne War Museum, a new museum dedicated to the Remembrance of the Second World War.

The bold architectural concept of the museum, which flanks the famous Mardasson Memorial, will welcome visitors for a unique journey to the past. The "Bastogne War Museum" experience will allow the visitor to step back in time and understand the reality of the Battle of the Bulge. From the causes of the battle to its dramatic consequences, the visitor will be immersed in an interactive experience. The personal testimonies, the many authentic artifacts, the innovative scenography, and the experience-orientated approach (three scenovisions, 3D Multi-sensorial devices)

make the Bastogne War Museum a must see.

The Mardasson Memorial and the "Bastogne War Museum" share the same ambition: maintain the memory alive of those who fought for our freedom and defend values such as peace and freedom. With the upcoming 70th Anniversary of the "Battle of the

Bulge," the museum will be an interesting place to visit.

The Museum is open from March 22nd, 2014. All information can be found at: [www.bastognenewarmuseum.be](http://www.bastognenewarmuseum.be).

—Story and photos submitted by Patrick Brion & Malek Azoug

## VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

Faith, Hope, Love, Charity, Inc. provides much-needed support for homeless veterans and their families. They have a house in Lake Worth, FL that provides veterans with meals, housing, and transportation. A donation of a 37" TV was made by the Battle of the Bulge Florida Southeast Chapter for the enjoyment of the residents. Pictured 1-r are Roy Foster, Exec Director, George Fisher, Chapter Pres, Gen Al Irzyk, Chapter Commdr, and Joe Petrucci, VBOB Member.





# WELCOME TO COLUMBIA, SC

## VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE 33<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL REUNION

**August 30 - September 3, 2014**

### HIGHLIGHTS AND SCHEDULE INFORMATION



Greetings from the SC Chapter, your hosts: (l-r, standing) Walter Hedges, 374 Fighter Sqd; Leif Maseng, 17 AbnD; Joe Watson (back), 75 InfD; Stanley Smith, 75 InfD; Congressman Joe Wilson, 2nd District, SC; Vernon Brantley, 75 InfD; Gerald White, 2 InfD. (l-r, seated) Morris Kline, 84 InfD; Charles Siano, 9 InfD; Chris Carawan (Pres.), 106 InfD

#### REGISTRATION FEE

All who attend the VBOB Reunion must pay the registration fee (\$35/person.) This fee covers the expense of name tags, programs, table decorations, Hospitality Room, etc.

#### SATURDAY, AUGUST 30

**Registration and complimentary Wine and Cheese Reception** sponsored by the Columbia Marriott.

#### SUNDAY, AUGUST 31

**Special service at Main Street United Methodist Church** with patriotic music and keynote speaker. The American Legion Post 6 Freedom Riders will line the walk into the church with American flags to honor the veterans. The congregation will host a luncheon following the service in the Fellowship Hall.

The public gets a chance to meet the veterans and get autographs at the **SC State Museum**. Built in 1893 to manufacture textiles, the Columbia Mills' storied stone halls now weave tapestries of knowledge with exhibits on everything from lasers and space travel to

South Carolina's role in the Civil War. Again, the Post 6 Freedom Riders will line the entrance of the museum to greet the veterans and public visitors.

End the day with a rousing musical tribute featuring the **Harry James Orchestra**. During the golden era of the big bands, Harry's band helped launch the careers of many pop music stars of the World War II era, including Frank Sinatra and Helen Forrest. Already a celebrity, James' marriage to Betty Grable in 1943 cemented his status as one of the most famous American personalities of his generation.

Back by popular demand from the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, the **Victory Belles** will present America's tribute to the Andrews Sisters. Noted for their close harmonies and synchronized dance steps, The Victory Belles are proud to pay tribute to this talented trio who volunteered so much time entertaining our troops here and abroad!

#### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

**A visit to Fort Jackson Army Training Center.** BG Bradley Becker and his Command Staff are arranging for the official wreath-laying ceremony with invited dignitaries and guests at the flagpole of Post Headquarters.

Afterwards, the group will visit the U. S. **Army Basic Combat Training Museum**, which has been totally renovated. Reopened



**A visit to Fort Jackson will include lunch with recruits, the U. S. Army Basic Combat Training Museum, and the Bastogne Range.**

in 2011, the Museum walks visitors through the experience of basic combat training, showing how the individual elements of training have evolved in the past century. Lunch will be served in the Mess Hall accompanied by "Blue-phase" recruits. (These are soldiers in weeks 6 - 9 of their advanced combat training and will be graduating soon.)

After lunch, the group will split up and half go to **Bastogne Range** and the other half to the highly sophisticated combat training facility, where computer animated scenarios are programmed to test soldier's quick thinking reflexes. (All visitors will visit both locations.)



**Tour of FN Manufacturing, a major small arms supplier to the U.S. Military.**

#### TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

**Tour of FN Manufacturing, LLC.** One of the most popular events of the 2010 Convention, FN Manufacturing again opens their doors for a tour of their precision manufacturing, unsurpassed quality and cutting edge technology. Because of their military heritage as a major small arms supplier to the U. S. Military, their employees take their work very seriously: Soldier's lives are at stake. Lunch provided on site.

**VBOB General Membership Meeting**

**Reception** with cash bar

**Banquet** featuring your choice of salmon, steak, or chicken for your entrée

#### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Farewell breakfast on your own.

**You can also register online: [www.battleofthebulge.org](http://www.battleofthebulge.org); click on "Attend Reunion." And, "Like" us on Facebook!**

# VBOB REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

**Deadline: August 9, 2014**

**There are two options for registering for the reunion:** Complete this form OR register online: [www.battleofthebulge.org](http://www.battleofthebulge.org), click on “Attend Reunion” and fill out the registration form. **Either type of registration form must be received by VBOB no later than August 9, 2014.**

**The VBOB registration desk at the hotel will only be open on Saturday Aug 30th and Sunday Aug 31, 8 am - 5 pm.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Division, Regiments, etc \_\_\_\_\_

or check box if Associate Member ☐ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Wife/Guest(s) \_\_\_\_\_

	No. of People	Cost per Person	Total Cost
<b>Registration Fee</b> ( <i>all attendees must register</i> )	_____	\$35	_____
<b>Saturday, August 30, 2014</b>			
Wine and cheese reception	_____	free	_____
<b>Sunday, August 31, 2014</b>			
Trip to Main Street United Methodist Church, SC State Museum <i>Includes lunch and bus transportation</i>	_____	free	_____
Dinner/Harry James Orchestra/Victory Belles	_____	\$30	_____
<b>Monday, September 1, 2014</b>			
Trip to Fort Jackson Post Headquarters and Museum <i>Includes lunch and bus transportation</i>	_____	\$35	_____
<b>Tuesday, September 2, 2014</b>			
Trip to FN Manufacturing <i>Includes lunch and bus transportation</i>	_____	\$30	_____
General Membership Meeting	_____	free	_____
Reception ( <i>cash bar</i> )	_____		_____
Banquet ( <i>choose entrees below</i> )			
Grilled Salmon	_____	\$40	_____
Roasted Chicken Breast	_____	\$40	_____
Grilled Sirloin	_____	\$40	_____
		<b>TOTAL</b>	_____

**Mail this form and check (payable to VBOB) to:** Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc., PO Box 27430, Philadelphia, PA 19118

**Or, to pay with a credit card, register online at [www.battleofthebulge.org](http://www.battleofthebulge.org), click on “Attend Reunion”**

(Refunds for cancellation, will be honored in whole or in part, depending on availability of funds)





# VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE, INC.

## COLUMBIA MARRIOTT

Columbia, SC August 30 - September 3, 2014

### REUNION PROGRAM

#### Saturday, August 30, 2014

- 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Registration
- 8:00 am - 10:00 pm Hospitality Room open (Palmetto Ballroom)
- 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm Wine and Cheese reception (Capital Pre-Function)

#### Sunday, August 31, 2014

- 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Registration
- 8:00 am - 11:00 pm Hospitality Room open (Palmetto Ballroom)
- 10:30 am City bus departs Marriott
- 11:00 am - 12:15 pm Main Street United Methodist Church for patriotic music and keynote speaker
- American Legion Post 6 Freedom Riders flag line
- 12:15 pm - 1:30 pm Lunch at the Church
- 1:30 pm - 1:45 pm City bus departs Main Street Methodist
- 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm SC State Museum, Autograph Session/Meet the Public
- American Legion Post 6 Freedom Riders flag line
- 5:30 pm Buses depart Museum
- 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm Dinner/Harry James Orchestra/Victory Belles (Carolina Ballroom)  
*Music compliments City of Columbia*

#### Monday, September 1, 2014

- 8:00 am - 10:00 pm Hospitality Room open (Palmetto Ballroom)
- 9:00 am Buses depart Marriott (Busy Bee Tours)
- 10:00 am - 10:30 am Fort Jackson Post Headquarters for Wreath Laying Ceremony
- American Legion Post 6 Freedom Riders flag line
- 10:45 am - 11:45 am Visit Fort Jackson Post Museum
- 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm Lunch with the Troops at Ft. Jackson Mess
- 1:45 pm - 4:00 pm Visit Simulation Room/Bastogne Range
- 4:30 pm Buses depart Fort Jackson (Busy Bee Tours)
- Dinner on your own

#### Tuesday, September 2, 2014

- 8:00 am - 10:00 pm Hospitality Room open (Palmetto Ballroom)
- 9:00 am Buses depart Marriott (Busy Bee Tours)
- 9:30 am - 11:45 am Tour FN Manufacturing
- 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm Lunch in FN Manufacturing Cafeteria
- 1:30 pm Buses depart FN Manufacturing (Busy Bee Tours)
- 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm General Membership Meeting (Capitol II Ballroom)
- 6:30 - 7:30 pm Reception (cash bar)
- 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm Banquet at the hotel (Capitol III & IV Ballrooms)

#### Wednesday, September 3, 2014

- 8:00 am - 12:00 noon Hospitality Room open, Breakfast on your own

See "Highlights and Schedule Information" page for more details.



## COLUMBIA MARRIOTT

1200 Hampton Street

Columbia, SC 29201

1-803-771-7000, 1-803-758-2456

1-800-593-6465 – toll-free reservations

Website: [www.marriott.com/caemh](http://www.marriott.com/caemh)

**RESERVATION DEADLINE FOR GROUP RATE:**

**August 8, 2014**

# WELCOME

## VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

### August 30 - September 3, 2014

### Hotel Information

The newly remodeled, AAA Diamond hotel is the largest in downtown Columbia and offers a concierge level lounge, airport shuttle (7 am – 10 pm) and convenient location. Newly-refreshed guest rooms and suites feature plush beds, flat panel televisions and warm décor, offering the perfect Columbia, SC lodging experience.

Check-in time is 4:00 pm, Check-out time is 12:00 pm.

This hotel has a smoke-free policy. The room rate is \$109 per night, single or double occupancy, plus taxes.

### RESERVATIONS

To make your reservation you have two options, by telephone or online.

**1. By phone:** call 1-800-593-6465 toll-free and say you are with the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge group.

**2. Online:** Go to: [www.marriott.com/caemh](http://www.marriott.com/caemh)

Use left sidebar “Check Rates & Availability” to put in desired dates, number of guests, etc. Then scroll down and select “Group Code” button, enter our group code: VBBVBBA. This will take you to our group rate page to complete your reservation.

We suggest you guarantee your reservation with a charge card. **Reservation must be made by August 8, 2014 to guarantee you will get the group rate. After August 8, reservations will be made on a space-available basis.**

In the event you need to cancel your reservation, please inform the hotel 48 hours prior to the day of scheduled arrival.

### HOTEL AMENITIES

- Full service restaurant and lounge
- Complimentary:
  - Shuttle service to and from Columbia Metropolitan Airport (7 am – 10 pm)
  - High speed wireless in the guest rooms as well as public areas
  - Business room including computers, printers and fax

### DIRECTIONS TO THE HOTEL

Leaving the airport, make a left on Highway 302/Airport Blvd. Continue on I-26 (toward Greenville/Spartanburg.) Follow I-26 W and exit 111B (Highway 1 Augusta Road-West Columbia.) Bear to the left at the 3rd light and follow the signs to Jarvis Klapman Blvd. Highway 12. After crossing the bridge in the city, Jarvis Klapman becomes Hampton Street. Go through 5 traffic lights. The Marriott Columbia is on the right at the corner of Hampton and Main.

- Airport shuttle service, on request, complimentary  
Shuttle Phone: 1-803-771-7000
- Courtesy phone available

## BACK ALIVE IN '45

by Wilfrid Riley, 188th CEB



CCR of the 4th Armored Division pierced the Bulge at Bastogne on the 26th of December. Increased pressure on all sides of the Bulge caused the German Army to surrender or retreat back towards Germany. Then the armored units turned east to pursue the retreating enemy. The 188th. Engineer Combat Battalion along with other combat engineer battalions were held in the Bastogne-Houfalize Area to restore the highway system to a serviceable condition.

The road system was never constructed to handle the pounding of tracked vehicles and heavy highway trucks. No highway system could withstand the conditions that the present roads were called on to withstand the beating they were subjected to. Most of the roads were nothing but a sea of mud, water and ruts. We worked day and night restoring them to a condition where they could be used again.

We constructed many sections of corduroy roadway, as the sub-courses of the road had disappeared. A corduroy road is constructed of sections of tree trunks covered by the rubble of destroyed buildings and homes. A corduroy road is a poor substitute for a paved surface but we did not have that option. A corduroy road will provide the necessary traction for the vehicles so necessary in a war zone. Maintenance is constant and never ending.

We turned east and moved through the Siegfried Line into Germany. Bridges were built and roads were repaired and land mines and anti personnel were removed or destroyed as we continued our move through German cities, towns and villages. The civilian population had abandoned their home farms and livestock and moved

farther into Germany at the approach of the American army. The abandonment of these towns and villages continued for a short time and then stopped. With the approach of the American Army from the west and the Russian army from the east there was soon no place to go. Some of the German civilians told us they had been told by their government officials that we would rob, rape and murder them. We did none of these things, but we did milk their cows and savored the fruits of our labors. Did you ever hear the pitiful mooing of a cow that needed to be milked?

We moved steadily east where our next big mission would be crossing the Rhine River. Training for the crossing was underway. Selected platoons in our Battalion received additional training in the operation and use of motor boats. All of our bridge building, road repair and mine removal work had been completed in this area and we awaited our orders for the Rhine River crossing which was awaiting our Battalion. With the receipt of orders the Battalion was off for Kaiserlauten, where we were to join the XX Corps. En route our orders were changed and we stopped at Oberthal. The German civilians were ordered to vacate their homes and when the Battalion arrived they were able to move in. Overnight the crossing was cancelled in this section and we were reassigned to the 1107th Group. So we are off again, this time in the direction from which we had just come. When we arrived at a wooded area near Braunschweig we started to prepare for the crossing. After a final preparation with the motors, we were ready for the Rhine River crossing.

Reconnaissance of the area between St. Goar and Oberwessel for suitable landing sites had been made by Staff Officers and all was in readiness. Orders for the crossing were received and at 2AM on Sunday the 26th of March we moved to the river. The artillery opened fire on the far side of the river and the mission was underway. The assault boats entered the river for the crossing to Wellmich, St. Goar and Oberwessel. The initial wave of boats were paddled and succeeding waves were powered. The assault boats were manned by combat engineers of the 168th Battalion. The *(Continued)*

## 2014 VETERANS TOURS



**LUXEMBOURG-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP WEEK AND SOUTHERN BULGE TOUR. JUNE 16-25 2014. Arr Paris - Dept Frankfurt.** A special tour for Veterans, families and friends of Third Army and First Army in the Southern Bulge. Its highlight is the action-packed Luxembourg-American Friendship Week when the US Veterans Friends of Luxembourg (USVFL) welcome you all as guests of honor to celebrate and commemorate the Battle of the Bulge. We will tour the Southern Bulge battlefields in depth. Let us know your "special places" and we will try to include them in the Tour.

We will be including the battlefields around Bastogne and St Hubert, the Saar-Moselle Triangle, Diekirch (and the Bulge Museum), Echternach and the Luxembourg National Day Celebrations. From the Bulge, we cross the Sauer River and Siegfried Line into Germany and then the Kyll and Mosel rivers to the Rhineland battlefields. Grand Finale Rhine Cruise. Optional Normandy pre-tour. (If interested, please inquire as soon as possible.)

### TOURS PLANNED FOR 2015:

- Danube Cruise, Pilsen Liberation Festival and Prague (late April 2015)
- US Memorial Day in the Bulge and Northern Bulge Tour, Nuremberg and Munich (late May 2015)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION about the above tours and/or special customized group tours, contact Doris Davis, President of VBOB Golden Gate (San Francisco) Chapter. Email: [doris@battleofthebulge.org](mailto:doris@battleofthebulge.org); Tel: (650) 654-0101 (PST)**



## BACK ALIVE IN '45 (Continued)

crossing at St. Goar was strongly resisted, with lighter resistance at Wellmich and Oberwessel. With the infantry clearing the far side, the construction of ferries began. Once built they were placed in service. The motor powered ferries would carry troops and supplies to St. Goar, on the east side of the Rhine and return within our wounded and German prisoners, but not on the same trip.

During the day our B Company had two of its jeeps knocked out with resulting casualties. A Navy Duck, operating on the river, side-swiped and swamped a ferry, drowning one of our combat engineer soldiers. He was a very recent replacement in Company B of our Battalion. In war, death can overtake you in many different ways. The construction of a log boom, to protect the floating bridges, had to be abandoned after eight attempts. The current was too strong and the logs anchored to the cable were torn away at mid river and beyond. Fortunately the Germans did not launch any floating mines.

After the two floating bridges were built it was time to move on to the east. The front line was now many miles ahead of us and we had quite some distance to cover to catch up to the Fourth Armored Division. When we did catch up to them our main assignment was to repair and maintain their MSR (Main Supply Route) as they made their drive to capture the city of Gotha, Germany. The MSR, for the most part, was on the Autobahn Highway and we were strafed daily by enemy planes and suffered many casualties. Fortunately we did not suffer any fatalities as a result of these straffings.

As we moved deeper and deeper into Germany we occupied German homes for our dwellings. We no longer had to sleep in our pup tents and that was a great relief for all of us who were out in weather all day and our personal belongings and spare clothing were protected from the elements. The Germans were told to leave their homes before we moved in. This had been the policy since we entered Germany and it would remain in effect during and after the war. To the victor goes the spoils of war seemed to be the policy for all as far as I knew at the time.

The highways were crowded with the slave labor that had been freed or escaped from their captors and German soldiers who had surrendered or given up the battle. They lined both sides of the highways single file towards the rear of our position and headed in a westerly direction and hoping for a free meal. However, we did not have the means or the desire to host a dinner party for the German Army. We told them to continue walking west and someone, someplace would take care of them. Most of the battalion assignments were on the Autobahn building and repairing bridges of all types of construction and repairing roads. There were numerous shell craters and tank traps that had to be filled. The speed of our advance was so great that we had crews working around the clock to keep the highways in service, and the Autobahn was the most important of them all.

While in this area we received word that a slave labor camp had been captured and the occupants had been set free. I decided to visit the camp and accompanied by my platoon sergeant and another squad leader from my platoon, we drove to the nearby town of Ohrdruf, Germany to take a look at the camp. The concentration camp was close by and we parked the jeep and walked through the main entrance. The gates and some fencing had been smashed by the armored force that had liberated the camp. The camp was fenced on all four sides. Prisoners dressed in striped pajama type uniforms were to be seen at many locations in the camp. The walking cadavers would approach you and stare aimlessly with glassy eyes. Some attempted to make conversation, asking for cigarettes

## VBOB BOOK OF YOUR STORIES NOW AVAILABLE

There are two ways to purchase the book:

**Barnes & Noble bookstores** (place an order)

**Online:** Amazon: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com); Barnes & Noble: [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

*(There are no doubt other online companies available, but*

*we recommend you deal with Amazon or Barnes & Noble.)*

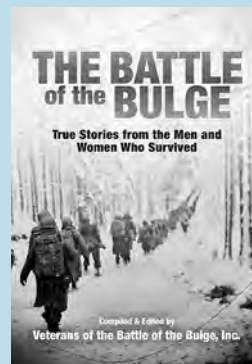
The best way to order the book, whether you do it online or in the bookstore, is to provide the ISBN and the title of the book:

ISBN: 978-0-9910962-3-7

Title: *The Battle of the Bulge: True Stories From the Men and Women Who Survived*

The price of the book is \$34.99

**You cannot order the book through VBOB.**



which we gave them. They may have asked for other things, but we could not understand them. We continued to walk through the camp and entered one of the barrack like buildings that housed the prisoners. There were both live and dead prisoners in the building. The odor was terrible and took your breath away.

We quickly exited the building and did not enter any of the other barrack type buildings. In another area we saw the naked bodies of men and women stacked in rows like cordwood. Here and there a body had fallen from the stack and lay on the ground like a piece of wood which had fallen from the stack. On some of the stackings of bodies, an attempt had been made to throw a layer of what appeared to be lime. Naturally we did not touch anything. Now and then I absentmindedly stuck my hands in my pockets to keep them out of harm's way. Most of the stacks did not have any lime on them. We moved on in this chamber of horror. In another area there was a large open ditch like excavation. Dozens and dozens of naked bodies of men and women had been haphazardly thrown into the excavation where they lay uncovered and exposed to the elements and animals.

We had seen more than enough and left the slave labor camp at Ohrdruf, Germany. A few days later the site was visited by Generals Eisenhower and Patton and other Generals. It is my understanding General Eisenhower dispatched someone to the nearby town of Ohrdruf and they brought a town official to the camp and ordered him to gather the town citizenry to report to the camp with shovels to bury the dead bodies. A few days after my visit to the camp at Ohrdruf another concentration camp was liberated at Buchenwald Germany. I did not visit that one as I had no desire to revisit the horror I had seen at Ohrdruf. "Man's inhumanity to fellow man."

Several times while doing repair work on the Autobahn Highway we saw jeeps bearing Russian Army Officers accompanied by American Army Officers traveling west. An occasional wave and sometimes a smile from them as they moved through our work area. Seeing the Russians we thought end of the war was at hand. However that was not the case.

C Company constructed a bridge across the Salle River, south of Vena, Germany, which marked the completion of one mile of fixed bridging in the ETO by our Battalion. This does not include the unfinished bridge at Keskastel in the (Continued)

## BACK ALIVE IN '45 *(Continued)*

Saar Valley constructed by B Company. We were on the job and would have completed the bridge that day. Then we received orders to cease construction and return to the company area and prepare for the move north to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. I often wonder if there is someone out there who knows the rest of the story. What engineer outfit did finish the Bridge at Keskastel in the Saar Valley... I wonder.

On the 6th of May the Battalion was placed in support of the 89th Division for a river crossing operation at Ave, Germany. On May 7th the operation was called off as negotiations were underway for a German surrender, ending the war. Later that day word was received that negotiations were completed and the Germans had surrendered. The war with Germany was over. May 8th was the day the war was officially over. I do not remember any large scale celebrations of the event. We were very relieved of course, but we all realized that there was an ongoing war with Japan and some of us would probably see some of that war.

We were now an Army of Occupation and the American Forces were to move to the American Occupation Zone in Bavaria. I was a member of the group that was dispatched to Bavaria to locate living quarters for our Company. We were to locate in an area near Regensburg, Germany. We surveyed the area for the most desirable quarters consistent with our future work as a member of the Army of Occupation. The most suitable quarters for our company were found in the city of Regensburg. It was a multi-storied apartment building and would suit our needs. The civilian occupants were given orders to vacate the building and this was accomplished quickly.

The site we had chosen had a large athletic field adjacent to our living quarters. We used the field for military drill exercises and it was also used for our daily program of physical training to keep us in top physical shape. The field was also used for our softball games when we had free time. A volley ball court gave us another outlet to expend our excess energy. The athletic games soon attracted the attention of group of young boys living in the neighborhood. These boys all about 10 years of age and younger became regular fixtures at all of our outdoor activities including meal times when we ate our meals outdoors. The mess sergeant offered the leftovers one day to the boys if they would provide a container to be used to carry the food away from our area. They disappeared and quickly returned with containers of all sizes and descriptions. Apparently they had hidden the containers nearby in hopes of being offered the leftovers someday. The kitchen leftovers were quickly augmented by food from the soldiers mess gear. When the containers were filled or all of the spare food had been parceled out, they headed for their homes to share the food with their families.

Kids are the same worldwide, even German youngsters. That is until they enter the German youth programs of Adolph Hitler. Then they become a very different person. I have seen both and I recognize the change in their character. One of our assignments in the Army of Occupation was to repair a bridge over the Danube River at a town east of Regensburg. The repairs included repairing two damaged masonry piers and placing steel members to bridge the gaps between the piers. Repairs to the approaches and other road work in the area had to be performed and then the bridge was returned to service.

One of the assignments we were given in the Army of Occupation was the establishment and operation of a railhead. Building material was being collected for the construction of barracks for the

troops that were to remain in Europe as a part of the Army of Occupation. The railroad tracks and railway equipment was severely damaged as a result of the aerial and artillery bombings during the seven (7) years of war in Europe. Slowly the reconstruction of rails and rolling stock was returning some of the railway system to an operating status. The freight cars we would be using to ship the building materials, namely, flat cars, box cars, hoppers and gondolas of various lengths and capacities. To realize the maximum value of this equipment we would have to be selective in the loading of the building materials.

We were assigned the use of four stub ended tracks coming off a ladder track which was connected to the main track serving the rail yard. It was a good location, readily accessible to the highway and with a large area to permit the delivery trucks sufficient room to maneuver into place to unload the building materials to the freight cars. When we had enough cars loaded, a switching crew was called to remove the loaded cars and assemble them into a train for delivery to a barracks building site. This involved switching out the loaded cars and placing the partially loaded and empty cars on one of the stub ended tracks.

The switching crew usually consisted of a conductor, a brakeman and a locomotive engineer. They were German civilians and they did not speak the English language. One of the soldiers in our platoon, Willie K., had been born in Germany and had emigrated to the United States with his parents when he was three (3) years old. His parents used the German language at their home in conversations with their family. Willie K. the American soldier was very fluent in the German language and he was called on for his services by other officers in the battalion.

The request for a switch crew had to be made at least twenty four (24) hours in advance of the day they would be needed. I had made such a request for a switch crew but Willie K's services were required by one of our staff officers that morning and so I was without an interpreter when the switch crew arrived. So I attempted to give the instructions to the crew myself. My skills in the German language were very limited but I had no other alternative but to try to get the job done. The usual procedure was to make a list in duplicate of the loaded cars to be shipped that day. The original was given to the conductor and I kept the duplicate. The conductor, interpreter and I would then check the loaded cars against the list and then the switching crew would cut the loaded cars out of the mix and assemble them on an empty track to build the outbound train for the shipment to the consignee. Then the crew would rearrange the remaining cars plus any empties that they might have delivered to us that day.

On this particular day, when I gave the conductor the instructions for that days work in my limited ability in the German language, he and I were unable to understand each other. He asked me if I could speak French. I advised him that I could not but that I had a soldier in the platoon who could speak French. The soldier was summoned to the scene and so I told him in English what I wanted the crew to do. He then gave this information in French to the conductor who then instructed the engineer and brakeman in German on the moves to be made. But if the engineer or brakeman had a question or did not understand, then it all ended back with me to attempt to unravel. What came back to me was not the same set of instructions that I originally gave to the French speaking soldier. Words in the original set of instructions sometimes stray in their meaning as they are translated from one language to another.

After several attempts I could see that we had an *(Continued)*

# WELCOME ABOARD, NEW MEMBERS!

These new members joined VBOB between January 1 and March 31, 2014:

Antonucci, Joseph	Associate	Oliver, Richard K	158 Engr Cmbt Bn
Bedell, Marilyn R	Associate	Olson, Cheryl	Associate
Brown, Dorothy A	Associate	Paris, Thomas R	Associate
Burns, Marjorie O	Associate	Pawlik, John A	Associate
Carlitz, Myriam	Associate	Peter, Judith D	Associate
D'Angelo, Lorraine	Associate	Power, Harold	106 InfD
Dax, Patrick	Associate	Russell, Bryan	Associate
DiFranco, Joseph S	862 Engr AVN Bn	Ryan, Maria T	Associate
Driggs, Walter	Veteran	Sansom, James F	28 InfD
Gahagen, Frank L.	Associate	Scarborough, Felix Terry	1252 Engr Cmbt Bn
Granado, Veronica	Associate	Schaefer, Vernon	Associate
Gribben III, George A	Associate	Schevers, Gary R	Associate
Levy, Al	288 FA Observ Bn	Sholtis, David	Associate
MacKnight, George T	Associate	Stassen, Ronald	Associate
Macris, James C	696 Armd FA Bn	Stoudt, Debra	Associate
Martin, Matheu	Associate	Sumner, Gordon	Associate
Mathis, Rafor C	2 ArmdD	VanWolvelaerd, Peter	Associate
McCarthy, Dennis C	Associate	Varuso, Jack	Associate
McCullough, Mark	Associate	Verjans, Roger	Associate
Miller, Andrew	Associate	Wright, Wayne R	Associate
O'Brien, Frank	Associate		

*We certainly are pleased to have you with us and look forward to your participation in helping to perpetuate the legacy of all who served in that epic battle. You can help immediately by:*

- Talking to people about VBOB and suggesting that they also join
- Sending us articles to be included in *The Bulge Bugle*
- Spreading the word about our website: [www.vbob.org](http://www.vbob.org)
- Attending our annual reunion, Aug-Sept 2014 in Columbia, SC (See details on page 16.)



## BACK ALIVE IN '45 (Continued)

Abbott & Costello "Who's on First" vaudeville scenario. Any further attempts to get the work done in this manner seemed hopeless. So I decided to try another approach to get the days work finished. The conductor, platoon sergeant and I identified each loaded car on the list of cars I had given him and the platoon sergeant circled the number of that loaded car with a piece of chalk for quick identification, so those cars could be drilled from all the other cars and switched to an empty track for the assembly of an outbound train. All of this the conductor and crew understood and we did get the train dispatched to the consignee that morning.

Austrian composer Johann Strauss wrote the very beautiful song "The Blue Danube Waltz." But the waters of the Danube River are a dirty brown and not blue. I know because I saw it every day for three or four weeks as we repaired the bridge.

In July of 1945 the 188th Combat Engineer Battalion was deactivated. Those with the required (60) points were returned to the United States to be discharged. The rest of us were assigned to other engineer units that were retained in the Army of Occupation. I was assigned to the 243rd. Engineer Combat Battalion which was to remain as a member of the Army of Occupation. I was only with the 243rd for about a month and then I was ordered to report to an assembly area in Regensburg for transport to Camp Lucky Strike in Le Havre, France. I traveled for two days and nights in a box car. The box cars were named, "40 & 8" box cars. Those numbers meant the capacity of the box car was Forty Horses or Eight Men. It certainly was not the Broadway Limited of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The accommodations included two buckets for sanitary use and several cases of rations. The rations were C Ration, K rations or 10 in 1 type. Fresh water you carried in you canteen. There were

eight or ten occupants assigned to each 40 & 8 box car. This is how I remember it sixty five years after the event.

On arrival at Camp Lucky Strike we were assigned to a tent enclosure for eight or ten people. We were at Camp Lucky Strike for about ten days. The rumor mill ran wild all day and every day. Then the Japanese surrendered and it became a whole new ball game. We were then told that we would be going to the States and given a leave of absence after which we would be assigned to another unit or be sent to a Repo Depot. Early one morning in the middle of August we were told to prepare to board a Liberty Ship named the John Cropper at noon. We gathered our gear and were taken by a buses or trucks to the dock at Le Havre and loaded aboard The John Cropper. One of our shipmates who was assigned to the same quarters as me told me that he was sea sick on every voyage he had ever made and expected the same for this trip. Yes, he was. We departed from Le Havre, France at 5 o'clock on August 18, 1945 and set sail for the United States.

There were about 325 of us plus the crew on board. About the third day at sea we encountered a heavy storm and the ship bounced around like a cork. Most of the 325 passengers were seasick but fortunately I was not one of them. Thirteen days after departing Le Havre, France we entered New York harbor. I was preparing my gear for docking. It was 9AM on August 31st when I heard a voice exclaiming "There is the Statue of Liberty!" I hurried to get on deck to see the Lovely Lady of Freedom. I heard another voice shout "We are Home!" This was confirmed a short time later, when I saw and heard a band playing and the Red Cross ladies waving and welcoming us home.

In 1944 as we fought our way across Europe, I often heard a fellow soldier say "Back Alive in '45." Yes indeed, it had all come true.



## JESSIE BOWMAN, 87TH ID, AWARDED THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR

Jessie O. Bowman from Granite Falls, NC (Sergeant, 345th Regiment, 87th Infantry Division,) along with 13 other American WWII Veterans from the U.S. Southeast, was awarded the French Legion of Honor during a ceremony on February 20, 2014 at 1:30 pm at the State Capitol in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Jessie will be quick to tell you that "I did not win the war; you did not win the war. We all won this war together!" Jessie Bowman was trained as a gunner operator of an 80mm mortar with company D, 345th Infantry of the 87th Division. Jesse fought in the battle of Morcy and then on to the Ardennes Forest and the Black Forest. Jessie also fought in the Battle of the Bulge, St. Vith and then crossed the Moselle River into Koblenz on the Rhine River and finished up fighting in Plauen in Northern Germany, which is near the Czech border.



Jessie Bowman, left, and Pat McCrory, NC Governor, at the event.

## 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION REUNION

The 28th Infantry Division Association Reunion will be September 3-6, 2014 at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

For more information, contact the association office at tel: 717-787-9385; or write to 28th Infantry Division Association, 1400 Calder Street, Bldg #3; Harrisburg, PA 17103-1297

Or visit their website: [28thinfantrydivisionassoc.org](http://28thinfantrydivisionassoc.org)

## MEMORIAL DAY CONCERT ON THE MALL, MAY 25, 2014

World War II Veterans who participated in the Normandy Invasion will be honored at the Memorial Day Concert on the Mall, May 25, 2014. There will also be a select number of seats reserved as "Seating of Honor" for all World War II Veterans who would like to attend. For more information, please email Anne Maginnis at: [amaginnis@capitalconcerts.org](mailto:amaginnis@capitalconcerts.org)

For more information about special events to be held during the weekend, go to: [www.dc.about.com/od/holidaysseasonalevents/a/MemorialDay.htm](http://www.dc.about.com/od/holidaysseasonalevents/a/MemorialDay.htm)

## REMEMBER THE FALLEN

by Orville B. Iverson, 926<sup>th</sup> Signal Bn

I would like to remember my comrades who gave their lives during the Battle of the Bulge. In fact, the book with my WWII story is a tribute to these fallen comrades of the 926 Signal Battalion:

- Capt. Harvey R. Clugston, our medical officer, seriously wounded Dec. 16, 1944 by German 88 shelling. Died Dec. 17, 1944.

- 1st Sgt. Clarence E. Cochran, seriously wounded Dec. 26, 1944 by German bomb at Roux, Belgium and died Dec. 27, 1944.

The following were billeted in the classroom with me, within 20 feet of me: 1st Sgt. Lloyd Hunt, Olin E. Fritz, Robert D. Baldwin, Santiago H. Gonzalez, Talisfor Buizeika, and Robert P. Bivins, all killed by a robot flying bomb, V-I, the night of Dec. 28, 1944 in Liege, Belgium. I was completely buried by debris. After I dug myself out of the debris, I pitched in and helped dig out my buried comrades, who all had died.

A Belgium writer gives his tribute: "There is one thing you dare not forget and that you must keep eternally engraved in your heart. It is the memory of those men who came from far away overseas and clung to the ground, fighting one against ten, falling down under bombing and shelling, for the name of LIBERTY."

"And when you pass before a military cemetery, where you will see the little white crosses adorning the tombs of the soldiers of Baugnez, of Stoumont, of Rochefort, and of so many little villages of the Ardennes, from the depths of your heart you will cry to them: 'THANK YOU!'"

*Find out what it was like for a regular GI in WWII. Check out Orv's WWII book, where you will find WWII photos: [www.blurb.com/b/454985-orville-iverson-s-world-war-ii-by-orville-iverson-t](http://www.blurb.com/b/454985-orville-iverson-s-world-war-ii-by-orville-iverson-t)*

*Orv's Website: [www.home.earthlink.net/~iversonom/](http://www.home.earthlink.net/~iversonom/)*



## BATTLE AT GRAND-HALLEUX, JANUARY 15-16, 1945

by Robert H. Justice, 75th ID, 291st IR, Co E

After dark on the 14th of January 1945, "E" Company, 291st Infantry Regiment marched into Belgium village of Grand-Halleux. We moved from the village of Petit-Halleux into Grand-Halleux across the Salm River, which was a distance of about two miles. If my memory is correct we crossed the Salm River on a Bailey Bridge. I was the Platoon Sergeant of the 3rd Platoon, "E" Company, 291st Infantry Regiment and my platoon leader was Lieutenant Jack W. Tracy. My perspective of this battle engagement will be from the lower echelon of command and how the chain of command works. It was after midnight when we arrived in Grand-Halleux where we bedded down in some barns on hay so the men could get a little rest and sleep before the attack. It was very cold and there was about 18 to 24 inches of snow on the ground.

About 0300 to 0400 hours on the morning of the 15 of January 1945, Lieutenant Tracy came to the barn where I (Continued)

## BATTLE AT GRAND-HALLEUX *(Continued)*

was bedded down, with some of our platoon personnel. He had me get our platoon guide and squad leaders together to tell us the Battalion and Company plan of attack, as well as the plan of action our platoon would utilize in reaching our objective. The Battalion objective was a heavily wooded area about 500-600 yards across an open field. The Battalion plan of attack was to cross the line of departure at 0730 hours with "E" and "G" Companies on the line and "F" Company in reserve. Our platoon was just a small part of the equation of the big picture of the battle plan.

The plan of attack for the 3rd Platoon was to be on line with the 1st Platoon and the 2nd Platoon would be in reserve. We had the first and second squads of our platoon on line and the third squad in reserve. "E" Company was on the right of "G" Company and on our right was supposed to be a unit of the 424th Infantry Regiment as I recalled. (At the history panel I learned that "C" Company, 291st Infantry Regiment was on our right.) We never made contact with "C" Company, 291st Regiment, therefore we assumed we had an exposed flank on our right. Prior to the attack a reconnaissance patrol from "E" Company (of which Charles Spence, first Platoon, was a member) was sent out with the mission to make contact with the unit on our right. According to Spence they went about 100-150 yards along the line of departure to our right and couldn't find anyone and were never challenged. This is not to say that "C" Company, 291st Regiment was not in position we just never made contact with any friendly force.

The battle plan of attack called for heavy artillery barrage and smoke shells (for cover) that were fired at about 0715 hours and we did get that support. The 3rd Platoon was lined up as skirmishers and moved out at 0730 hours toward our objective. The enemy had a very effective defensive plan with open fields of fire from small arms fire, automatic weapons, mortars, artillery and mine fields. The 3rd Platoon advanced about 200 yards across the open fields, and suffered heavy casualties and were pinned down. I was with the 3rd Squad in reserve and Lieutenant Tracy at that time committed our squad with orders to make flanking movement to the right, along a trail that was in our assigned area of the plan of action. I went with the 3rd Squad and much to my surprise we had an exposed right flank. This was because the information had never reached us prior to the attack.

The exposed flank offered the 3rd Platoon and 3rd Squad a great opportunity for an excellent flanking movement. The terrain was defiladed and not covered by small arms or automatic weapons fire. At this time we were about two hours into the attack, and communications were in shambles, no radio contact and platoon runners were exposed to open fields of fire, therefore each unit was acting as one, trying to advance against an enemy that was well entrenched. Our OD clothing made us look like ducks on a pond, with the entire area covered with snow they could detect every movement we made from their positions in the woods.

After taking the 3rd Squad along the trail we were able to stay in ditches on each side of the trail and advanced to within about 100 to 150 yards of the woods, we were losing our cover in the ditches as the terrain became more level. We were pinned down by automatic weapons fire and had no communication to reach anyone to ask for any type of mortar or artillery fire. I then made a decision to use our bazooka and we fired one round and knocked out one machine gun nest, but that gave our position away and the attempt to fire a second round resulted in the bazooka man

and ammo bearer being wounded with small arms fire from the enemy. We then used our BAR man and this resulted in his being wounded by return fire. Our flanking movement then resulted in us having only small arms fire to knock out an entrenched machine gun squad in the wooded area. Our element of surprise was lost and we couldn't reach our wounded bazooka man or BAR man to use their weapons, as it would mean crossing the trail and that would have been full exposure for any individual. It was not to be.

We had many factor against us that day, but we held what ground we took and suffered heavy casualties. Under the cover of darkness we established a defensive perimeter and what men that were able to move withdrew back to Grand-Halleux to reorganize and find out what our plan of action would be on the 16th of January 1945. On the 16th of January 1945, Company "E" left Grand-Halleux again with one officer and thirty five (35) combat troops attached to Company "G."

On the 17th of January 1945 we moved to a crossroads near Poteau where a road block was established by the 2nd Battalion, 291st Regiment, after another bitter fire fight. We were a more experienced group during that engagement and succeeded in driving the enemy back.

We later moved into other Battles of the Bulge, the Colmar Pocket and in the Ruhr Valley in Germany. Most of those encounters are vivid memories, but none can compare to January 15th at Grand-Halleux, Belgium.

*Source: [www.battleofthebulgememories.be/](http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/)*

## THE KOREAN WAR: SHOULD WE KNOW THE HUMAN COST? SHOULD WE HONOR THEM?

The Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) foundation, wants to build a glass Wall of Remembrance at the Memorial in Washington DC. They have raised private funds to finance it, but need Congressional authorization to add that wall — even though no public funding is sought. The authorization bill is HR 318.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact and urge your House Representative to become a cosponsor of HR-318, a bill to authorize a Wall of Remembrance for the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the National Mall in Washington DC.

To find your House Representative, go to: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>

Contact: KWVMF, 10301 McKinstry Mill Road, New Windsor MD 21776-7903. Phone: 1-800-KORAWAR (567-2927.) E-mail: [kwvmf@koreanvetsmemorial.org](mailto:kwvmf@koreanvetsmemorial.org)



★ **DECEMBER 2014** ★

## **VBOB Trip to Belgium and Luxembourg in Honor of the 70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY of THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE**



Luxembourg City at night



This is an interim outline of the VBOB trip to Belgium and Luxembourg to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge.

Please understand this is a proposed brief outline of the Itinerary that is still evolving, so please bear with us as we attempt to finalize the trip.

A few points first: We have requested the Belgium government to provide free air travel via their own aircraft for VBOB veteran members of the VBOB Association and possibly one or two accompanying family members for those veterans with medical problems or need assistance. The Belgium ambassador made this provision, at our 17 March meeting with him, and the assistant military attaché. The Belgium government has not yet approved this. If it is not approved travel will have to be by commercial aircraft by all.

The Belgians indicated they would provide Belgian army buses for the land portion of our visit. The tour is planned to depart the U.S. on 8 December and return on 19 December via a stateside gateway city to Brussels and return to that U.S.A. gateway city.

We have requested Patrick Hinchy sponsor the tour with coordination in Belgium/Luxembourg with the task force that has been planning the itinerary. We are concerned about commercial travel costs. Therefore, we expect Patrick can provide that data soon. We have a date and a plan, but we need costs, including hotel and meals! Most of you will note that Patrick has sponsored annual visits to Europe over the years and many of our members have engaged him for their European trips.

The task force I referred to and itinerary was developed by personnel residing in Europe and headed by Patrick Brion, who also

assisted in the 2004 VBOB visit. The task force has been coordinating with the cities and the events in the proposed itinerary and will effect necessary changes as the plan evolves toward finalization.

*This is a brief outline of the proposed itinerary subject to final changes:*

**08 December:** Assemble in Washington area metro hotel during the day

**09 December:** Depart U.S.A. and arrive in Brussels. Bus to Houffalize and hotel

**10 December:** La Roche-en-Ardenne, La Gleize and Trois Ponts

**11 December:** Baugnez Memorial & Museum and Wereth 11 Memorial

**12 December:** Vielsalm, Parkers Crossroad and Rencheux

**13 December:** Bastogne: Bastogne Barracks, new Bastogne War Museum, ceremonies, Mardasson remembrance

**14 December:** Henri-Chapelle Cemetery, Thimister-Clermont Remember Museum, Luxembourg City and transfer to hotel in Luxembourg

**15 December:** Diekirch-National Museum of Military History, Clervaux ceremonies and reception at the castle

**16 December:** (70th Anniversary date) travel to Ettelbruck (Patton Museum), Wiltz (crossborder ceremony), reception/dinner

**17 December:** Visit Hamm Military Cemetery, afternoon free time in Luxembourg City

**18 December:** Check out of hotel, travel to Brussels for return to U.S.A.

**19 December:** Arrive in U.S.A.

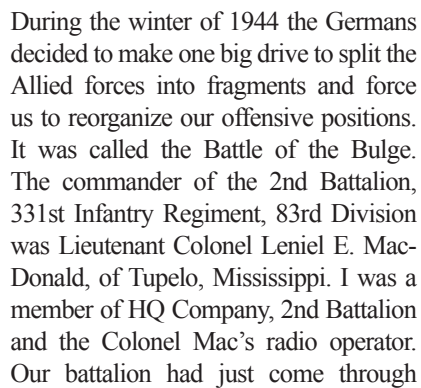
*Note: no doubt some revisions to this plan will occur – more later. —Doug Dillard*



Baugnez Memorial & Museum, Belgium




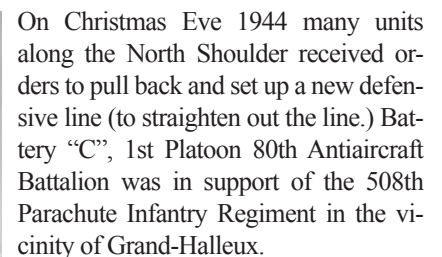
**by Michael Catrambone, 83rd ID, 331st IR,  
2nd Bn, HQ Co**



## THE BULGE BUGLE

Source: [www.battleofthebulgememories.be/](http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/)

by Raymond Fary, 82<sup>nd</sup> AB, 80<sup>th</sup> AAA, Bty C



Our platoon pulled out about 2200 hours and headed toward Bra (about two miles Northeast of Manhay.) We set up our 57mm AT gun on the Southwest edge of Bra, covering the road from Manhay. Sometime after midnight after our gun was set up, our squad offered shelter from the cold in the house just in back of our gun position. This was the home of Joseph Fourgon family.

Christmas day, sometime in the afternoon, I was standing outside the house in back of our gun position when I noticed about six or eight GIs coming up the road. I don't remember the first words or the conversation but when they began telling me that they moved up online the evening before. A fire fight began later. (Four platoons of Company "C" 290th Regimental Combat Team attacked south on N-15 directly into the advancing elements of the 2nd SS Panzer division.) They realized they were cut off with many casualties and outnumbered.

It was decided that they would break out in small groups. Three groups, about eight men per group would move out in different directions. There was a least one tank and one vehicle. They did say the tank crew damaged the tank. I'm not sure what was done to the vehicle. I then asked what outfit they were from. They said the 75th Infantry Division, Company "C", 290th Regiment. This is when I became excited and told them I was with the 290th AT Company at Fort Leonard Wood. After more chit chat, they left and headed into Bra.

Some year ago, I attended my first 75th *(Continued)*

## WE WERE IN BRA *(Continued)*

Division Reunion. That is where I met member of Company "C" and I asked if any of them remembered this incident on or about Christmas Day, 1944. Their faces lit up and they said they were in one of the three groups that walked out on Christmas Day but they did not remember what direction they headed or if they did go thru Bra or meeting a former member of the 290th Infantry Regiment.

I mention "on or about Christmas Day." We were in Bra 3 or 4 days. When meeting these men at the Reunion, I was not sure if this incident occurred on Christmas Day or on the 26th. Their comment was that they walked out on Christmas morning.

*Source: [www.battleofthebulgememories.be/](http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/)*

## THE BATTLE STARTED ON 16 DECEMBER 1944

by Clarence Blakeslee, 28th ID, 112th IR, Co M

It seemed like a rest camp after the Hurtgen Forest. We did some training made a few raids to capture German prisoners for questioning. The German prisoners a ways told us that all that faced us were old men and boys. I was given the job of sound spotting, we could locate German guns by charting their flashes and measuring the time it took for the sound to reach us.

After a few nights, I noticed some new guns on our right front, they had a different sound like they were mounted. Also there was much truck activity and sometimes voices. I was given a citation by Battery "HQ." They said my reports were excellent and detailed, but they thought my compass must be off because they had sent a patrol into the area and had not found anything a few days before. The next night I couldn't sleep so I went out where I could watch for flashes. There was no artillery falling near our positions.

Soon the Germans began turning on searchlights which crisscrossed over our positions. It was an eerie light that didn't case heavy shadows like moonlight. When you looked at the shafts of light it took a few moments for your eyes to adjust. I went back to the dugout to warn the boys. I told them to keep their shoes on because something was happening. Switzer told me to quit scaring the h...l out of the men. They were mostly new, replacements for the ones we lost in the Hurtgen Forest. I countered by saying that the Germans weren't lighting up the place just to (be) nice to us and went back out to the perimeter to listen. Now I could hear the Germans talking, apparently their leader name was Carl because the men kept calling his name. I found our sentry and used his phone to call the C.P. They thought it must one of our "white cow" patrols. I said they were talking in German and their leader name was Carl. The Lieutenant said it would be "hell to pay" if I was wrong and he alerted the company. I said it will (be) worse if I am right and you don't alert the company. He said you stick with them and keep us posted and I will alert the company.

They crossed between our cook tent and mortar positions to an empty German bunker. The sky was beginning to get lighter so I had to crawl to keep from being seen. I could not see what they were doing. Someone from "K" Company heard them and emptied his carbine at them and me, suddenly they came running toward me. I thought they had discovered me but they went by me full speed into the valley behind our position. I had asked for permission to fire on them but the Lieutenant had said just keep track of them.

There was a stunning explosion near me, the blast went over my head, huge chunks of concrete began falling around me. I was scared. They had blown up the big bunker beside me

Now everyone was alerted for the beginning of "The Battle of the Bulge." We had a front center seat.

*Source: [www.battleofthebulgememories.be/](http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/)*

## MY COMBAT ENDED ON 23RD DECEMBER 1944

by Robert M. Bowen, 101st AD, 401st GIR, Co C



In retrospect the Battle of the Bulge is viewed as a glorious victory for the American army while in reality it happened because of a monumental failure on our part to correctly interpret a massive German build up and to take appropriate steps to meet it. As a result many thousands of Americans lost their lives and many more ended in German prison stalags. I was in the latter group.

On 16th of December 1944 the 101st Airborne Division was in a rest camp near Reims, France, having just returned from a long bitter campaign in Holland. Before that it had fought in Normandy from D Day until the end of July. In both campaigns it had about 50% casualties. When we got word that there had been a breakthrough in the Ardennes, we were hurriedly packed on open-bodied trucks and rushed with headlights blazing in the middle of the night to Bastogne. 1st Battalion, 401st Glider Infantry Regiment was led by Colonel Ray C. Allen, a feisty Texan from Marshall. We were put in a defense line west of the city in the vicinity of Mande St Etienne on a salient with no friendly support on either flank. We set up roadblocks on St Hubert Highway about two miles from Bastogne. "C" Company was commanded by Captain Preston Towns, Atlanta, Georgia, and was about 40% under strength because replacements for those lost in Holland hadn't reached us yet. Three of the platoons were led by non commissions like myself. At the time I was a Staff Sergeant and had led 3rd Platoon since 8th October 1944 when 1st Lieutenant Howard Kohl had been killed.

The weather was cloudy and cool when we arrived in Belgium but took a turn for the worse on the 20th when it became bitter cold and began to snow. By the following morning over six inches was on the ground and our fox holes were like refrigerators. The actions of our weapons froze as did the turrets on the TD's and tanks with us and couldn't be rotated until they were thawed.

The Germans cut the road behind us during the night of the 21st, isolating us from the rest of the division. I received orders on the morning of the 22nd to take out the enemy roadblock and was given a tank from the 10th Armored Division to help. I sent a squad of men down each side of the main road, covering them with the fire power of the tank's 75 and 50 caliber guns and enfilading fire from a MG and my 1st Squad on the left flank. The Germans didn't know what him them. The fight was short and violent and when it was over twelve Germans lay dead and twenty-five more our prisoners. Sergeant Jerry Hanss, 3rd Squad leader, was the only casualty, a bullet wound in the calf. We settled back in the frozen confines of our fox holes, waiting for the next move of the enemy. It came the following day.

*(Continued)*

## MY COMBAT ENDED ON 23RD DEC 1944 (Continued)

2nd Platoon held a roadblock farther west on the same road. It was led by S/Sergeant Grayson Davis, Charlotte, North Carolina. At dawn enemy tanks and infantry in snow suits struck with a vengeance. The rattle of small arms fire, the explosion of mortar shells and the sharp crack of tank guns echoed over the snowy fields when I got the order from Captain Towns to take two of my squads and support 2nd Platoon. We had to cross a couple of large snow-covered fields to get there and went as fast as we could, burdened by our equipment and the deep snow. On the way we were met by 1st Lieutenant Robert Wagner, San Antonio, Texas, who left his 1st Platoon on his own volition to help us. His men were dug in, in a corpse of trees on 2nd Platoon's left flank. The race to reach 2nd Platoon was a disaster. Wagner and two of his men and I with two of mine were the only ones to reach a large house directly behind 2nd Platoon's main line of resistance. The house stood on the east side of the raised highway on a hill which sloped down toward 2nd Platoon's fox holes. Behind the house and to a side was an inclined courtyard. A tank destroyer from the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, commanded by S/Sergeant Chester Sakwinski, Franklin, Wisconsin, would rise to the top of this incline, take a shot at the enemy tanks, then retreat before a barrage of enemy shells could hit it.

The enemy tanks had done much damage to the position. Many of the men manning the line were killed or wounded during the battle and a tank and Tank Destroyer were knocked out. A group of medic from our battalion aid station managed to reach us and set up in the basement of the big house. Our efforts to retrieve the wounded were fruitless because the enemy infantry fired on anyone who moved. Several of our wounded lay screaming in pain and, when we tried to bring them in, were met by barrage of small arms fire.

2nd Lieutenant Gwynn had gotten a battlefield commission on the 22nd of December. He was in command of the two tank destroyers with 2nd Platoon. He called Wagner and I for a conference beside the aid station about four in the afternoon when the situation began to look desperate. Shells had been dropping in the area all day. We ignored most because by their sound we could tell whether or not they would be close. The one which hit us we didn't hear until it was too late; it was a 81mm mortar shell. We were bowled over like struck ten pins. Medics rushed from the aid station and got us inside. Gwynn was the worse hit, peppered all over with shrapnel shards. Wagner had a piece in the foot and I in the chest and right wrist. We were treated and put on the floor with other wounded. Even though I was given morphine the pain in my arm was agonizing.

Wagner left the aid station near dark in an effort to see what was happening on our front as the gunfire was sporadic at best. He saw the line of resistance had crumbled and men were trying to withdraw any way they could because they were out of ammunition. He did his best to rally them but before he could the Germans sensed our predicament and attacked with renewed vigor. Wagner was cut off from us and could not get back to tell us to make a run for it. In retrospect there was no way we could. There were too many liter cases. The aid station was saved from being destroyed by a German-speaking medic who shouted that all inside were wounded. The Germans burst through the doors with machine pistol ready, angry because so many of their "*Kamraden Kaput*."

The battalion withdrew that night on a line where it did not stick out like a sort thumb from the rest of the division. However, on Christmas Day 18 enemy tanks supported by infantry of the 77th

Grenadiers smashed through the battalion. All the tanks were knocked out by guns of the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 463rd Parachute Field Artillery plus bazookas of our infantry. All the enemy infantry were either killed, wounded or captured. By the time the siege of Bastogne ended what was left of the 401st hardly made up a good-sized company.

My combat career ended on 23rd December but not the war. Like many other POW's, I was to endure strafing by our fighter planes, bombing raids by our B-17's, and harsh treatment and starvation on my way to north Germany to a prison stalag hospital at Bremervorde, near the port of Bremerhaven. I was liberated by the British on 1st May 1945, fifty pounds underweight and with serious medical problems. When the war ended in August I was bedridden at Walter Reed Medical Center, fighting a lung full of blood clots while listening to a wild celebration going on in the other wards. Good treatment saved my life. Six months later I was well enough to be discharged, forever changed by the Battle of the Bulge.

Source: [www.battleofthebulgememories.be/](http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/)

## THE WRONG ROAD

by Dean Vanlandingham, 26th ID, 328th IR, MP platoon



Some day during the first week in January 1945 a Corporal Davis and I were assigned to ride shotgun on a couple trucks of Germans being sent from the line to the P.W. compound in Arlon, Belgium. After delivering the prisoners we decided to do some recon work in the bars and cafes of the city. We were successful.

So much in fact we forgot which road to take back to our regimental H.Q. (the 328th of the YD Division.) Being adequately filled with anti-freeze we finally asked an M.P. "Which is the road to Groshus?" Maybe we didn't pronounce the name any better than I can spell it, but he pointed out a road. We started down using only the cat's eyes of the jeep for help in keeping on the road.

After about an hour one of us began to sober up somewhat. Somehow the road didn't seem right. We should have gone through a small burg named Ell and crossed a stone bridge then a sharp right turn. After some discussion we agreed the M.P. was probably right. We kept on.

Suddenly a "Halt," cracked out at us. Then "You dumb ... turn out those ... lights." A Sergeant came up and stuck a B.A.R. in my face. After some discussion, while we tried to explain who we were and what we were doing and going, the sergeant said, "You dumb ... drunken ..., you are in Bastogne with the 101st Airborne." That didn't mean a thing to us. So we turned around and returned to Arlon. By that time it was beginning to get light and we found the right road to our outfit.

It wasn't until I was in hospital in England, I was shot through my neck January 20, 1945, that I became aware of the Bastogne situation and realized that Davis and I had driven through fifteen miles of German held territory.

As it is said, "God takes care of children and drunken damn fools." He sure did take care of us that night.

Source: [www.battleofthebulgememories.be/](http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/)





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by Russell Kelch, 591st Field Artillery Bn



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On December 22, 1944, we made our way from Aachen, Germany to Maffé, Belgium. The road was covered with sleet and snow, and a blizzard had begun. The entire VII Corps was moving southwest.

On December 24, we occupied gun positions at Noiseux, Belgium. Everything started going wrong. We lost three cannoneers almost at once. The first was leading a howitzer into position when his feet slipped on the ice, and the prime mover crushed his foot. A second cannoneer, Anthoni Niznick, "A" Battery, was caught by the breech block and broke both bones in his right forearm.

Then it began to sleet harder. A shell was rammed as the tube was being elevated. The sleet caused the 95-pound projectile to slide out of the breech, and a cannoneer tried to catch it. The projectile turned over and went fuse first right through his foot. Luckily, it was a bore-safe fuse. We had three calls for the "meat wagon" in what seemed 20 minutes!

Everything was going sour. To add to the confusion, buzz bombs were passing overhead. I went to the kitchen truck for coffee. It was 10°F, and as I warmed my hands on my canteen cup filled with hot coffee, I saw trucks bringing clean straw for our foxholes. Then I saw a small cedar tree the young GIs had decorated with radar foil and tin can lids. I realized the next day was Christmas, and things seemed brighter.

*Source: [www.battleofthebulgememories.be/](http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/)*

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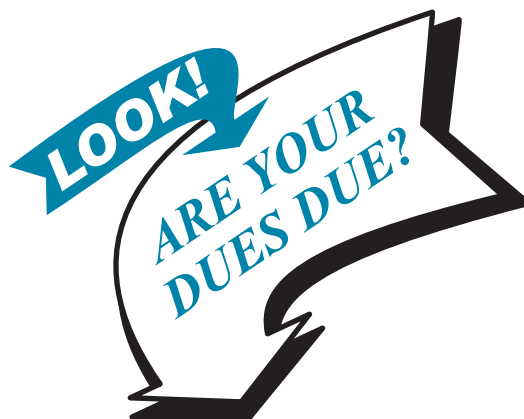
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