

The BULGE BUGLE

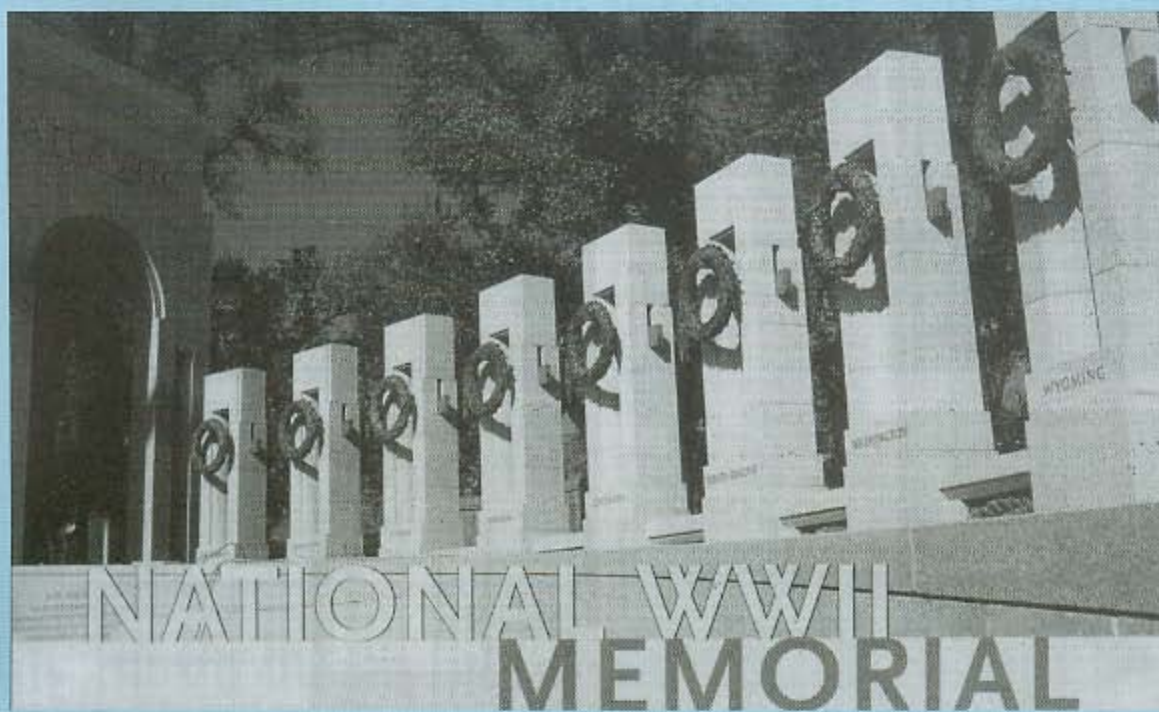
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION • VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE, INC.

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 2

THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

MAY 2004

AT LAST !!



DEDICATION: SATURDAY, MAY 29, 2004

VBOB members and guests will be the largest single veterans organization in attendance - *See Page 7*

344th Bomb Group

"SILVER STREAKS"

Carl Christ, historian, tells of his 344th Bomb Group's mission during The Bulge period. *Page 10*

60th Anniversary Commemoration

Belgium & Luxembourg
Over 250 responses to recent questionnaire. *Page 25*

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

IF YOU FIND YOU HAVE A LITTLE TIME,
WRITE TO VBOB AND WE'LL SEND YOU THE
NECESSARY TOOLS TO GET OFF TO A
GOOD START IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA.

President's Message

I hate to repeat myself, but as I wrote in the February issue of *The Bulge Bugle*, this is an exciting time for all veterans of World War II, and our extended families. As dedication day for the World War II Memorial, Saturday, May 29th, draws closer you can feel the anticipation building whenever a group of Second World War veterans get together.

Some might decry the fact that it has taken almost 60 years for this long overdue tribute to be completed on the National Mall, but from several visits I have made to the site in past months, I can assure you it will be worth the wait.

I am proud of the fact that the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge will be at the dedication in force. I believe we will have the largest contingent at the event, with more than eleven hundred in attendance.

John Bowen, who with his wife, Mary Ann, Dorothy Davis, and Nancy Monson, is coordinating our annual reunion, May 25th to May 30th, has been working with the World War II Memorial Committee to secure a good viewing section for our members and their families. We are actively seeking volunteers to help those of our members with disabilities at the dedication, and also at the various events of the reunion. We want to make this a memorable week for all of our members and their families.

As I write this message, it appears that you are responding at a record pace to sign up for our reunion. Hotel space in the Washington area is at a premium for that week, and while our two headquarters hotels are filled at present, cancellations may occur for illness and other family problems.

If you find you can make the reunion please contact John Bowen at 301-384-6533 and we will do all that we can to take care of your request. But don't put it off much longer because the Washington area is really filling up and the "No Vacancy" signs are already going up at local hotels.

Earle Hart, who is heading up the committee planning the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge 60th Anniversary trip back to the ETO, is also hoping you will respond as soon as possible to the request in the last issue of *The Bugle* to let us know if you are interested in going back for the anniversary observances in Belgium and Luxembourg. Earle has an update later on in this issue, and from what I hear at our committee meetings, this will be a fitting climax for a year that we will never forget.

While none of us can ever forget the events of 60 years ago in the Ardennes, we hope our participation in the WWII Memorial Dedication and our Anniversary Trip back to the battle sites will remind others at home and overseas of the sacrifices our GI's made to restore freedom, and to defeat terror and tyranny.

That remains the goal of our organization, and it up to us as individuals and chapters to keep that message alive here in our homeland.

As we have said so often, we must do that by taking part in events in our local community, and particularly in our schools. I can attest to the fact that our young people are eager listeners to the history we bring to the classroom.



George Chekan

Recently I was invited to talk to the students at Calvert High School in Calvert County, Maryland, and to relate my experiences to four history classes. Aided by visuals I put together with my daughter and aided by artifacts provided by VBOBer Earle Hart, I took them through my service as a 9th Infantry Division rifleman in the Mediterranean Theater, in Normandy, and up through the Bulge. The response I received would make anyone proud. The students listened attentively, and came up with great questions. The entire experience proved to me that we must make that extra effort to reach into our schools as one sure way to pass our history along to future generations, and to insure that the battle we fought becomes a part of our nation's heritage. I know that some of you may be reluctant to stand up before an audience and to talk about yourself and what you went through but from my experience, and those of other veterans, there is an audience out there that wants to hear your story and will welcome you into the classroom.

As I was talking to the classes, I couldn't help but think that I was only a few years older than the students when Uncle Sam called me into the service. I also thought afterward that I hope none of them are called upon to go through what we went through as individuals, and as a country.

But we know from the TV and Radio, and from the headlines, young American men and women even now are putting their lives on the line in a number of foreign lands. As we prepare to dedicate the World War II Memorial, I believe it is important that we remember the sacrifices they are making for their country in this new century. I am sure that many of our members have sons, daughters, grandson, and granddaughters who are serving in trouble spots overseas.

Let's let them know now that we veterans care about them, and thank them for what they are doing--again in the cause of freedom. A letter, a postcard, even an e-mail will let them know we care. We can also hope they won't have to wait 60 years for their service to be recognized.

See you at the reunion and dedication....

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 3. President's Message | 21. German Soldiers Killed Civilians |
| 4. Letters to Editor | 22. Stoumont / LaGleize |
| 6. Associate Members | 23. Bulge Reenactment |
| 7. VBOB Convention and WWII Memorial Update | 24. Failure of Leadership |
| 8. Foy Cemetery | 26. Reunions |
| 9. Luxembourg Memorials | 27. Members Speak Out |
| 10. 344 th Bombardment Group | 28. Did You Know Hugh |
| 14. Terrify and Destroy | 29. German Paratroopers in Bulge |
| 16. Pvt. Ralph A. Simpson, Jr. | 30. Hospital Haven |
| 18. Patton - 3 rd Army | 31. VBOB Quartermaster |
| 20. Terrible Time Reminders | |

VBOB. Inc. is non-partisan. It encourages candidates of all political persuasions and incumbents to support legislation important to: National Defense and to Active, Reserve, National Guard, retired members of the uniform services, other veterans, their families, and survivors.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

81ST ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION OMITTED

I would like to know why there is never anything in about the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion of the 106th Infantry Division, which I was a part of.

Grant L. Bostian
106 INFD 81 ECB

[Our omission of any unit is unintentional. We depend entirely on YOU for our stories. If you don't send them in, we don't have them.]

LET'S GET IT CORRECT

I want to thank you for recounting my experiences in the Battle of the Bulge which appeared in your February edition starting on page 29.

A misprint in the introduction referred to the 12th Regiment as being in the "40th Infantry Division." The 12th was a regiment of the "4th Infantry (Ivy) Division," which, with the 22nd and 8th regiments comprised the 4th-the division which spearheaded the D-Day assault on Utah Beach.

Morgan Welch
4 INFD 12 INF

SOME KIND WORDS

I thoroughly enjoy all the articles in *The Bulge Bugle* and the friendship of all the lads in John McAuliff's Massachusetts Chapter.

William "Woody" Ford
107 EVAC HOSP

[Thanks, Woody, for the kind words. Our aim is to bring you information for your enjoyment in the stories you submit.]

THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS DO KNOW

This is in response to the letter from Thor Ronningen in the February issue of *The Bulge Bugle*. My dad also served with the 99th Infantry Division, but in the 394th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion, Company E. My dad was Frank Cordella, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

He wasn't in the battle very long when he became MIA. Fortunately, he was found eventually and sent to Paris to recuperate from a gunshot wound. He came back to the States several months later, but Mom said he was never the same man. He never talked about any of it to her or anyone else.

If it weren't for books to read and *The Bulge Bugle*, I would never have learned anything about what he went through. I am the proud daughter of a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge. If anyone from the 99th Infantry Division, 394th Infantry Regiment, Company E, is around, I would so desperately like to know if anyone knew my dad.

He passed away in 1986 at the young age of 64, taking his war pain to the grave with him. I'm sorry Mr. Ronningen has the attitude he has. If everyone felt like him about any of our war history, nobody would know anything about our country's history. I'm proud of my dad—a "foot soldier." I would like to hear from any proud member of the Almighty Checkerboard.

Francine Stinson
202 Kanady #232
Miami, OK 74354

THANKS, MILAN

Once again it was such a pleasure to read the excellent *Bulge Bugle*, which you edit and publish. This February newsletter, as all those which preceded it, was rich in content thanks to your expertise in this area of information sharing. First of all was your glowing "President's Message" encouraging our veterans to continue propagating our heritage by visiting and lecturing at schools and making it a high priority to attend our VBOB reunions. All of the other articles were of high quality such as Joe Zimmer's "Remembrance and Commemoration." I was especially gratified to see an article on my good friend and Ohio Buckeye (Chapter) member, Ed Arn, who at the age of 95, was inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame not only for his service to his country during the war, but also for his numerous contributions to the betterment of his community. I was

privileged to attend his induction.

There was the fine Activity Report by my friend, George Fisher, as well as the important up-dates on the VBOB Convention and WWII Monument Ceremonies and the 60th Anniversary to be held in Belgium and Luxembourg. Missing was the announcement of our next 87th Infantry Division Association Reunion under the title "Reunion" on page 19. I suppose this is a small matter in comparison to the other articles but it came to mind that I have not seen my division announced in *The Bulge Bugle* for many years even though a large contingent of our 87th people attend the VBOB Reunions. I'm submitting an announcement which you may see fit to publish in the next issue. *[Milan, it's in this issue. If we receive it, we publish it. We also check through the many unit newsletters seeking this information. We must have missed the 87th.]*

Milan Rolik
87 INFD

COMBAT MEDICS BADGE

I am writing in regard to some information I sent to you some months back. I can't remember just when but it was before the last issue of *The Bulge*, as you did make a reference to the information in the last issue.

You gave a nice write-up to the Combat Infantry Badge, could you do the same for the Combat Medics Badge? It had the same status as the CIB. *[We did--see page 4 in the February issue--you can write to: Commander (ARPERCEN), 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63132-5260. Send a copy of your DD-214 and specify the medal(s) you are interested in receiving. Be prepared to wait a while.]*

I believe this is the least known award in the service, even our local Veterans Service Center had no information on it until I gave them the information. I have talked to quite a few guys and no one has ever heard of it. Evidently, the period of time it was introduced, close to the end of the war, was one reason it is not known about.

Before that award was okayed a few medics were awarded the Combat Infantry Badge. I was one of that very small number. I don't know how many of us combat medics are left but it sure can't be a large crowd anymore.

I was in hopes you would put more of the information that I sent you in *The Bulge*. I was somewhat disappointed to see the very small article about it on page 4 of the last issue. Hopefully you can find more room in a future issue to get more about it out so the guys can try for it. I realize you are limited to what you can put into print and the last issue was larger than usual which is great--it is still my favorite publication.

I'm only sorry I didn't know about the VBOB years sooner than I did as *The Bulge* is the only source of what really happened during that cold, miserable winter of the Bulge.

Well I got that off my mind so I will close and wish you well.

Lawrence T. Page
148 ENGR CMBT BN C MEDIC

NOT TO CONTRADICT, BUT...

In reference to *The Bulge Bugle*, February 2004, pages 32-33, "Removing the Blanket of Secrecy," it is not my intention, as a former PFC in the ranks of the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, to contradict a flag rank officer. However, I feel that Major General Joseph A. McChristian should be aware of the fact that the presence of CCB, 10th Armored Division, fighting at Bastogne, was properly and timely recognized in General Tony McAuliffe's historical Christmas letter to the troops dated 24 December 1944.

Moreover, I want to assure the general that we, the front line troopers, the ones holding the MLR, were fully aware of the presence of the units from the 10th Armored Division, the 705th Tank Destroyers, and artillery attached to our division (the 101st), and we were damned glad to have them as worthy comrades during that bloody battle.

To the General: Sir, we recognized you (the 10th Armored) from day one because you were there with us from day one. In fact, you arrived there earlier! And we remember you with heartfelt gratitude. God Bless the USA!

Eduardo (Ed) A. Peniche
101 ABND

OOPS, AGAIN

Page 7 of the February 2004 edition contained an error. The caption under the photo of the portable reservoir listed location of Echternach as Germany. Actually, Echternach is located in Luxembourg on the border of Germany.

The Bulge Bugle is a wonderful publication which I look forward to receiving and read from cover to cover.

Sylvain Van Gobes
84 INFD 333 INF H

REMARKS DETRACTED

It was with great interest and pleasure that I read the cover article, "Medics in the Bulge." I was both a litter platoon leader and an ambulance platoon leader with Company B, 305th Medical Battalion, 80th Infantry Division, and the 587th Ambulance Company, Third United States Army, with credit for four campaigns in the European Theater.

I can understand the exigencies of space and the fact that some of the material in the article was taken from another source. The most glaring error was attributed to Donald Ratliff, of the 7th [should have stated he was in the 75th] Infantry Division. The 7th Infantry Division had a lustrous career in the Pacific theater. The quoted indicated to General Patton regarding wounded soldiers detracted from the excellent performance of the Medical Department of the Third Army. This field army under the direction of its surgeon had a unique formation of auxiliary surgical units that gave flexibility and much needed skill that saved hundred of GI lives.

Again I understand the space requirements, but mixing the physical and mental casualties could certainly lead to confusion. The United States Army tried to work through this by establishing neuropsychiatric hospitals and assigning a medical psychiatrist in the rank of major to each division. Also front line medical personnel were trained to recognize and to treat physical shock.

I appreciate your acknowledging and paying tribute to the medical personnel who fought in the Bulge so gallantly.

Lionel Rothbard
80 INFD 305 MED BN B

...WHO WILL CARRY THE TORCH!

[My letter responds to letter from R. Keith Ostrum, in the August, 2003, newsletter.] My father was KIA on December 25, 1944, at Haller, Luxembourg. I was born the next day in Michigan. I now have life memberships for myself, my son, and grandson. I have become vice president of the VBOB Chapter in Arizona.

We will carry the torch, with honor, pride and in the eternal memory of all veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

Brian Schwall
Associate Member

NO SPECIFICS PROVIDED

[Re: *The Bulge Bugle*, May 2003, page 25] The author covered a topic written about so often, "Americans Used Weapons of the Past" with almost no specifics of the details required to go from "here to there" and no coverage of the immense needs thrown upon the public which had almost no experience in specifying, designing, developing, testing, manufacturing just about everything from ships to food. All and each had to be considered with only weeks in the schedules. Personnel availability for troops was an empire in itself.

The present day M-1 tank was stalled for over a year while evaluations were made to use the 120 mm gun instead of the original spec. The Bradley Vehicle went through a throes of APC, M-113, Forward Observer vehicle, etc. Those two decisions took years to finalize. In 1941-42 everything was go-go!

At that time decisions on allocation of radio frequencies for planes, tanks and ground pounders affected the size and shape of the end item radio needed to fit into spaces allocated. Further, crystal material was so scarce that the higher priority aircraft needs took precedent.

In my own experience, in developing Facsimile in 1942-43, the completion was in the needs for weather maps and photographs required by United Airlines and film industry publicity pictures.

Everything was a pressure point, which could only move so far. Ever

consider how the thousands of barracks were built on new ground known as camps for all of us draftees to move into? Review army pamphlet 672-1 and see how many small units were organized, funded, equipped, scheduled, etc. The 8th Air Force had several wings with each consisting of a number of Bomb Wing and Fighter Wing composed of 5 squadrons of numerous aircraft types.

William Leeseemann, Jr.
26 INFD 101 ECB

K-9 VETS...

...can they read??

Anyway, there is a website dedicated to the war dogs of WWII. If you would like to visit, the address is: www.dobertoons.com ■

ST. LOUIS CHAPTER PRODUCES VIDEO

The St. Louis Chapter has developed a program to perpetuate the memories of the sacrifices of those involved in the Battle of the Bulge. The chapter developed a program to meet this objective by forming speaking teams of three veterans and the wife of a veteran speaking to the young people in the schools telling of their experiences in WWII. The program has been very successful and has been presented to over 10,000 students and adults over a seven year period. The goal is to create an interest in history, instill patriotism in the attitude of the listeners and to have a bond between the generations.

Individuals (and chapters) are encouraged to obtain a copy of the video to show to the students in their neighborhood schools as a part of their history studies. Title of the video is *Everyday Heroes of the Battle of the Bulge, WWII*, and it can be obtained by sending a check or money order (including handling and postage) for \$14.95 to: Millworks Post, 51 Garnet Lane, Cape Girardeau, Missouri 63701. For further information, you can contact John L. Mills 573-339-0933. ■

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER BUILDING WALKWAY

The Western Pennsylvania Chapter of VBOB is building a memorial brick walk way at the National Guard Armory in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

Cost per brick is \$50.00 with a personal inscription--a wonderful way to permanently remember any WWII veteran. For further information, write to Harvey B. Waugaman, 9 Meadowbrook Avenue, Greensburg, Pennsylvania 15601-2722 or telephone: 724-834-4474. ■

ARE YOUR DUES DUE?

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

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

The time is approaching...

WHEN OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS WILL TAKE OVER THE REINS

As you can well imagine, a power bigger than all of us is daily taking its toll on our numbers. We must begin to look to our spouses, children, relatives and history buffs to carry the load and see that the Battle of the Bulge is never forgotten. VBOB continues to grow (a little slower than in the past)--but we are the ones who must ensure that that we have built a fortress so strong that it will not crumble with time. We have so much left to do.

We are, therefore, making a special effort to enroll family members and history buffs so that they can carry on our efforts. We are offering a two-year membership to any member of your family for the price of one--\$15.00 for two years.

"What am I going to do with two copies of *The Bugle*?" you might ask.

Glad you asked. This could be the most important piece of second class mail you have ever received--other than the *Victoria's Secret* catalog. The extra copy of *The Bugle* should be taken to your local high school or public library. If you have a college in your area, take it to their history department library. If there is a military post in your area, take it to the library there. These copies will be instrumental in helping to educate students of the sacrifices made during "America's greatest battle."

Many of you have a difficult time talking with your family about your war experiences. Perhaps, a gift of a two-year membership would whet their appetites to learn more and enable you to be able to speak of your experiences a little easier. Many of the letters we receive are from children who are eager to learn of their dad's experiences--"Dad never talked about it."

To take advantage of this offer, it is necessary that you use the membership application below--the regular membership application will not do. If you need more than one or do not wish to cut up this newsletter, make a Xerox copy and send it in along with your check.

-----Detach and Mail-----

**SPECIAL ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP
Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc.
P.O. Box 11129, Arlington, VA 22210-2129**

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Two Year's Dues--\$15.00

AO
Do not write above this line

Name _____ Birthdate _____

Address _____ Phone (____) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

I am joining VBOB in honor of my _____ (relationship), whose name is: _____

He/she was in the following campaigns: _____

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

Regiment _____ Battalion _____

Company _____ Other _____

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

Applicant's signature _____

VBOB 2004 REUNION & WWII MEMORIAL

It is done! As you read this the WWII Memorial will have been finished and opened prior to the formal dedication scheduled for Saturday, 29 May 2004.

Plans for our 2004 Annual Reunion in conjunction with the Memorial Dedication are moving right along and we expect over 1100 VBOB veterans and their family members to attend the dedication. We will be the largest of the more than 300 Veterans organizations that will be attended. Most of the other organizations are in the 50 to 250 attendee range. The WWII Memorial Committee indicates that they will have seating for over 100,000 and they expect over half-a-million attendees for the events.

We plan a great reunion from 25 to 30 May in conjunction with the Memorial events to include, tours of Washington during the day and in the evening under the lights. Visits to the new International Spy Museum and the new Air and Space Museum at Dulles which opened last December are also on the agenda. There will also be time to visit the Smithsonian Veterans Folklife Festival between Third and Seventh Streets NW on the Mall. There will be WWII music, historic equipment from WWII, a reunion tent, a chance to record your WWII recollections with the Library of Congress as well as VA, National Archives and the military services represented. We will also hold our Annual Meeting on Thursday, 27 May, from 8:00 – 10:00 AM followed by a trip to Ft Meade MD for lunch, greetings by the Garrison Commander and visits to our Battle of the Bulge Conference Room and the Ft Meade Museum.

On Friday night we will have an 800 seat banquet in the headquarters hotel the Fairview Park Marriott in Falls Church VA. General William Knowlton, Bulge veteran, will be our principal speaker as well as attendance by the Belgium and Luxembourg Embassies. After the Memorial Dedication we will conclude the reunion by attending the "Road to Victory" musical along with Gold Star Mothers and Orphaned Children group from 8:00 – 10:00 PM at the Lisner Auditorium. Our South Carolina Chapter is sponsoring this musical. Of Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

Everyone who was on our wait list for rooms should have been contacted by our Secretary, John Bowen, and placed in a room. As with an event of this size, sadly we have had veterans who have died or other veterans who have had to cancel because of health reasons. We now have a few cancellations for attendance for 3 nights 27-30 May and one or two rooms for 4 nights as we go to press. If you still have an interest in coming call John Bowen at 301-384-6533 to see if there may have been some last minute cancellations.

Everyone who has requested a room or information should have received Registration Forms from the Reunion Committee. If you did not please contact John immediately.

In a Washington Times article by Jon Ward, on 2 April 2004, he wrote "The \$170 million memorial has been built entirely with private funds in less than three years. Visitors will enter the bronze-and-granite memorial plaza through a 43-foot arch. In the center of the plaza stands a rainbow pool with fountains, and the plaza is ringed by 26 granite pillars. A wall with 4,000 sculpted, gold plated stars

will commemorate the 400,000 American soldiers who have died in the war.

"The sweep of the memorial will take your breath away," Alan K. Simpson, a former Republican senator from Wyoming who has supported the efforts to build the memorial, said in a telephone interview. "That's going to stun the American people and the people of the world. It's an absolutely inspirational thing, pure power."

The article mentions that it will be "the largest gathering of WWII veterans since the war ended."

WWII Service Members	16.1 Million
Battle Deaths	291,557
Non-theater Deaths	113,842
Living WWII Veterans	4.4 Million
Est. Deaths this Fiscal Year	385,369
Est. Veteran Deaths/Day	1,056

Sources: Dept of Defense, Dept of Veterans Affairs, American Battle Monuments Commission, Associated Press.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE WEAPONS

We have received a request for Battle of the Bulge firearms anecdotes from Guy J. Sagi, executive editor of Shooting Illustrated magazine in Fairfax, VA.

He is researching an article detailing the firearms used by U.S. Forces in the Battle of the Bulge. While he cannot guarantee every comment or anecdote submitted will make it into print, he's hoping to add some color to his historic look scheduled to appear in the December issue of the magazine.

Comments about the reliability of the 1911 .45 pistol, the rifle you may have carried for the entire campaign that never misfired, the machine gun that provided cover fire that saved your entire squad's life are exactly what he's looking for--proof positive that the United States indeed produced the finest combat arms around. Humorous anecdotes are also greatly welcomed, and Sagi (whose father was a member of the 7th Armored in the Battle of the Bulge) is looking for a few personal glimpses of each firearm. "You spent a lot of time together," Sagi said. "Here's the chance to tell someone about it."

Please contact Sagi by writing to him at Guy J. Sagi, % Shooting Illustrated, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030, by calling him at 703 - 267-1375, or you can e-mail him at gsagi@nrahq.org.

The magazine is also interested in capturing on film some of the memorabilia you may have also collected from the battle, including photos, however he is asking that you do not send anything of value until you have spoken to him personally and he has a chance to consult with his art department.

REUNIONS

The MIDWEST 26th "YANKEE" DIVISION Veterans Association will be having their 15th Annual reunion Monday, September 20th and Tuesday, September 21st, 2004 at the Holiday Inn, North in St. Louis, MO. For more information contact W. Kent Stephens, 107 Bluffview Lane, Collinsville, IL 62234. Phone 618-34-1616. Email address is kentvbob@aol.com.

FOY AMERICAN TEMPORARY CEMETERY

On February 6, 1945, the American Army decided to open a military cemetery near the village of Foy, Bastogne, Belgium. This cemetery was to receive the bodies of the American victims of the Battle of the Bulge (Dec.1944 – Jan.1945) and the increasing number of casualties made its opening necessary. But it was soon decided that this cemetery would only be temporary and in 1947, the transfer of the bodies to other permanent cemetery began. The bodies were transferred to other American Cemeteries like Henri Chapelle, Belgium – Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium – Margraten, The Netherlands and Hamm, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

In the year 1948, after having 2,701 heroes buried in its resting fields, the Foy American Temporary Cemetery was permanently closed. In 2003, a group of Bastogne citizens, still frustrated by the fact that no American cemetery had been built in their area, decided to have a Memorial dedicated to the memory of those 2,701 Americans who died on their soil for their freedom.

They created a **Committee of Organizations of Bastogne "Remember Americans" (COBRA)**. The acronym COBRA was also chosen in reference to the nickname of the first tank to ever penetrate the encircled city on December 26, 1944 (COBRA KING).

The City of Bastogne decided immediately to support COBRA and to include the building and the dedication of the Memorial into the official schedule of the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. The monument's construction is still in process, but its name has been chosen:

"FOY AMERICAN MEMORIAL."

It will be made of:

- A 5.9-foot (1.8 meters) by 6.56-foot (2-meter) wall made of local gray stone.
- In the middle of the wall, a three part sign made of black marble and engraved with a bi-lingual text, a design and a poem by an American veteran.
- On the left (when facing the wall), a Latin Cross made of white marble of Carrare. This cross is the same as the ones found in all American Cemeteries across Europe.
- On the right, a Star of David made of the same material.
- Around the back of the Memorial, a half circle of evergreens will be planted.
- In front of the Memorial, there will be a grassy area, with a gravel path in the middle.
- On each side of the Memorial, there will be a flag: the American flag and the Belgium Flag.

On September 10, 2004, the FOY AMERICAN MEMORIAL will be dedicated by the highest authorities of Belgium, in the presence of the American representatives in Belgium, the American Color Guards, a Belgian Military Band, a Belgian Army detachment, patriotic associations of Bastogne and its area, many different city Mayors, school children, a fly over by Belgian F-16's, and more... Of course, American Veterans as well as children of men who were buried in Foy will also be attending.

On the same day, courageous walkers will arrive in Foy from the Henri Chapelle Cemetery, after a 5 day march (a distance of approximately 65 Miles) bringing with them a little bit of soil from the Henri Chapelle Cemetery to pour over the new memorial grass. The last stretch of this walk (11 Miles) will begin at Noville, Bastogne on Sept. 10 at 8:00 am and will arrive in Foy right at the time of the Memorial dedication, which is planned for 3:00 p.m.

We wish to invite any of you veterans (or groups you might know of) who are planning a trip to the area of Bastogne around the same time, to join us to attend the ceremony and/or participate in the walk's last stretch (all is free). Please contact the organizer, at the address below, if you are interested. If you plan to participate in the whole 5-day march or in the walk's last stretch, please contact the organizer ASAP at:

Roger Marquet
Chenogne, ID
B-6640 Sibret, Belgium
Phone & Fax: + 32.61.21.91.51
E-mail: rogermarquet@blegacom.net

The Mayor representing the City of Bastogne: Mr. Philippe COLLARD

The Executive of the 60th Anniversary Committee is made of:
Mrs. Patricia LEMAIRE
Lt.Col. BEM e.r. Joseph GELARD
Cdt e.r. Henri MIGNON
Mr. Guy HORMAN
Mr. Marcel LAFONTAINE
Mr. Olivier DELMEE

The COBRA Group officers are:
President: Mr. Jean-Claude CREMER
1st Vice-president: Mr. Guy PEREMANS
2nd Vice-president: Mr. Joël ROBERT
Secretary: Mr. Roger MARQUET
Treasurer: Mrs. Monique MASURELLE
Deputy Treasurer: Mrs. Ninie ALEXANDRE

NATION'S CAPITAL ST. PATRICK'S PARADE



The Torch is Passed - Members of the MD/DC Chapter who marched in the Washington DC Nation's Capital St Patrick's Parade. Front: Griffen Diday, Connor Diday. rear: Moe Shulman, Bob Jones, Dan Funl, MD/DC Pres., Henry Kwiatkowski, Bob Shawn, & John Bowen

MEMORIALS TO AMERICANS IN LUXEMBOURG

[Following is a listing compiled by Mr. Jean Milmeister, of CEBA and Luxembourg Liberty Road Committee, which was sent to us by the United States Embassy in Luxembourg.]

Berdorf	10th Armored Division
Berle	90th Infantry Division
Bertrange	5th Armored Division
Bettborn	26th Infantry Division
Bettendorf	5th Infantry Division
Bigonville	4th Armored Division 9th United States Air Force
Boulaide	35th Infantry Division
Brandembourg	28th Infantry Division
Clervaux	GI Memorial
Consdorf	10th Armored Division
Consthum	28th Infantry Division, 110th Infantry Regiment
Dahl	80th Infantry Division
Diekirch	Liberation Units
Echternach	Liberation Units
Eschdorf	26th Infantry Division
Eschialzette	United States Army
Ettelbruck	Patton Memorial
Findel	4th Infantry Division
Graevenmacher	83rd Infantry Division
Heiderscheid	80th Infantry Division
Heinerscheid	6th Armored Division
Hoesdorf	28th Infantry Division, 109th Infantry Regiment
Hoscheid	5th Infantry Division
Hosingen	Liberation Units
Larochette	United States Army
Lieler	712th Tank Battalion
Marnach	28th Infantry Division
Marte Lange/Rombach	4th Armored Division
Medernach	9th Armored Division
Montfort	Liberation Units
Osweler	Liberation Units
Perle	385th Bomb Group
Petange	1st Fallen GI
Rambrouch	26th Infantry Division
Redange	511th Engineer Company
Rodenbourg	Ernest Hemingway
Sandweiler	5th Armored Division
Schumanns Eck	1944-45 Liberation Memorial
Steinfort	Patton Memorial
Stolzembourg	5th Armored Division
Troisvierges	6th Armored Division
Vianden	6th Cavalry and 1255th Engineers
Waldbillig	9th Armored Division
Weilerbach	5th Infantry Division
Weiler/Putscheid	28th Infantry Division 110th Infantry Regiment
Weiswampach	35th Infantry Division Dwight D. Eisenhower
Wintrange	90th Infantry Division

NOMINATIONS FOR 2004-05 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

As Chairman of the VBOB Nominating Committee, I present the following members to serve as officers for the year 2004-05.

President

George Chekan
9th Infantry Division

Executive Vice President

John J. Dunleavy
737th Tank Battalion

Vice President, Membership

John Hyland
84th Infantry Division

Vice President, Chapters

George Fisher
26th Infantry Division

Vice President, Military Affairs

Stanley Wojtusik
106th Infantry Division

Vice President, Public Affairs

Demitri Paris
9th Armored Division

Treasurer

William P. Tayman
87th Infantry Division

Corresponding Secretary

Dorothy Davis
57th Field Hospital

Recording Secretary

John D. Bowen
Associate Member

Trustees

Three Years:

Joseph Zimmer
87th Infantry Division
Earle Hart

87th Infantry Division
Richard Schlenker
26th Infantry Division

Two Years:

Richard G. Guenter
511th Engineer Light Pontoon

Neil Thompson
740th Tank Battalion

Robert Phillips
28th Infantry Division

One Year:

Frances Dougherty
Associate Member

James W. Hunt
1st Infantry Division

John McAuliffe
87th Infantry Division

These nominees will be presented, along with any nominations from the floor, at the General Business Meeting on Thursday, May 27, 2004, at the Reunion Headquarters Hotel (The Fairview Park Marriot).

Louis E. Cunningham
Chairman, VBOB Nominating Committee

Please check your mailing label to see if your dues are due.

344th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M)

"Silver Streaks"

By Carl M. Christ
Historian, 344th Bomb Group

So little has come to light on the tactical bombing in WWII by the B-26 Marauders of the Ninth Air Force.

Stephen Ambrose in "D-Day June 6, 1944: the Climatic Battle of World War II" gives credit in Chapter 13--"The Greatest Show Ever Staged," (The Air Bombardment) on the excellent support the B-26 Marauders gave to the ground forces just prior to the landings on Utah Beach--just as support was given by the Marauders during the Bulge.

A report I wrote as historian for the 344th Bomb Group tells of my group's (one of eight medium groups in the ETO) missions during the Bulge period.

Due to the severe weather the 344th Bomb Group was able to fly 12 missions in support of the ground forces. I flew 10 of those missions as a bombardier, including two on Christmas Day.

We, the B-26 Maraudermen, were there too!

Missions in Support to Ground Forces

18 December 1944	Herhahn Defended Town
23 December 1944	Euskirchen Railroad Bridge
24 December 1944	Kons-Karthus Railroad Bridge
25 December 1944 (a.m.)	Kons-Karthus Railroad Bridge
25 December 1944 (p.m.)	Keuchingen Highway Bridge
27 December 1944	Ahrweiler Railroad Bridge
5 January 1945	Houffalize Road Junction
11 January 1945	Houffalize Road Junction
14 January 1945	Rinntal Railroad Bridge
16 January 1945	Bullay Railroad Bridge
21 January 1945	Mayen Supply Center

18 December 1944--Target: Herhahn Defended Town

• **494 Squadron**--On December 18, our squadron furnished seven aircraft for the mission against the defended area of Herhahn. This was another close support target requested by the First Army. The destruction of this facility would ease the way for the 79th and 99th Infantry Divisions which were launching an attack to relieve the pressure of the enemy on our troops further north. Although visual determination of the results was not possible due to heavy cloud coverage, the Gee fix indicated that the bombs hit in the immediate area of the target.

• **495 Squadron**--December 18 saw Lt. Col Norgaard leading the group to attack Herhahn. This defended town was successfully bombed by use of Pathfinder equipment. As has been usual for the missions in December, no flack was encountered.

• **496 Squadron**--A defended area at Herhahn was attacked on 18 December. Bombing was done on Pathfinder and no results observed.

• **497 Squadron**--On December 18 our mission was to Herhahn, Germany. This was a defended area holding up the advance of the ground forces. Twelve of the squadron's planes participated and each dropped 16 x 250 lb. bombs on the Pathfinder aircraft, as briefed. No flak was encountered. Results were unobserved cause of 10/10 clouds.

23 December, 1944--Target: Euskirchen Railroad Bridge

• **494 Squadron**--The 23 December mission was against the Euskirchen Bridge, which was a five track railroad facility over the River Erft and serving the flow of supplies to the enemy front lines. Our squadron furnished seven aircraft. The results, as indicated on the final Mission Report, read as follows: "Concentration blankets the rail

over bridge 4008NE of the DMPI...hits on train and locomotive standing at bridge approach...excellent."

• **495 Squadron**--The railroad bridge at Euskirchen in the breakthrough area was attacked when Major Schifani led the group, encountering intense flak but only slight battle damage was suffered. The bridge was bombed with good results--all aircraft returned.

• **496 Squadron**--Mission was against Euskirchen Bridge on 23 December. Bombing was done on Pathfinder with all bombs falling outside a 1,000 foot radius of the bridge. Intense flak was encountered at the target resulting in damage to six of our seven planes.

• **497 Squadron**--A Pathfinder mission to destroy the railroad bridge at Euskirchen, Germany, on December 23rd. Two small rail bridges were hit. Flak was encountered sporadically enroute, probably from mobile guns and moderate flak was encountered at the target. Five of the squadron's planes received flak damage.

This was a period of the German breakthrough in the Ardennes Forest area of Belgium. Fortunately there was a break in the bad weather from December 23rd until the 27th, and an all out effort was put up by the Marauder Groups to stop the German counter-offensive and paralyze his communications system in this area.

24 December 1944--Target: Kons-Karthus Railroad Bridge

• **494 Squadron**--On the 24th of December the attack was against the railroad bridge at Kons-Karthus, crossing the Sarr River, which achieved superior results. This facility was employed by the enemy to carry supply trains to the area where the breakthrough was made on our fronts. The destruction of the bridge would hinder the enemy's progress in his new salient. The results of this mission was another manifestation of the sort of initiatives and achievements which frustrated the Hun's futile attempt to turn the tide of battle.

• **495 Squadron**--Kons-Karthus rail bridge was attacked on 24 December. Results were called very good when the bombs hit the bridge and approaches. However, the target was not knocked out by this attack. Weak, inaccurate flak was encountered but no planes were damaged. When this group followed the 322 Group in the attack on Euskirchen, 23 December, fighters attacked the 322nd outfit. Some 60 enemy fighters jumped that group and three aircraft were lost. The Pathfinder plane leading our group was also attacked after leaving us but no enemy fighters were sighted by our crews although we followed within 15 minutes of the time the other group was attacked. The 391st Group lost 16 aircraft in this same area on the same date when fighters attacked.

• **496 Squadron**--On 24 December our squadron furnished the 1st and 2nd flights of Box II. The target was a RR bridge at Kons-Karthus over which supplies were being shipped to the enemy front. Bombs of the first flight fell 1,500 feet north of the bridge because of a frosted bomb sight, but the 2nd flight scored a superior with a bomb pattern blanketing the eastern half of the bridge.

• **497 Squadron**--On 24 December the squadron put up 10 planes to attack the rail bridge of Kons-Karthus near Trier, Germany. Bombing was visual, but the squadron's flight received a rating of poor because the No. 2 flight crowded him out on the bomb run and a second run was impossible. Moderate accurate flak was encountered and there was no flak damage.

25 December 1944--Target: a.m. Kons-Karthus Railroad Bridge & p.m. Keuchingen Highway Bridge

• **494 Squadron**--On the morning of 25 December we furnished twelve aircraft again in a maximum effort against Kons-Karthus. This time we led the Third Box...results here too were superior. The afternoon of the 25th, our squadron put up twelve aircraft again, for this mission to Keuchingen. The target was a highway bridge which served on a supply route for the enemy columns fighting in the Eiffel salient. Superior results again achieved added to the weight of accomplishments hurled by our squadron and our group against the enemy.

• **495 Squadron**--Christmas Day was clear and excellent flying conditions prevailed. Two missions, both very successful, flown. The morning mission to Kons-Karthus Bridge.

(Continued)

344TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Continuation)

Weak, inaccurate flak did not interfere with bombing as the photo cover showed the results to be superior. This bridge seemed difficult to knock out, having been hit several times before. The afternoon mission was flown to Keuchingen where a bridge was attacked. No flak was encountered and the bombing results were called good to excellent.

The traditional army Christmas dinner was served on Christmas evening. Despite the fact that we're in France and the battle situation is very critical, the cooks exceeded themselves in preparing a most sumptuous repast. Turkey was a main dish and there was more than enough for all.

• **496 Squadron**--On Christmas Day this squadron participated in two missions. The morning mission had as its target the same bridge at Kons-Karthaus, where one rail was found standing. Our planes made up the third flight of the 2nd box. An excellent was scored by the 1st flight with possible direct hits on the western end of the bridge. The second flight had no photo coverage but visual observation placed their bombs in a good pattern across the target.

In the afternoon, we attacked a highway bridge at Keuchingen. The 1st flight scored a superior with hits on the northern part of the bridge, while the 2nd flight hit 450 feet southwest of the DMPI for an excellent. No flak was encountered and all ships returned safely to the base.

• **497 Squadron**--December was a maximum effort mission to again attack the Kons-Karthaus Bridge at Trier. This was a visual mission and flight bombing was employed. Weak flak was encountered but there was no flak damage.

The second mission Christmas Day was to attack the highway bridge at Keuchingen, Germany--an important supply route for enemy columns fighting in the Belgian breakthrough area. Visual flight bombing was employed. Complete photographic coverage was not available but there were hits on or near the bridge. No flak was encountered.

27 December 1944--Target: Ahrweiler Railroad Bridge

• **494 Squadron**--The mission for the 27th of December, was an attack against the Ahrweiler Railroad Bridge. Our squadron furnished twelve aircraft. This mission was yet another step in the plan to isolate the enemy forces participating in the Eiffel counter-offensive. Heavy smoke in the target area prevented the bombardiers from picking up the exact DMPI, however with the aid of check points some good concentrations were achieved and great damage was wrought to this transportation facility.

• **495 Squadron**--December 27 was a tragic day for the squadron. Returning from a mission in the afternoon and making no attack, the formation encountered very heavy haze over the base. After making several passes over the field in an effort to get the aircraft in at this field the group, with the exception of six planes that were very fortunate in getting in, was diverted. When leaving this area for the diversion field one plane ran out of gasoline and his ship crashed into a hillside some 10 miles south of this base. All his crewmen were able to bale out at an altitude of about 500 feet. The pilot remained with the plane and was killed when it crashed. Two crew members were able to make successful jumps at this very low altitude. Two other crewmen were both killed when their chutes did not function properly at this low altitude. Burial for the men killed in this accident was held on 28 December in Celeres, France.

Shortly after the breakthrough by the Germans, the squadron was alerted for an emergency. Station defense plans were in effect, all men were fully armed at all times and steps made to evacuate the base in the event of an emergency. Paratroops dropped by the enemy in this vicinity necessitated road blocks and a doubling of the guard. All personnel were restricted to the base and could not leave their immediate area after 2100 hours. Air raids were numerous and although our alert was sounded often, no attack was actually made.

• **496 Squadron**--No record.

• **497 Squadron**--On 27 December 1944 the third box in the mission to Ahrweiler Bridge did not bomb because of inability to pick up the target due to bomb smoke. The No. 2 flight salvaged bombs over the

target. All the squadron's planes landed away from base because of haze and poor visibility at base.

During December, the training program was continued for reinforcement crews. During the period of the German counter-offensive stringent, protective measures were taken to ensure against any possible paratroop attacks of sabotage. The guard strength was increased with a guard on each plane or important installation. More arms were carried by all personnel. Road blocks were established and guards placed on road entrances to the base.

During December, a large wooden building was erected for a mess hall and orderly room building was completed. Also a policy was instigated by the group for sending combat crews to the front lines to further relations and liaison between the ground forces and the Air Corps. A crew went to the Bastogne area of Belgium, and brought back interesting accounts of their stay at the front.

5 January 1945--Target: Houffalize Road Junction

• **494 Squadron**--The New Year entered with snow and generally adverse weather conditions holding a restraining grip on our operations for the first days of the month; as witnessed by the scrubbing of the mission to Kons-Karthaus on the first, and the subsequent missions to the Houffalize Road Junction on the second, third and fourth of the month.

Improving weather on the 5th of January finally permitted the mission to the Houffalize Road Junction after four prior attempts. Houffalize, an important communications center, above Bastogne, was in an area where the enemy had been most aggressive. This target was a vital road junction in the enemy's salient into our lines, and a successful bombing would greatly hinder the enemy in the furtherance of his troop and supply movements at a time when he was particularly vulnerable in this respect. Bombing results were very encouraging. Our squadron furnished six ships for this mission.

On January 7th, our squadron sent another party of combat crews to visit ground units at the front. This program was instituted early in December to give flying personnel an opportunity to observe at first hand the problems of the infantry men, the tank men, and the artillerymen. It was hoped that the experience gleaned there would provide a better understanding of the fighting on the ground and the role of the medium bombardment in supporting them.

• **495 Squadron**--The first mission this month was completed 5 January when the group attacked a road junction at Houffalize. The mission was carried out in bad weather with the use of Pathfinder equipment. The formation encountered moderate accurate flak at the target and six of the twelve aircraft from this squadron received battle damage. Photographic cover of the attack revealed the bombing to be excellent.

• **496 Squadron**--The objective of the mission (Houffalize Road Junction) was to destroy the enemy's rail supply line in the salient and deprive his forward troops of the materials of war which they so badly needed. Bombing was done on Pathfinder lead with excellent results for the first box, of which our flight was a part. Moderate accurate flak was encountered at the target and turn off the target damaging four planes (Cat. "A").

• **497 Squadron**--A Pathfinder mission to attack the important road junction at Houffalize, Belgium, in support of the Allied drive to stop the German counter-offensive in this area. No bombs were dropped because the lead bombardier did not see the Pathfinder aircraft drop until too late. Moderate accurate flak was encountered at the target and seven of the squadron's planes received Category A battle damage.

Five briefings were held and the missions scrubbed from January 6th through 7th because of bad weather. Practically all of January saw the ground covered with snow and ice, making operations a little difficult. The runway and perimeter tracks were sanded after each snow fall which were frequent. This placed a strain on the whole squadron as 30 or 40 men would have to be called so that a mission might be possible. Also, the cold weather tended to make the engines in the aircraft sluggish and unresponsive, and on several occasions the engines were finally started with only extreme difficulty. Also, the cold made icing conditions in all clouds extremely

(Continued)

344TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Continuation)

hazardous for flying, but not withstanding all these difficulties, missions were flown on every occasion that the weather permitted.

11 January 1945--Target: Houffalize Road Junction

• **494 Squadron**--It was not until January 11th that weather conditions permitted our next participation in a mission. This time to the Houffalize Road Junction once again, where we furnished seven aircraft.

• **495 Squadron**--January 11, Houffalize was again attacked on a Pathfinder mission. However, due to snow and ice on the perimeter track, four of our aircraft were unable to take off because one aircraft was blown off the track in such a position that it was impossible to get other planes around it in time to take off. Moderate accurate flak was again encountered at the target. Bombing results on this mission were poor.

• **496 Squadron**--Houffalize Road Junction--Having destroyed the Nazi railroad transportation, the 9th Bombardment Division now turned its attention to the destruction of the automotive supply line. The target had been bombed before but had been repaired and traffic was seen going through the town. A complete overcast caused the mission to bomb on Pathfinder lead. Our lead ship had rack malfunction causing the rest of the flight to bomb late. Results were unsatisfactory. Moderate flak was encountered on turn off the target causing Category A damage to all six ships.

• **497 Squadron**--January 11, a Pathfinder mission to again attack the road junction at Houffalize. Bombs were dropped on the Pathfinder but results were poor. Moderate, accurate flak was encountered at the target and seven of the squadron's planes received battle damage.

14 January 1945--Target: Rinnthal Railroad Bridge

• **494 Squadron**--On the 14th of January, we furnished twelve aircraft on a mission to the Rinnthal Railroad Bridge. The target was an embankment bridge, another link in the interdiction plan to isolate the enemy's battle front from all sources of supply and reinforcement. The mission was flown in support of the Seventh United States Army. It may be of interest to note that the target (an embankment bridge) was picked up by the bombardiers due to the fact that it cast an obvious shadow upon the snow. Once again our results were superior. It is regrettable to note that on the join up of this mission, one of our aircraft crashed and the entire crew was lost.

• **495 Squadron**--Six squadron aircraft participated in an attack on the rail bridge at Rinnthal on 14 January. Good weather prevailed on this day and Pathfinder equipment was not used. Weak and accurate flak was encountered but none of our aircraft sustained battle damage. Two bombing runs were made on the objective and although no photographic coverage was available, the results were believed to be generally good. On takeoff one aircraft from the 494th Squadron was lost when it spun in shortly after takeoff. All crewmen were lost.

• **496 Squadron**--January 14, 1945, Rinnthal--The target was a railroad embankment bridge which formed an important link in the interdiction plan to separate the enemy battle fronts in the Sixth Army Group area from its source of supply. This mission proved to be the first visual of the month. Our squadrons' first flight scored a superior with probable hits on the bridge. The results of the second flight were unsatisfactory. No flak was encountered and all ships returned safely.

• **497 Squadron**--Attack against the rail bridge at Rinnthal, Germany, on 14 January 1945. The primary target was not bombed because of cloud cover, but a target of opportunity, a rail line near Pirmasens, Germany, was bombed instead with poor results. Weak, inaccurate flak was encountered in the vicinity of the target.

16 January 1945--Target: Bullay Railroad Bridge

• **494 Squadron**--On the 16th, we furnished seven aircraft to participate in the attack on the bridge at Bullay. The results were believed to be satisfactory. Continued poor weather prevented any missions from being flown until the 21st of the month.

• **495 Squadron**--The Bullay Railroad Bridge was the target January 16. No flak was encountered at the target but the bombing results were only fair. The bridge itself was not touched but the rail line leading up to it was severed. Eight aircraft were battle damaged when the

formation got off course and flew over Trier on the way back to base.

• **496 Squadron**--January 16, 1945, Bullay Railroad Bridge. An important railroad link across the Moselle River supplying the enemy troops in the Bulge area. The mission took off in Pathfinder formation, but bombed visually by boxes, through a break in the clouds over the target. The lead ship was caught in prop wash of a preceding group causing tumbling of the Gyro and making synchronization impossible. The result was a bad miss. Three of our ships were damaged by flak when they flew too close to Trier. However, all planes returned safely.

• **497 Squadron**--On 16 January the squadron attacked the rail bridge at Bullay, Germany. Bombing was by boxes and was superior although actual assessment was not possible because of previous bomb smoke over the target. Moderate flak was encountered enroute near Wittlich, Germany, but none of the squadron's planes received battle damage.

Three briefings were held from January 18th to 20th, but the missions were scrubbed before take-off because of weather.

21 January 1945--Target: Mayen Supply Center

• **494 Squadron**--The target for the 21st of January was the Mayen Supply Center. It was attacked because of its anticipated important role in the enemy's plans. Since the bridge west of Mayen had been destroyed (by the Mediums), the enemy had been unable to move rail traffic beyond this point. The city was converted into a military post in conjunction with the rail head. It was an active depot, handling supplies, equipment and personnel, intended to reinforce the sector resisting our First and Third Armies. Troops and supplies were detailed here and moved to the front by motor transport. Captain Rheinhart led our seven ships which were in the first box...third flight. The bombing results were good.

• **495 Squadron**--Major Clay led twelve aircraft from the squadron on a mission briefed to attack a supply center at Mayen on 21 January. The mission aborted when severe icing conditions were encountered in the vicinity of Chateau Thierry. All aircraft returned safely to base.

• **496 Squadron**--January 21, 1945 (Mayen Supply Center)--The enemy, because of the bombing of his railroad bridges, was forced at certain points to transfer his supplies from railroad to motor transport. Mayen was one of these points. The flights of the second box became separated in the overcast and were forced to return to base. However, our flight led by Lt. McSwain joined the first box and bombed on Pathfinder lead with unsatisfactory results. No flak was encountered and all ships returned safely to the base.

• **497 Squadron**--Major Catlin led the group on 21 January 1945 in a Pathfinder mission to attack a supply center at Mayen, Germany. All bombs were dropped on the Pathfinder as briefed but results were unsatisfactory with bombs two miles northeast of target area. No flak was encountered.

Headquarters Section 344th Bomb Group

Battle of the Bulge - 16 December 1944-16 January 1945

The missions flown in December were more in the nature of close support to ground forces rather than direct tactical support. Our attacks were directed against such objectives as enemy defended towns, supply depots, and barracks. The group also struck at railroad bridges to cripple routes of communications supplying the enemy front line forces, which had broken through our lines of December 17th at Ardennes Forest in a supreme effort to surround and defeat our First Army troops.

Our Battle of the Bulge targets took the group to Herhahn, defended town on 18 December; Euskirchen railway bridge on 23 December; Kons-Karthaus Railway Bridge on 24 and 25 December; and in the afternoon of 25 December to Keuchingen to strike a bridge, and to the railway bridge at Ahrweiler.

Casualties and battle damage for the month were comparatively slight. Three crewmen wounded due to enemy flak action and 22 aircraft struck by flak. One plane crashed near the base on return from the Ahrweiler mission 27 December. The weather that day closed in so thickly at our station that most of the aircraft after circling were diverted to emergency fields, nine planes only being

(Continued)

344TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Continuation)

able to put down at the field. A plane of the 495th Bomb Squadron was rapidly running out of gas and not able to land due to visibility, proceeded toward an emergency field. Unfortunately, and before he could reach a landing point, his gasoline was practically exhausted. One motor stopped and the plane began to lose altitude and when the plane was approximately 300 feet above ground the other stopped. All of the crew bailed out at this low altitude, and excepting the pilot who remained at the controls hoping to crash land the plane successfully and probably could have had the plane cleared a slight hill in its path. He was killed. Two crewmen only were successful in the parachute attempt at that extreme low altitude who both stated their chutes opened practically as their feet struck the ground. The others plummeted to the ground before their parachutes were able to open and check their descent.

Winter began to get into full swing the latter part of December and by the early part of January, the countryside in the vicinity of our base was a vast white carpet of snow. Sudden snow flurries added to the depth of that already on the ground and hampered operations for flying.

The runways and taxi strips were constantly swept clear of snow to enable operations to proceed if weather permitted. Sand mixed with salt was spread upon them to prevent freezing and to lessen the skidding of planes while taking off or landing; yet despite these constant preparations and precautions, planes often found themselves suddenly bogged down at the edge of the strips with some portion of the landing gear holding it fast in the soft ground. Tractors quickly hauled those out which menaced other craft.

Maintenance of the airplanes under these conditions presented a problem also. The wings, accumulating snow, had to be swept off each morning before the planes could take off. Motors developed "Bugs" from the cold and electrical systems "shorted out" for no apparent reason. The conditions kept many of the planes on the ground and often during the month, formations had to be skeletonized to meet the operational requests of bomber command.

It was only natural, with conditions as such at our base and target areas, that the number of missions that could be flown would be limited. Though crews assigned for each day were briefed on targets forwarded through channels, our group flew but eight missions in all during the month.

Points of interdiction (railway and road junctions) were the main objects of attack assigned to us during the first month of the year--to disrupt the enemy's lines of communication and cripple their lines of supply and reinforcements.

In keeping with this program, 1 January 1945, our group was assigned to Koms-Karthus to bomb a railway bridge. Our planes lined up for the takeoff and two aircraft became airborne. The third plane, of the 497th Bombardment Squadron, after making its run at high speed down the runway, rose to join up with the preceding aircraft when, apparently a loss of power in the engines when but 20 feet above the ground caused his airplane to crash to the left of the runway and burn.

Despite the known danger that existed, the 2058th Engineers (Aviation), fire fighters, approached the flaming craft to extinguish the fire and rescue those trapped within and those who managed to extricate themselves from the twisted plane but fell near it due to their injuries.

Fourteen minutes after the crash, the bombs the plane carried, exploded with terrific force, scattering plane, fire and bomb fragments over a wide area. Four of the fire fighters were killed instantly by the detonation and five others of the fire fighting team were seriously injured. Due to the danger to other planes and personnel while the crashed ship burned the mission was scrubbed by wing headquarters.

On 5 January 1945, our aircraft took off to bomb a road junction at Houffalize. Of the formation put into the air for this objective, only 17 aircraft bombed, but with excellent results. Flak defenses of the enemy damaged 18 planes, causing Category A damage, wounded one crewman and killed another.

We again bombed the Houffalize road junction 11 January, after the enemy had hastily made his repairs, using 25 aircraft for the purpose,

but the results were unobserved due to the haze and cloud cover in the area.

A Pathfinder mission with 34 of our aircraft was flown to Rinnthal to bomb a rail bridge on 14 January. Again, results were unobserved due to weather conditions. No flak was encountered.

January 16th, we proceeded on another Pathfinder mission with 33 planes to strike the rail bridge at Bullay. The run on the target was not good and the bomb dropped on the Pathfinder ship and did not strike the aiming point.

Shortly after take off for this mission and while joining up a plane of the 494th Bomb Squadron was seen to go into a spin and dive into the undercast. The plane was subsequently located crashed on the outskirts of Abbeville--all of the occupants having been killed. ■

STAINED GLASS POST CARD WINDOW STILL AVAILABLE

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

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

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

QUERIES

Associate member Roger Marquet recently received the following letter:

"My name is Yvette Willems and I'm still living in LIBRAMONT, Belgium (just like during WW II). I was 10 years old in 1944 and I remember 3 American soldiers living--about 10-15 of December 1944 -- in a little house near ours. Their names are Jo, Ted and Thad (?). They were young. I went and cooked for them slices of corned beef on a little stove and in a little frying pan. They gave me chocolate and chewing gum. There was near our house a kind of truck with different phones. I was allowed to go in because I was young. My 16 years old sister wasn't allowed to go in. On Christmas Day, Jo, Ted and Thad (?) were coming and eating with us (my parents, my sister and I) and afterwards they went away... Unhappily, I haven't got any other information about them. My best wish would be to see them again. Please can you help me to find them again. In anticipation, I say a great great thank you. Yours faithfully, Yvette Willems".

Some extra information: Yvette is a female name in French. She was living in the "Rue des Alliés" in Libramont, Belgium. This street is now named "Rue du Pressoir". Libramont is located some 15 Miles south of Bastogne.

If you can help, please write to Roger Marquet at Chenogne, 1D - B-6640 Sibret, Belgium or e-mail him at hb051701@belgacom.net

TERRIFY and DESTROY

The Story of the 10th Armored Division

Written in 1945 by Ray Moore
Illustrated by Jim Short

The December wind swirled about the schoolhouse in the small French border town of Apach. Inside, the staff of the 10th Armored Division virtually had completed plans for a battle--a battle that never would be fought. The 90th and 95th Infantry Divisions had carved footholds on the east bank of the Saar River. The 10th Armored Tigers were to roll through these bridgeheads and drive steel-tipped spearheads into the Saar Basin. This was to be General Patton's march on the Rhine.

At 0330, December 17, movement orders came over the war room ticker. Less than three hours later, leading tanks and half-tracks clattered down the road--not east toward the bridgeheads, but north toward Luxembourg! So precipitous was the change in orders that few men of the division realized the importance of the new mission.

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt could have told them. Germany's stony-faced West Front Commander had struck a body blow in the Ardennes.

Men of the 9th Armored, 4th and 28th Infantry Divisions could have told the Tigers. Their lines, stretched thin and taut as a bowstring along a 95-mile front north of the Franco-German-Luxembourg border intersection, were snapping beneath the weight of concentrated German military might.

Von Rundstedt, who had chosen to marshal his remaining strength for a single paralyzing blow, hoped the haymaker might be the knockout punch. He had told his elite SS, Panzer and Volksgrenadier Divisions they would overrun Belgium, Luxembourg and northern France, and even penetrate to the Channel coast. This was no idle boast. Von Rundstedt had to be stopped. The Tigers were the first division called to help stem the raging drive.

That a successful penetration in depth can be only half the width of its base is a basic military axiom. To punch out a wider base, the Prussian Field Marshal sent a mailed fist crashing southward along a 30-mile front toward Luxembourg City.

The 10th arrived as the fingers of the fist were choking off isolated pockets of the 4th Infantry Division doughs at Echternach and half a dozen adjacent towns only 132 miles northeast of Luxembourg's capital.

Brigadier General Edwin W. Piburn's Combat Command A marched 75 miles in 18 hours December 17, and the Tigers clawed into Rundstedt's south flank early next day. Task forces commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas C. Chamberlain, Lt. Col. Miles L. Standish, and Lt. Col. John R. Riley roared forward to meet the Nazis.

For three crucial days tankers, doughs and cannoners lashed at the Germans, engaging superior forces, keeping them confused and occupied until III Corps could assemble sufficient strength for a counter-thrust to push the salient back across the Sauer River Line. TF Chamberlain blocked the deepest German penetration in Mullerthal's "Bowling Alley," a deep draw which



crescendos the battle's din. TF Riley ran a three-mile gauntlet of fire on three occasions to rescue infantrymen marooned in Echternach; TF Standish slashed northward to Berdorf, scene of bitter house-to-house fighting. A combat team under Capt. Steve Lang, Chicago, killed 200 Germans in Berdorf in an engagement fought partially at night in the torchlight of burning houses.

Meanwhile, two Nazi divisions were reported heading for a three-mile gap between the 9th Armored and the 28th Infantry Division's lines. Lt. Col. Cornelius A. Liehirie's 90th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron plugged the gap, held fast.

CCA had jabbed and parried to keep the Germans off balance. Now it would deliver the solid punch. Jumping off at 1100, December 24, the combat command cleared the area south of the Sauer River within 24 hours. The southern anchor was secured.

As Maj. Gen. William H. Morris, commanding the 10th, sent his strong right arm, CCA, smashing into von Rundstedt's body, he unleashed a left hook, Combat Command B, which swung in a wide arc to catch the Germans squarely on the nose.

"Stone of Bastogne"



Blunts Nazi Blitz
Greying dusk
shrouded Bastogne
as CCB's lead
Sherman tanks,

tank destroyers and half-tracks rolled through the town December 18. These were the first combat troops to reach the threatened city and before leaving they would write a glowing chapter in the history of World War II.

CCB's commander, Col. William L. Roberts, split his command to form a crescent-shaped arc facing eastward five miles from the city. A task force commanded by Maj. William R. Doesobry went north to Noville, while a similar group under Lt. Col. Henry T. Cherry wheeled east to Longvilly. Lt. Col. James O'Hara's group shifted southeast to Bras.

While the Tiger's steel-treaded tanks ground over Bastogne's cobble-stoned streets, the avalanche of German might rolled westward with increasing momentum.

Capture of Bastogne, hub from which seven main roads spread spoke-like in all directions, was essential to the swift movement of Rundstedt's panzers. Riding the crest of a 14-mile advance, five Nazi divisions knifed through blanket-like fog to strike CCB in the pre-dawn darkness of December 19.

For the first time since he launched his onslaught, von Rundstedt was stopped!

Bazooka-armed doughboys and single platoon of tank destroyers came to grips with a column of German Mark IV tanks on the Houffalize-Noville highway, turned them back after a furious engagement. More enemy armor followed and with the road blocked, the battle spilled into the snow-mantled fields and woods, raged unabated.

German Volksgrenadiers flanked TF Cherry's main defenses at Longvilly and surrounded the battalion CP. Carbine firing clerks, cooks and drivers resisted fiercely; converting the chateau headquarters into a veritable blockhouse. TF O'Hara, lightly hit at first, felt increasing pressure throughout the first day's engagement.

(Continued)

10TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Continuation)

For eight hours, CCB alone withstood the multiple blows of the Nazi's Hydra-headed attack. Then help arrived. First reinforcements of the 101st Airborne Division, which had moved into Bastogne under the screen of the 10th's actions, reached Dosebry.

Drawing from a seemingly endless reservoir of might, Germans still maintained an overwhelming balance of power. The outnumbered Americans shifted their defensive arc nearer Bastogne.

Completely encircled, its CP ablaze, TF Cherry fought back to Mageret as the commander radioed CCB headquarters: "We're not driven out; we're burned out! We are not withdrawing; we are moving."

Attacked from three sides, the Noville defenders knocked out 31 Nazi tanks in two days. Then, led by Maj. Charles L. Husted, they broke through a ring of steel to set up another defensive line near Foy. TF O'Hara pulled in its left flank slightly, stood fast.

Balked frontally, the German attack swirled around the city, shooting pincers to the north and south. The night of December 21, the pincers met and closed west of the city. Bastogne became the "hole in the doughnut."

In the center of the hole, the 10th assembled a highly mobile reserve force to strike in any direction. Bastogne's "Fire Brigade," as it was called, fought wherever the battle flamed hottest. This force was Bastogne's indispensable backbone of steel.

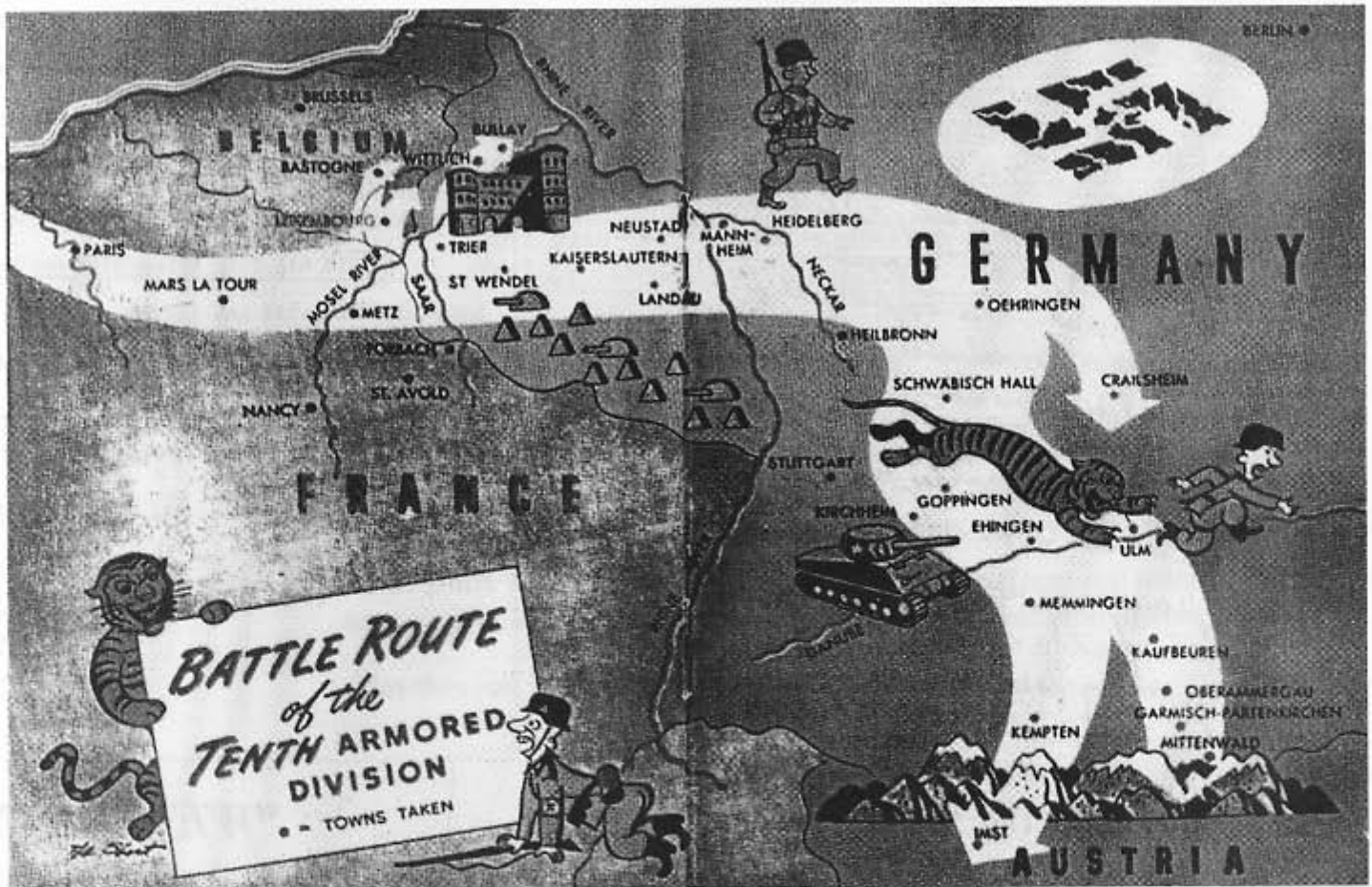
The remainder of the epic, like the beginning, is a tale of the individual soldier's raw courage.

The Tigers saw the fanatical enemy press in from all sides; rocked beneath terrific artillery barrages and repeated bombing; froze in ice-filled foxholes and along the snow-covered slopes; watched supplies and ammunition dwindle. Threatened with extinction, they echoed Maj. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe's reply of "Nuts" to a German surrender ultimatum. Men of the 10th stood, fought, died.

Fourth Armored Division tanks cracked the ring December 26, but CCB's fight wasn't over. The weary, triumphant Tigers did not take their final ride through Bastogne's rubble strewn streets until January 18.

In 30 days of hell, these men of CCB had earned the Distinguished Unit Badge.


Von Rundstedt's spearhead first had been blunted when it struck CCB, labeled by the division, "Stone of Bastogne." Besieged now from all sides, the Germans reluctantly withdrew the tattered and bleeding Wehrmacht. The scars of that fight never healed.



Private Ralph A. Simpson's
letter to his parents,
December 8, 1944

"HE DID HIS DUTY SPLENDIDLY"

Letter to Pvt. Simpson's father
Major General Willard S. Foy
CG 26th Infantry Division

 Dec 8, 1944

Dear Mom & Pop,

I didn't have any mail from you
again yesterday, but I had a card from
Madeline and Lee

I hope everything is o.k. at home
the reason you haven't written. How
are you and Pop? How are all the sisters
and Brothers and all the kids? Tell them
I said hello. Have you been getting
my mail regular, did you get the Christ-
mas card yet? How Madeline and Mary
got my letters yet? How did Madeline
like it? Did it do any good?

How is the weather at home? It
is pretty cold here and almost always
raining. Does it rain much at home?

I changed my allotment, I am
sending \$50 a month home now.
How much have you got from me
so far? You should have \$30 now.
Did you send that package
yet with the flashlight and other
things such as the mixed nuts and
Keweenaw? Don't forget to send
a package a week with candy, pe-
nuts, fudge and reading material, use
my money for it. Don't mind me asking
for so much but try to send them if
you can

I will close now so write soon
and don't worry as I am o.k. Write
often.

Your Son
Ralph

HEADQUARTERS 26TH INFANTRY DIVISION

My dear Mr Simpson:-


I know only too well that words cannot
heart in these hours of loss. However, as you
mander, I want to tell you that all of us who
sion grieve with you in the loss of our comrade

Your son, Private Ralph A. Simpson, Jr, IS
action 5 January 1945 during our advance near
was buried in Belgium, after an appropriate sev-
tant Chaplain officiated. You may secure more
concerning the location of the grave and the is-
remains and effects by communicating directly with
General, Army Service Forces, Washington, D. C.

He did his duty splendidly and was loved
knew him. We will not forget.

He gave his life in battle in the service
simple words cannot lighten our sorrow, but they
inspiration to us all.

Sincerely,


W. S. Foy
Major General,
Command

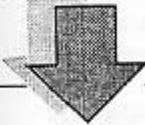
"WE WILL NOT FORGET"

Pvt. Ralph A. Simpson, Jr. - KIA - 5 Jan 1945

Our grateful nation honored Pvt. Ralph A. Simpson, Jr.
with the Combat Infantry Badge, Purple Heart, and
Star for his sacrifice to his country

ADLY..."

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PO 26, c/o Postmaster
New York, New York
24 February 1945

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Paul
PAUL
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T FORGET"

January 1945 - Luxembourg

ph A. Simpson, Jr.
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country.

WESTERN UNION

JOSEPH L. BARNETT
PRESIDENT

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RALPH A SIMPSON SR=

PLEASE BE ADVISED THE REMAINS OF THE LATE PVT RALPH A SIMPSON JR ARE ENROUTE TO THE UNITED STATES. OUR RECORDS INDICATE YOUR WISH REMAINS DELIVERED TO LESLIE E AXE 1520 4TH STREET ALTOONA PENN. WE CANNOT GIVE A DEFINITE DELIVERY DATE. IT IS EXPECTED THAT AN INTERVAL OF SEVERAL WEEKS WILL ELAPSE BEFORE DELIVERY CAN BE EFFECTED. YOUR FUNERAL DIRECTOR WILL BE NOTIFIED BY TELEGRAM THREE DAYS PRIOR TO DELIVERY GIVING DATE AND TIME REMAINS WILL ARRIVE AT RAILROAD STATION. PLEASE INSTRUCT FUNERAL DIRECTOR TO ACCEPT REMAINS AT RAILROAD STATION ON ARRIVAL. HE WILL BE REQUESTED TO INFORM YOU SO YOU MAY MAKE FINAL FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS. REMAINS WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY MILITARY ESCORT. SUGGEST YOU ARRANGE WITH LOCAL PATRIOTIC OR VETERANS ORGANIZATION IF YOU DESIRE MILITARY HONORS AT FUNERAL. PLEASE CONFIRM ABOVE DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS WITHIN FORTY EIGHT HOURS OF RECEIPT OF THIS MESSAGE BY TELEGRAM COLLECT TO DISTRIBUTION CENTER ONE NEW YORK PORT OF EMBARKATION OR SUBMIT NEW INSTRUCTIONS. WE REGRET IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPLY AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE WITH CHANGES IN DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS RECEIVED AFTER EXPIRATION OF THE FORTY EIGHT HOURS. PLEASE INCLUDE FULL NAME OF DECEASED IN REPLY TELEGRAM=

G H BARE COL QMC=

1520 4=

As we join together to dedicate the long awaited World War II Memorial on the National Mall, we remember the sacrifice Ralph A. Simpson, Jr., and over 19,000 American soldiers and airmen made to gain a great victory in the Battle of the Bulge.

As we honor them, we also pay tribute to all American men and women who made the supreme sacrifice in the defense of freedom on battlefields throughout the world.

May they rest in the eternal peace they fought and died for.

William F. O'Donnell

Rev. Msgr. William F. O'Donnell
Chaplain - Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge

PATTON MOVES THE 3RD ARMY 120 MILES IN 3 DAYS (Eisenhower Said It Was Impossible)

By Hank Mooseker
87th Infantry Division
347th Infantry Regiment
Company A

[The following article appeared in the December 2001 issue of "The Golden Acorn," the newsletter of the 87th Infantry Division. (Apologies to Mr. Mooseker--the original copy was lost and there was nothing to compare against when proofreading.)]

When I saw the movie "George S. Patton" I was enthralled by the scene where Eisenhower was holding a conference of all army and corps commanders immediately after the Germans had wreaked such havoc to our forces with their tremendous onslaught through the Ardennes. In this scene General Patton stood up and said he could move his whole army from the Saar to the Bulge within three days. Eisenhower thought it was an impossible task but told him to do what he could.

This three day business made me recall our Company A, 347th Infantry move from the Saar. I thought at the time that the Saar front was very miserable and cold and things couldn't get any worse. Little did I know!

After we took some nondescript German town (Neidergalbach) and had hung around for a few days, we were told to haul ass back to waiting trucks and that we were going for a ride. This after we were relieved by the 27th Division.

To me getting a ride sounded wonderful after all the foot soughing, hole digging and double timing for cover when the heavy stuff came in.

Whoever was in charge crammed as many men as possible into the covered trucks. For some reason I always got the seat on the end or next to the end of the bench on the left side of the truck. Sitting in a truck with cover was heavenly. With as many men as there were in the truck it soon got warm and in minutes most of us were dozing off with our rifles butts on the floor between our legs. It was during one deep sleep that my head bumped against the muzzle of an M-1. I opened my eyes to find that I was looking down the barrel of an M-1 of the GI who was sleeping on the bench to my left.

I sharply jabbed an elbow into the unknown sleeping GI next to me and told him, "Take this f-- piece out of my face." He responded with a, "What the H-- is the matter with you, you A.H., it isn't loaded! And then he said, "See," as he bent over to pull the trigger. Every one in the truck woke up as a round went up through the truck tarp.

One might say we were contrite but I thought--well, you're still lucky. Speaking of luck, everyone probably has a talisman. Mine was unusual--it was a partial roll of toilet paper. Toilet paper was almost non-existent in the line and it was difficult to locate even when we were looting but I thought that I'd be O.K. as long as I did not run out. Still to this day I'm careful about this when I travel. Back then it worked.

The trucks seemed to move slowly for about 25 miles and then come to a halt when we had to hit the road and start hiking.

We'd march in a column on either side of the road and the trucks would turn around and go back to pick up more riders. We were supposed to get shut eye in these trucks but we weren't in them long enough to do any good. After a hike the trucks would return with a new batch of men who were then dumped so they could hike and we got back into the trucks.

The Third Army had all its vehicles and tanks on the road and they leap frogged, emptied, reloaded went forward and then returned to do it all over again--24 hours per day.

After two or three of these forced marches we were hauled off the trucks. It was dark and we marched into a side lane. Here we were told to rest the best we could. Soon there was a light rain that soon changed into a freezing down pour. Me without a raincoat wondered what to do. Shivering I remembered the gas prevention plastic conical envelope we were supposed to put over us if the enemy was spraying gas. I assumed the lotus position with the butt of my M-1 in the center of the lotus and the muzzle at the peak of the plastic pyramid. Since there was no ventilation, I soon was anaesthetized by my own CO2.

It seemed like minutes later that we were roused again and off we slugged. Somewhere in this trek we stopped near an artillery site where 155's were firing repeated rounds. At this potty call I was standing near a tree when I heard this ominous whirr that seemed to be caused by some object that passed closely over my head. It felt like it was going to hit me. I was to learn that this was one of the brass rings that rode the lands of the barrel of the artillery piece and that some times they left the shell spinning and it went on its own trajectory as it left the barrel of the piece. Although it had scared the p--- out of me, I felt lucky again.

Between marches and vehicle rides (of any kind), we were dumped into the outskirts of Libremont, Belgium. Here after three days, these tried, spent infantry men were about to engage der Meister Volk in the bloodiest campaign the U.S. had ever fought. The snow was deeper than it had been in the Saar and I thought what a helluva place to have a war. I really didn't know where we were but it was nice they had marked the place with a road sign.

Patton had moved his Army from the Saar to the Bulge in three days!

The next day we pushed off towards Moircy to really recontact Jerry. As miserable as we were it soon became apparent that things would get much more miserable.

In 1991, I took a trip by myself to see the areas where we had fought. I stayed in a small hotel in Thionville and drove to Metz where the 87th Division Headquarters had been and on to the small town where we had crossed the German border in December 1944. Here is where we had left and started our forced march to the Bulge. It seems that most people in this area can speak German and French and my guide said he had been an interpreter for an American unit. He certainly was knowledgeable of the events of our units here in 1944.

From here I drove to Libremont, Belgium. It didn't take very long. It was Sunday about noon, mass was over and there were people about. I was hungry and wanted to find a place to eat. I entered a bar where five or six men were bellied up. Not knowing French, I thought I'd try my German on them and asked them where there was a good place to eat. They were non-committal if not down right inhospitable. I thought that it was the better part of valor to leave.

As I was leaving a young lady was entering. I thought I'd try my German again.

(Continued)

PATTON MOVES...

(Continuation)

This time I got an answer in Flemish which is identical to Dutch. She gave me good directions to a small hotel where she said the meals were excellent. The men at the bar became hospitable when the young lady told them I had been there in 1944-45. They even offered to buy me a drink now that they knew I was not l'Bosche.

The small run-down hotel that was still majestic in its own way was run by a family. The mother soon cooked me a very excellent meal with wine and dessert. Her son had graduated and was intending to spend some time with missionaries in the Congo. What better way to see Libemont!

When we left Libemont to engage Jerry, my 1st Battalion of the 347th had approximately 900 men--some 150-190 men under strength. After the battle of Bois de Tillet (where we cut the supply route to Bastogne) our battalion had 167 men left in it. It must be remembered that the Battle of the Bulge accounted for the highest number of casualties in any battle in the history of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Infantry Squad Replacements

As we moved and did battle in the Saar and then the Bulge, the Pfalz, the Moselle, the Rhine, and then raced across Germany, the replacements kept coming to fill in the spots left by those who were killed, wounded, were sick, had trench foot, were hurt, or otherwise relieved or occasionally give a pass to Paris. The squad was usually quickly filled out whenever we were under strength by these new comers. There were so many we just tried to remember their first names or a nick name that came with them or was quickly given to them--even then I didn't do a good job of that.

We saw many air force special training men who had been in college as future air men but who were yanked out of school, sent to infantry basic and now were replacements. We also got rear echelon men who were no longer needed back there and were assigned to the infantry. There was every imaginable kind. I even had one older soldier in a fox hole in Belgium who called me over and said he had a letter he'd like me to read to him as he could not read. I took the letter and noticed immediately that it was from the War Department. This very official letter indicated to this private that since his physical condition was so poor he could not be sent overseas and for that reason was uninsurable. Here he was in a fox hole, in a wet cold drizzle, somewhere in Belgium. It always amazed me that this private had reached my squad sooner by days than the letter that had been forwarded from his post in the U.S. I consoled him as much as I could saying that everyone overseas was insured with GI insurance. He was a quiet soldier who tried to do his best. He did not last long.

Sometime after the battle of the Rhine crossing at Rhens I got two replacements who struck me as being different from all the others. These two replacements I was told (by them) were given their freedom from the stockade in England if they first volunteered for duty with the infantry. The tall 6' 3", belligerent one, told me he had been sent to the stockade for manslaughter and that he was now here to kill Germans. The other sullen, darkly quiet individual had sent been sent up for rape. He never said much of anything. The tall one turned out to be an effective infantryman and I am sure he got his share of Germans. The rapist on the other hand didn't last a week. He picked to fill out a combat patrol and was killed when he got hit by a Panzer Faust. Men who were there said there wasn't much left

of him. The murderer fought well and lasted the war out.

John Foy, a heavy machine gun squad leader in our weapons platoon, tells of two replacements he got. They were two master sergeants who had come from the QM corps and who had been court martialed for selling gasoline on the black market. They were sent to the infantry line company as punishment. John had to use unusual tactics to have them obey his order (the GI issue 45) to attack a M.G. nest to his front.

According to a friend, who was with the company from its beginning, the company left the States with 196 men and of that lot, 23 returned to the U.S. at Fort Berming and each of them had a Purple Heart. I had a Purple Heart as well but joined the company after about three days of their being on line. I sometimes wonder how many total replacements went through the company.

Sniper

We were going forward in single file and our squad was spread out and very near the head of the column, if not the head of the column. As assistant squad leader I was bringing up the rear.

As usual we were dispersed in good infantry procedure with five yards between the man in front of me and the man behind me. I don't remember exactly when or where we were but it was somewhere in Belgium. It was a relatively clear day and we were going through fairly open and hilly country. Some trees were along our path.

As we plodded ahead I heard the "thuck" of a bullet hitting it's mark. The man directly in front of me fell and his helmet clattered to the ground behind him. He fell face forward.

When I reached him he was already dead. The bullet had drilled his helmet and head and came out to the rear of his head. Spilled brains are a gory sight.

We had all hit the ground and the cry "Sniper" rang out loud and clear. It was the only shot we heard.

I believe the leading troops were able to get the sniper. There were no more casualties that afternoon. I never really knew the man who had been hit. A fire fight was always unnerving but the sniper's round was particularly frightening. ■

VOLKSWAGEN/JEEP

The February, 2004, issue of *The Bulge Bugle* contained a letter from Philip Leibroch, 26th (not 36th) Infantry Division, 104th Infantry, in the "Letters to the Editor" column. Philip has since sent us a picture of himself and Jim Belmonte sitting in the Jeep he told us about. Thanks, Philip.



REMINDERS OF A TERRIBLE TIME

[DAVID A. LEVINE, 38TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (MEZ), COMPANY A, sent us this article quite some time ago. It is an article from "Newsday" a local newspaper and the article was written by Paul Vitello--we do not have the date.]

Members of the Long Island Chapter of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge meet at noon on the first Wednesday of every month, rain or shine or snow cover--even though snow cover reminds most of them of that freezing December in Belgium in 1944 when the snow was red with blood and the dead lay frozen everywhere.

"When I go to see my son in Massachusetts--he lives in a wooded area--it always brings me back, said Bob McElroy, of Babylon, now an 82-year-old father of four and grandfather of 11, who on Christmas Eve of 1944 led his anti-tank unit up a hill in the Ardennes forest only to run out of ammunition, when they reached the top. They retreated, began the attack again on Christmas morning, and on the way up passed many of those who had died on the first ascent.

"That was our Christmas that year. Christmas always reminds me of that," he said.

The men are old. Some are frail. A few have trouble with short-term memory. But in a meeting room there about 70 of them gathered yesterday at the Marine Reserve headquarters in Garden City, there didn't seem to be one who was free from the burden of 58-year-old war memories.

They ate lunch, they bought raffle tickets and they laughed and joked, but in one conversation after another there emerged reminders of the war. They come each month, after all, to be with other people in whose thoughts these reminders emerge. No one who was not there could be reminded in just this way, at this time of the year.

"Walking along, you would trip over bodies in the snow," said Sam Manzi of New Hyde Park. "You would find they didn't have clothes on. The Germans had stripped them of their uniforms...I remember that like it was yesterday." Men nodded.

David Saltman, of Wantagh, who is 90 years old, has scheduled a guest speaker for almost every meeting since he founded the chapter in 1999. (It was five years after a national organization formed on the 50th anniversary of the battle.) But yesterday's speaker, Brig. Gen. Paul Brigade, based in Uniondale, was called to the Persian Gulf at the last minute and had to send his regrets.

Every day now, military units are being summoned to the Persian Gulf to prepare for a possible war with Iraq. An estimated 100,000 troops are already in place.

If there is war, its veterans--American and Iraqi both--may stand up in meeting rooms 58 years from how to remember the bloody scenes of their youth, too.

In place of Gen. Hill, Saltman called on Bob Olsen, a former signal corps commander and founding member of the Battle of the Bulge chapter, to read from an account he wrote of his experiences on the day the attack began--December 16, 1944.

Olsen stood--tall, thin, thick-haired still, with traces of the gangly youth he must have been still evident in his angular frame. He described how a late wake-up call for guard duty had saved his life, and how the man who saved him may have died

for it, and how people all around him--the "cream of the crop of their generation"-- were falling dead, left and right.

"A 100-pound bomb fell near one of our men," he said, "and all that was left was his boots with his legs still in them." "Nothing else. Not a thing...This was on the first day of what was to be the German's last effort to push the allied armies back. In the month-long carnage that followed, 19,000 American lives and an equal number of Germans were killed."

Olsen kept his talk simple. He told mainly of things he had seen with his eyes. He named the men he saw fall, described the circumstances. He reminded the veterans of how angry they were--a few nodded at this--because the brass had ignored warnings of German troops massing for weeks before December 16. He said that after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and the later revelations of intelligence warnings ignored in that case, he was reminded of the many who died needlessly in all wars, in all times, due to the bungling of the guys in charge.

"Just a minute," he said at one point in his talk, pulling a handkerchief from his pocket. He let his fame crumble for a moment in tears, wiped the tears from his face, put away the handkerchief and went on remembering aloud his war. ■

ORDER OF THE DAY

January 1, 1945

To the officers and men of the Third Army,
and to our comrades
of the XIX Tactical Air Force.

From the bloody corridor at Avranches, to Brest, thence across France to the Saar, over the Saar into Germany, and now on to Bastogne, your record has been one of continuous victory. Not only have you invariably defeated a cunning and ruthless enemy, but also you have overcome by your indomitable fortitude every aspect of terrain and weather. Neither heat nor dust nor floods nor snow have stayed your progress. The speed and brilliancy of your achievements are unsurpassed in military history.

Recently I had the honor of receiving at the hands of the Twelfth Army Group Commander, Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley, a second Oak Leaf Cluster to the DSM. This award was bestowed upon me, not for what I have done, but because of what you have achieved. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

My New Year wish and sure conviction for you is that under the protection of Almighty God, and the inspired leadership of our President and the High Command, you will continue your victorious course to the end that tyranny and vice shall be eliminated, our dead comrades avenged and peace restored to a war-weary world.

In closing, I can find no fitter expression of my feelings than to apply to you the immortal words spoken by General Scott at Chapultepec when he said: **"Brave rifles, veterans, you have been baptized in fire and blood and have come out steel."**

George S. Patton, Jr.

Lieutenant General, U.S. Army ■

[The above appeared in the January 2004 issue of "The Pekan Newsletter, of the 526th Armored Infantry Battalion.]

GERMAN SOLDIERS KILLED CIVILIANS Malempre Citizens Suffered

By Demetri Paris
9th Armored Division
14th Tank Battalion

The Battle of the Bulge (Ardennes) commenced on December 16, 1944, when the Germans attacked in force along a wide front. The major attack was by two Panzer armies in the area of St. Vith and Malmedy, Belgium. Combat Command B (CCB) of the 9th Armored Division met the first attack and denied St. Vith against repeated German attacks before a Combat Command of the 7th Armored Division arrived, CCB of the 9th continued fighting without relief or rest for the next seven days.

Companies A, B, and D of the 14th Tank Battalion and a unit of the 9th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron were holding a defensive line from Grufflinden to Hohenbusch. Other units of CCB were similarly engaged against the enemy.

Infantry Command Post Captured

The command post of the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion of CCB was captured by the Germans. There were both German and American wounded. The German captors allowed Medical Officer Paul Russomano to use his ambulance to bring medical supplies to the CP to treat all the wounded and, later, to evacuate the wounded German prisoners.

Glen Strange, of the 17th, was one of those captured. The prisoners and their German guards came under artillery fire and when it lifted, Strange escaped. He obtained a handgun from his supply officer and organized about 15 of his infantry soldiers. He was joined by Lt. Duck, of A Company of the 14th Tank Battalion, and a platoon of tanks from B Company of the 14th. They attacked the command post and after firing a few tank rounds into the building, the Germans surrendered and the headquarters staff was rescued.

CCB Order to Withdraw from Bulge

Orders came to CCB to break off contact with the enemy and to withdraw. But it was not an easy maneuver. General Bruce Clarke, of the 7th Armored Division, called upon CCB of the 9th for assistance.

The help came from Companies A, C, and D, of the 14th Tank Battalion; Companies A and B, of the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion; and Troop D, of the 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

Company A, of the 14th, covered the withdrawal. The company lost several men, two tanks and three command vehicles while destroying German antitank guns. They also recovered several American vehicles which had been captured by the enemy.

Lt. Col. Leonard Engeman led the 14th Tank Battalion out of the Bulge. His unit came under intense fire at Manhay. Company C, of the 27th Armored Infantry, was ordered to withdraw to Malempre.

No Rest After Withdrawal from Bulge

The withdrawal from combat with the enemy did not mean rest for the weary men of Combat Command B. Dr. Walter B. Reichelt, in his 9th Armored Division history "Phantom Nine," reports the exhausted men of the 27th Infantry established a

defensive position around Malempre. The 14th Tank Battalion tankers established road blocks. Company D, of the 14th, was ordered to report to the command post of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Company C, of the 14th, remained in Manhay where the 3rd Armored Division employed them in attacks and where they lost three tanks and their crews before their release by the 82nd Airborne. But the 82nd had a reason for seeking the release of Company C/14. The 82nd had been forced out of Regne so they called upon Company C/14th to recapture the town. During this action, C/14 destroyed five German tanks but lost three tanks and the crews.

These latter actions came after the CCB withdrawal from the Bulge and after seven days and nights of combat action with neither rest nor relief.

Peter Elsob's book, *Hitler's Last Offensive* states, "There was little rest for the weary soldiers from the St. Vith defense because the increasing pressure from the newly-committed German troops would not allow it..." Also, "Some of the troops who had just retreated from St. Vith were hurried forward again to form a blocking position from Malempre to Manhay..." Elsob writes of other combat actions in the Malempre-Manhay area by CCB of the 9th Armored Division.

But relief finally came to CCB/9th Armored. They closed into an assembly area at 0530 hours (5:30 a.m.) on the 25th of December. These men had been in continuous combat with the enemy from 0700 (7:00 a.m.) on the 17th of December until 1430 hours (2:30 p.m.) on the 24th of December. All the men--including cooks, clerks, mechanics--were engaged in combat. There was no air support during this period.

Civilian Casualties Mounted

These were trying times for the Belgian civilians. The 1st SS Panzer Division killed more than 100 Belgians in the Stavelot area. The Village of Bande had 32 Belgian youth killed by German soldiers.

The 2nd SS "Das Reich" Panzer Division threatened civilians in the Manhay area. Citizens of Malempre-Manhay suffered injuries and deaths. It was estimated that 3,000 German shells fell on this area.

On March 10, 1995, the citizens of Malempre dedicated two memorial plaques--one plaque to the American soldiers who defended and later liberated the town during the Battle of the Bulge and the second plaque to the civilian heroes of the village.

In his benediction during the dedication ceremony, Father Chou, of the local Roman Catholic Church recalled the sacrifices: "Belgians and Americans, fighting together, died together and, from the earth, fertilized by their blood, peace has sprung. You are here today because gratitude is a fundamental virtue among honorable men."

Demetri Paris, of Company D, 14th Tank Battalion, was the American speaker who concluded the ceremony with the words: "Many of you here today are those honorable people for whom gratitude is a fundamental virtue. Those of us who fought here are grateful for having lived through that combat and for the privilege of being here today. We join all of you in gratitude to those American soldiers and Belgian civilians who gave their lives for this victory over an enemy who would have destroyed us. We are mindful of the 50 years of peace you have enjoyed and pray that it will last forever." ■

STOUMONT then LaGLEIZE... and Finally Some Turkey

By Ray Haserodt
30th Infantry Division
119th Infantry Regiment
3rd Battalion
Headquarters Company

[The following article appeared in the 30th Infantry Division newsletter--late 2003 issue]

It began with the unit going back to Kohlscheid in the early part of December, 1944, expecting to be there for Christmas.

We cut a small pine tree and hoarded our packages from home anticipating a quiet Christmas.

We had learned that Lt. Col. C.P. Brown, who had been our battalion commander through the war, had been relieved. Both he and his radio man, Pvt. McHale, who drove, were much admired and respected. They had been through many dangerous situations together. The new commander, Lt. Col. C. E. Stewart had taken over the battalion. Unlike the previous commander, he had not had previous combat experience in Italy but was called a first class soldier by Brig. Gen. William K. Harrison.

I know our regimental book has a different version but this is how I remember it: On the morning of December 17th, we were given orders to be out on the road and be ready to move out in short order, which we did. We had no knowledge of what was going on but got our jeep with radios and trailer full of batteries and, in line with the 2-1/2 ton trucks, were ready to move out.

I recall many comments about hurry up and wait, however, the column moved out and we proceeded south in convoy much of the night. According to our regimental book, we then occupied an assembly area near Eupen, Belgium. My memory of this stop is not good. We were back in the U.S. First Army.

The next morning, 18 December, we continued on through Leige, Belgium, where my superior Sgt. Ryan, and myself, as driver, were handed a "Welcome!" handbook by the Belgian underground. At the bottom of the sheet were the words, "Long live liberty and the heroes who are bringing it back to us."

We then turned east and by evening were entering the Town of Stoumont, Belgium. We still had no knowledge of what was going on. We billeted in a house in that small town. I pulled the radio jeep and trailer alongside the house.

We had maintained radio silence during the move and did not start radio communications that night. We understood that the line companies had been deployed near the crest of a series of hills surrounding Stoumont to the south and east but no reconnaissance patrols had been sent beyond the company areas.

It was quite a sight to see the quartermaster trucks racing from the area and speeding down the long hill out of Stoumont. The comment was, "They knew something we didn't."

Next morning about 0600, we woke up to 40mm and 88mm tank shells going through the upper floors of our house. All hell had broken loose. There was much rifle and machine gun fire.

Sgt. Ryan ran down to Company Headquarters for orders and came back with the order to get the radio jeep and trailer out of there as fast as possible. He was also told to inform Lt. Col. Hal McCown, the 2nd Battalion Commander, who was in reserve, about our situation. Radio silence was still in effect and apparently no wire had been laid for telephone communication.

So it was doubly important to get down the exposed hill and find the 2nd Battalion Headquarters. What evidently happened is that at first light, the whole German Army had come over the top of the hills surrounding Stoumont and had overrun our company before any defense could be set up.

I backed the jeep and trailer out of the driveway without a hitch, to my surprise. The road through the center of town went uphill for about 1,000 feet until it came to the base of a larger hill. At this point there was a large brick building. Immediately to the rear of the building, the road made a left turn and went down an exposed hill for about 1/4 mile and made a right turn at the bottom and went through a fairly narrow valley.

From this down hill road from the brick house was an excellent view of Stoumont and a large open, slightly depressed area.

On the corner behind the brick house, the terrain rose about 500 feet to another house. When we arrived at the corner where the road turned to the left behind the house, we found about 150 3rd Battalion men waiting for orders.

Sgt. Ryan, seeing the German tanks and infantry behind us were getting closer, said the best thing he could see to do was to get as many men on the jeep and trailer as possible and make a dash down the exposed hill.



A really cold ride--but then, everything else was cold.

Believe it or not we got 21 men on that jeep and trailer. They really piled on. I was told to get moving and I gave the jeep every bit of acceleration it had. I remember looking to my left and seeing German infantry firing at us as we dashed down the hill. I was pleasantly surprised that we were not fired on by the tanks. We must have surprised them. We felt like ducks in a shooting gallery.

One bullet went between my legs and somehow through Sgt. Ryan's legs, ending up in the glove compartment. Another bullet entered the chain compartment directly behind me. Miraculously no one on the jeep or trailer was hit. When we rounded that corner at the bottom of the hill, we must have been doing 70 MPH.

We found the 2nd Battalion Headquarters and attached ourselves to them until we would rejoin our 3rd Battalion.

Our 3rd Battalion absorbed a tremendous amount of punishment but did dull the attack of the First SS Panzer Division, Liebstrandarte Adolph Hitler, the elite of the German armored divisions. Our Headquarters Company and Line Companies I, K, L, and M, in all suffered 267 casualties. We also had 150 men captured and they were held in a church basement in the Town of LaGleize across a valley not far from Stoumont.

(Continued)

STOUMONT then LaGLEIZE (Continuation)

We returned to our 3rd Battalion the next day and as we drove back up the same road that we had gone down the previous day, we saw a knocked out German tank right at the base of the hill. Evidently, that was as far as the German attack had penetrated our lines.

We established radio communication at the brick house 500' up the hill from the corner where all the men were. Later, we moved to a castle somewhere east of there.

In support of Task Force Harrison, the Army positioned a 155mm Long Tom mounted on a tank chassis next to the castle and had direct fire into the Town of LaGleize.

For all of the punishment we took, the remnants of our 3rd Battalion did regroup and participated with that task force in the recapture of our POW buddies from the cellar in LaGleize.

After the situation around Stoumont had stabilized, we eventually relieved the 120th Regiment in Malmedy. That city had been largely destroyed by our bombers not once, but twice. It was hardly more than a pile of bricks in many areas.

Our 119th Regiment did stop Kampfgruppe Peiper of the 1st SS Panzer Division (known as the Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler, Hitler's own, since it was originally formed as his first bodyguard). That beefed up unit had formed the main thrust of the German Army toward Leige and Field Marshal von Rundstedt's objective of splitting the American Army in half. Other divisions got a lot of credit for the Bulge success, but the 30th actually did the most effective and important fighting in there.

I think our 119th Regiment, for all the mauling it took from a totally unexpected attack by Hitler's 1st Panzer Division, did a monumental job in dulling their advance and providing enough defense to allow our battalion, held in reserve, to come in to turn the tide and eventually to rout the 1st SS Panzers.

Later, while en route from LaGleize to relieve the 120th Regiment in Malmedy, we looked up and saw a Messerschmitt 109 and an Air Corps P-52 chasing each other in a tight circle. Neither pilot could get the advantage. The circle was so small that they could not get their sights on the other plane. This went on for about 5 minutes until, I think, with gentlemen's agreement, both pilots peeled out of the circle and went off in opposite directions.

Somewhere along the way, we had been promised that we would receive the Christmas dinner we had missed. So, the crowning blow came toward the end of January when the Bulge was over. The army in all its wisdom announced that we would finally get our Christmas dinner of turkey and all the trimmings.

They finally lived up to their word. They brought up the kitchens. One problem--the turkeys had spoiled while waiting for the Bulge to consummate. Every GI in our battalion got the worst case of GIs you ever saw.

At that time, we were billeted in a farm house with only a two-holer outside. Needless to say, the twelve guys sleeping on the floor of the living room spent a very exciting night dashing over everybody to make it outside to the busy two-holer.

So, when we moved on from that place, we called it the Fertile Valley!

Once more, we returned to Kolscheid and to the 9th Army. ■

ARE YOUR DUES DUE?

BATTLE OF THE BULGE REENACTMENT

(The following account of the Battle of the Bulge reenactment was written by Joe Chekan, VBOB Associate Member.)

A hardy platoon of VBOB vets endured a weekend of bitter cold which brought back heart-stirring memories of the Ardennes campaign 59 years ago.

The weekend of January 30th through February 1st, 2004, at the Battle of the Bulge reenactment at Indiantown Gap Army Post in Central Pennsylvania, proved to be a challenge to the many WWII reenactors and to the Battle of the Bulge vets who attended.

Temperatures hovered near zero with wind chills at a dangerous point. The VBOB vets, accompanied by a supporting contingent of latter-day veterans, journeyed out on Saturday on a school bus to witness the reenactors recreating the Bulge experience. Despite the best efforts of the bus driver and guide to locate the action area, snow and rutted roads and some misdirection forced an early return to the warmth of the vets' barracks.

While the viewing of the battlefields was incomplete, the vets were rewarded with a banquet and festivities on Saturday night that proved to be a fitting climax to an exciting weekend. The Indiantown Gap Community Center (formally the officers club) was the scene of a remarkable trip to the nostalgia of the war years as a 17-piece dance band played tunes from that period.



L to R: William J. Pronsato, Charles Gerry, and John Bowen enjoy the good food provided by the 28th Division and Civil Air Patrol.

Later that evening, the many make-believe soldiers joined the gathering outfitted in authentic dress uniforms adding to the reminiscing. Participants in colorful attire from Germany, Britain, Canada and some Eastern European countries added to the lively atmosphere. A talent show charmed the vets with some humorous and artistic entertainment. Overall, a delightful evening to enjoy the pleasant memories of the past. Other items that added to a memorable weekend was the excellent food at the mess hall facilities provided by the 28th Division and the civil air patrol, along with the many flea market vendors who provided uniforms and WWII memorabilia for sale.

Cold weather outside and an unduly hot barracks inside were soon forgotten as the vets departed for their homes with an eager promise to each other to return again for the big 60th reenactment in 2005. ■

THE FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

The Huertgen and The Ardennes

By Robert J. Galgan
113rd Gun Battalion
Battery C

[[Following] is research on the conduct of American leadership during the Battle of the Huertgen Forest and its overlap into the Battle of the Bulge (Ardennes).

These actions occurred during the fall and winter of 1944-45. American casualties in the Huertgen were 35,000. This fight decimated five divisions. In the Battle of the Bulge, 82,000 fell. To win this battle required a maximum effort by Allied Forces reaching from the British Army on the north to the U.S. Seventh Army.

Its conclusions are as objective as the facts present. While harsh, one must recognize that American military leaders carry a great responsibility for the lives of their troops.

Commanders must use every initiative to obtain information including personal inspections of the areas over which their men must fight. Nothing less can be accepted.]

Foreword

The events described are the result of a dissatisfaction of the conduct of the battle for the Huertgen Forest in the fall of 1944. The research of books and periodicals to describe events leading up to the battle in the Ardennes (Battle of the Bulge) revealed a gross error by the 1st Army commander which resulted in a blood-bath for five divisions.

Personal Note

My artillery unit was sent to the Huertgen. The war was closing in on us, but it was not to be here. We pulled into the assembly area in a torrential rain with mud as never seen; God help the infantry. After two days, it was apparently more artillery would not help and we were sent around to Aachen. In pondering the decision of the First Army Commander Hodges and 12th Army Group Commander Bradley to fight in this hellhole forest an astounding fact emerges. These leaders were ignorant of conditions that are encountered in such deep pine growths. Many could have detailed what was to be faced. Anyone who spent, or even casually visited comparable forests in Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, or Canada, knew a defense within would invoke horrible casualties and so it came to be.

But why? If you must protect your flank, as was Hodges' alibi, use a screening force. And use experience and imagination to overcome large obstacles such as the Huertgen. There was estimated to be 50 miles of forest. Each pine tree is a veritable candle, full of pitch, explodable with heat. A heavy incendiary drop on the upwind side would have created a firestorm wherein the fire feeds on itself. Too simple. Just turn to the huge forest fires in the American west. Just read of the thousands of acres destroyed--once started, they are devastating. There were 35,000 casualties; limbs blown off by shell fire or mines, or, frozen into gangrene. Proud, experienced divisions were decimated. If the commanders respected the lives of their soldiers who were committed to carrying out their orders under the threat of court marshal or death there were superior ways to accomplish objective.

Bradley, Hodges, Collins and, yes, Eisenhower performed

actions that were derelict and so contemptible that even at this date the record must be corrected. The men, American men--the expendables, at least deserve that. To be direct is to accuse that you failed your command responsibility; you were blatantly ignorant and simply stated you screwed up. Justice demands you to be shown to America for what you did. And, yes, the question arises again.

You never went to see the situation first hand. What a dereliction of duty. What an elitist attitude. What a disregard of the trust placed in you by the mothers and fathers of your soldiers. You threw away their lives and futures wantonly. What would the home front--the mothers--have done if given the facts? The report at the time, by the Manpower Procurement Board, of having underestimated manpower need, i.e., replacements is akin to a slap. Why a shortage of men? Look again at the abuse. Then it also becomes understood why the 16,000 men in the ASTP Program were thrown into the replacement pools. These men, the most educated in the Army, were, or became, infantrymen. Normally, they would have been spread across the services.

The slaughter of five divisions resulted in the distribution of the exhausted survivors as a very thin line from Monschau to the Luxembourg Duchy. It was an invitation for another disaster, the Ardennes (Bulge) that the Germans gladly took. What is puzzling is the attitude of the army commanders. This continues to be the subject of speculation; were they exhausted by the fight across France? Were they complacent believing the Germans were defeated? Or, were they incapable of a common sense approach following only the dogma of the army's "by the numbers" training?

There is support for the observation that commanders were looking at situation maps in the comparative comfort of command posts and not assessing conditions in the field. A British observation was that most American commanders, unlike General Patton, failed to make on-the-spot observations of the conditions their men were facing. Patton, whose constant observations, along with the high activity and information gathering of 3rd Army's I and R Teams, were a positive measure of his success. Another puzzle is the lack of aggressive action upon reaching the German border! There were reports by American patrols of large areas that were empty, unchallenged by the enemy. The argument that it was necessary to await supplies appears suspicious. When there are opportunities, commanders must take them. If supplies are needed the support units must be galvanized into rapid action. It goes without saying that, in their home ground, the Germans would fight desperately. Aachen and Duren, especially Aachen, were defended bitterly. But that did not preclude penetrations in lightly defended areas.

An indefensible act of division commanders was to commit their troops to disaster without fierce objection. If serious objections were raised, they are difficult to locate in the records. Reviewers have not recorded verbal protests. It strains the mind to believe that a commander with the responsibility for 12,000 to 16,000 lives would compromise those lives! Didn't anyone, including General George Marshall, connect the dots! One's questions shift to the other bloodbaths--the Hedgerows, Metz, the Huertgen? It has been stated and is true that the American soldier, the draftee and enlistee, [those] not a part of the regular Army organization, brought the vitality and innovativeness that won World War II.

(Continued)

THE FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

(Continuation)

The list of culprits:

General Omar Bradley	12th Army Group
General Courtney Hodges	1st Army
General Andros	1st Infantry Division
General Barton	4th Infantry Division
General Irwin	5th Armored Division
General Cota	28th Infantry Division
General Macon	83rd Infantry Division
General Craig	9th Infantry Division
General Collins	Chief of Staff, 1st Army

Hodges ignored the team concept which was so successful in the run across France. Astonishing statements were made by General Eisenhower and General George Marshall to support the action taking place in the Huertgen. To quote, "the honor of the U.S. Army was at stake"! Linkage: The linkage to the Ardennes battle is inescapable! Availability of full strength divisions, rather than exhausted remnants, would surely have limited German gains and American casualties. Eisenhower went to the "old boy" network, again! Bradley should not have gotten the fourth star, and Hodges should have been relieved of his command when General Montgomery found him in a state of collapse a few weeks later. The panic of the 1st Army staff should also have been grounds to have them relieved. The immediate leaders, sergeants and lieutenants, without top leaders, fighting in small groups, sometimes isolated or cut-off proved that the GI was among the best. Like his German counterpart, he endured the brutal winter, overcame the shocking surprise of a massive attack, dealt the attackers, finally, a bloody crushing blow. He paid a heavy price--82,000 casualties--but went on to total victory.

Notes:

1. The order of battle enclosed (not attached) is incomplete. Many units, particularly artillery, were regularly shifted from corps to divisions, as needed, so had no permanent base.
2. Despite the confidence in Charles B. MacDonald's book, and his official report for the U.S. Army Archives of the Battle of the Huertgen Forest, there is a blandness that is too sterile and requires clarification.
3. A little mentioned report by the 82nd Airborne Division, sent to clean up the Huertgen debacle, after the Ardennes Campaign was ended, deserves study. The suspicion created is that the U.S. Army commanders covered up and altered or removed incriminating reports.
4. Battle of the Bulge facts are not totally accurate. The battle did not end until mid-February in Luxembourg. American and German casualties exceeded the numbers shown.
5. The battle raged until the Germans were stopped approximately one mile from the Meuse River, their intermediate objective.
6. The 9th Tactical Air Command supporting 1st Army, besides air forces, were numerous 90mm and 120mm gun battalions, which turned into dual support units. They were effective in both roles and the 90mm proved to be the gun that could stop the heavily-armored German tanks. It also proved that the 90mm was severely underutilized. To expand this observation, the 90mm was the gun mount on the General Patton tank toward the end of WWII.

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OFFICIAL BULGE 60TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR DEFINITELY "A GO"!

A great response was received from the questionnaire in the last *Bugle*, with over 250 persons are in going on VBOB, Inc.'s Bulge 60th Anniversary ETO Tour this December 9-20. Once scheduling and cost details are finalized, information and application forms will be mailed to all who responded--plus it will be published in *The Bugle*. If tour capacity is over-subscribed, priority will be the application's date of receipt.

Cost-wise, many elements are under discussion with the Belgian and Luxembourg officials that could substantially reduce the cost of the tour. It is expected that final decisions on this will be obtained in the near future. I remain quite optimistic.

The schedule of events is being slowly worked out by the Belgian and Luxembourg officials. The major events will be on December 16, with the VBOB group spending half of their visit, each, in Belgium and Luxembourg. I am very confident that the events schedules will be arranged to our total satisfaction--and enjoyment.

Our VBOB group is currently scheduled to meet with the King of Belgium in Bastogne on December 18th and with the Crown Prince of Luxembourg (equivalent of King) at Hamm (Luxembourg) Cemetery on December 16th.

VBOB's "Trip Back" will be a most memorable occasion--a revisit to the sacred battlefields of our youth--to pay our respects, and recall to memory, those valiant comrades whose sacrifices will ever be honored. We will be accorded absolutely VIP, royal treatment in every respect--"they will never forget"--that "we are their liberators"!

Earle Hart, Chairman
VBOB, Inc., Bulge 60th Anniversary Committee
April 11, 2004

REUNIONS

3RD ARMORED DIVISION, July 13-17, 2004, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: Walter Stitt, PO Box 2346, South Bend, Indiana. Telephone: 574-291-3414.

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

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

8TH ARMORED DIVISION, July 14-18, 2004, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Contact: Sidney B. Bishop, P.O. Box 427, Jefferson City, Tennessee 37760-0427. Telephone: 865-475-2883.

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

11TH ARMORED DIVISION, 55TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION, September 7-16, 2004. Contact: Patrick J. Kearney, 33-21 172 Street, Bayside, New York 11358. Telephone: 718-762-0342.

17TH AIRBORNE DIVISION, October 17-23, 2004, Columbus, Georgia. Contact: Edward J. Siergiej, PO Box 4793, Dowling Park, Florida 32064. Telephone: 386-658-1292.

25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, September 25-October 2, 2004, Tucson, Arizona. Contact: 25th Infantry Division, PO Box 7, Flourtown, Pennsylvania 19031-0007.

26TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 328TH INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM, October 19-20, 2004, Holiday Inn Boardwalk, Atlantic City, New Jersey. Contact: Ed Hauck, 1117 Wheatland Avenue #H-1, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17603. Telephone: 717-392-4419.

30TH INFANTRY DIVISION, June 23-27, 2004, Fayetteville, North Carolina. Contact: Contact: Armored Forces Reunions, Inc., 242 West 22nd Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23517--Attention: 30th Infantry Division.

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

87TH INFANTRY DIVISION, September 6-13, 2004, Valley Forge Hilton Hotel, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Contact: Harold Tendam, 9372 Arnaz Circle, Port Charlotte, Florida 33981. Telephone: 941-697-3563.

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

248TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, September 16-19, 2004, Cleveland, Ohio. Contact: Fred Mone. Telephone: 216-252-1603.

285TH FIELD ARTILLERY OBSERVATION BATTALION, August 19-21, 2004, Crown Plaza, Pittsburgh International Airport, Corapolis, Pennsylvania. Contact: Bruno Toia, 213 Forest Green Drive, Moontownship, Pennsylvania 15108. Telephone: 412-262-2296.

291ST ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, June 10-14, 2004, Radisson Downtown Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri. Contact: Joe Geary, 70 Linden Drive, Kingston, Rhode Island 02881. Telephone: 401-783-9155.

300TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, June 3-6, 2004, Holiday Inn Select, 11350 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, Texas 75238. Contact: Randy Hanes, 6490 Ridgemont Drive, Dallas, Texas 75214.

501ST PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT, June 2-6, 2004, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Contact: Bill Sefton, 355 Plymouth SE, Grand Rapids, Ridgemont Drive, Dallas, Texas 75214.

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

526TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION, September 15-18, 2004, Salt Lake City, Utah. Contact: Sherrie Morrison, PO Box 456, Yolo, California. Telephone: 530-662-8160.

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

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

SPECIAL MEETINGS AT UP-COMING REUNION CHAPTER OFFICERS

Maintaining an open line of communication is most important. Accordingly, I am delighted to report that I will be chairing a special meeting of Chapter Presidents (or officers) at the forthcoming reunion in Washington, D.C. Please calendar the date: Thursday, May 27th, at 6:00 p.m., at the Falls Church Marriott in Falls Church, Virginia. This important meeting will afford us the opportunity of meeting face-to-face and to exchange valuable information about chapter activities, recognition, higher visibility, and increased membership.

George Fisher, Vice President for Chapters

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

As we all know, responsibility for seeing that the Battle of the Bulge sacrifices are never forgotten will some day fall to members of our families, military historians, etc. We have therefore scheduled a meeting for those interested in being an integral part of this endeavor on Thursday, May 27, 2004, 6:00 p.m., Falls Church Marriott, Falls Church, Virginia. Time is of the essence to determine our path and procedures. Room location for this meeting will be posted in the hotel lobby.

Demetri "Dee" Paris, Vice President / Public Affairs



MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

OWEN WITT, 7TH ARMORED DIVISION, would love to hear from anyone who knew his brother **KARL WITT, 707TH TANK BATTALION**, who was killed in action the morning of December 16, 1944. Any information on Karl or the 707th would be very much appreciated. Write to Owen at: 14950 Coalter Avenue, Kent City, Michigan 49330.

WESLEY ROSS, 146TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION, COMPANY B, would like to contact any member of the **2ND RANGER BATTALION** who was near Monschau prior to the Bulge. He believes they were attached to the **38TH CAVALRY SQUADRON** who in turn may have been attached to the **395TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 99TH INFANTRY DIVISION**. A platoon of the 2nd Rangers was attached to the 38th Cavalry shortly after the liberation of Paris. Write to Wes at: 17411 SW McCormick, Hillsboro, Oregon 97123.

EARL L. FORT, 97TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 387TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, COMPANY I, would like to hear from anyone who was with him April 14, 1945, in Schilgen (Schillingen) Germany when his company drew fire from machine guns, small automatic weapons, 88's and 20 mms. Write to Earl at: 373 South Tarrybrook Court, Cornelius, Oregon 97113-7105.

CARL MONTGOMERY, 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 110TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 1ST BATTALION, HEADQUARTERS, has sent us a letter addressed to Joseph Elek, who served in Stalag 9-A at Ziegenhain, Germany, and asked that we forward same to Mr. Elek. We don't have Mr. Elek's address. If you have his address, please send it to Carl at: 5 West 8th Street, Apt 502-506, New York, New York 10011. It seems that they were POW's together.

ROBERT THOMAS, 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 358TH INFANTRY, COMPANY A, writes to see if anyone knows whether or not the 90th Division received a Presidential Unit Citation. Write to Bob at: 650 Floyd Avenue, Chula Vista, California 91910.

Can you provide Mike Webster any information on the **52ND GENERAL HOSPITAL**, which was at Wolverley, Kidderminster, England? He is writing a book and plans to produce a film with proceeds to be donated to charities. If you can help, write to Mike at: 13 Hayes Road; Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worc's, England; DY11 5UI.

Associate Member **Brian Schwall** is seeking information regarding **JOEL GLASSMAN, 5TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 11TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, MEDICAL BATTALION**. Joel fought through Luxembourg and was KIA at Trier, Germany, March 2, 1945, and is buried in Hamm Cemetery.

Brian also plans to visit (Ham Cemeter) Luxembourg, (Lacheppelle) Belgium and Germany in June, 2004, and has generally offered to take a photo of a grave stone for anyone who wishes to let him know. Write to Brian at: 308 East Monte Way, Phoenix, Arizona 85042-8347.

Associate Member **Antoine Nouens** advises that he bought a GI dog tag which belonged to **ALBERT D. CLOUSE, 7TH ARMORED DIVISION, 48TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION, COMPANY B**, who was killed in action December 24, 1944, near Sart lez St. Vith/Rodt in Belgium. He was from Carlisle, Pennsylvania. His mother was named Hilda C. Cauffman and he had a sister named Freeda L. Sherman (maiden name Cauffman). Joel was interred at Westminister Cemetery, in Cumberland, Pennsylvania. Antoine has been unable to locate any next of kin for Albert. Can you help? Write to Antoine at: Aawal 41, 5211 PS Den Bosch, Holland.

Would you like to find individuals or families you knew when you were in Belgium during WWII? If so, maybe the following organization can help you. Contact: U.S. Army Descendants (USAD), 39 Rue de Slins, 4682 Houtain, St. Simeon, Belgium.

F. Seery Chamberlain would like to find anyone who can provide information on his father's service--**JOHN t. CHAMBERLAIN, 755TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION**. Contact him at: 130 Ogden Street, Penn Yan, New York 14527.

GEORGE H. SHIMKUS, 3RD ARMORED DIVISION, 33RD ARMORED REGIMENT, 2ND BATTALION, would like to know if anyone remembers the grouzers which were installed on the tank tracks to keep them from sliding off the road? If you do, write to George at: 1648 Crabapple Lane, Webster Groves, Missouri 63119-4511.

LIVE NEAR LAS VEGAS?...

...if so, please contact Thomas J. Daniels. Tom is eager to form a chapter in that area and is very interested in hearing from BoB veterans who would like to be part of a chapter to promote education on the Battle of the Bulge.

You can contact him at 1416 Teton Street, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101 (Telephone: 702-399-0933 or FAX: 702-399-4453.)



NEVER IN A MILLION YEARS...

would we dishonor
anyone who served in defense of our country...

*[The following letter and picture were received from
KENNETH A. FALBER, 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION,
351ST INFANTRY REGIMENT, COMPANY B.]*

I call your attention to the back page of the February edition of *The Bulge Bugle*. The drawing under the date of February, 2004, which apparently depicts part of a military cemetery depicted by Roman crosses--but where are the Stars of David in honor of the Jewish dead?

In my opinion, this sketch has dishonored the troops of the Jewish faith who died in the service of our beloved country--and there were many of them!

Perhaps the person who drew this picture never saw a Star of David. If this is so, I have enclosed a photo taken of myself at the American Military Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg, standing between the graves of two soldiers killed in action--one Christian and the other Jewish. I offered my prayers for all of them.

I would like to [see] a corrected sketch in the next edition or this photo reproduced. Thank you.



[Our sincerest apologies to any VBOB member (Jewish, Christian, etc.) who may have been offended by the drawing. We are sometimes desperate for pictures, drawings, etc., to use in the newsletter to convey a thought. This drawing was a copyrighted item from a clipping service and we used it only to convey that we would remember ALL who had fallen in World War II.

Our thoughts are always to remember and honor ALL who served.] ■

Our thanks to all who responded so quickly to our recent dues reminder. We are hopeful you will look at the dues date above your last name on the mailing label to keep your dues up-to-date. Dues reminders are expensive. Please help us avoid having to send one--it will ensure our longevity. ■

DID YOU KNOW HUGH?

[The following letter was received from RICHARD BROOKINS, 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 28TH SIGNAL COMPANY.]

On December 15, 1944, I was sent to Clervaux, Luxembourg, to show movies to GIs enjoying two to three days off the line. Clervaux was a rest camp for GIs of the 28th Infantry Division.

I arrived about 5:30 p.m. from Wiltz, Division Headquarters, and was assigned a room in the "Central Hotel" in the shadow of the ancient Clervaux Castle. My room mate was a GI from the 112th Infantry Regiment named "Hugh."

At 4:45 a.m., December 16, Hugh and I were jolted awake by mortar fire in the town. We were assigned as "runners" carrying messages from the Central Hotel to the regimental headquarters at the "Corvallis Hotel," located at the far end of the village.

My 60-year-old memory recalls that we "ran" information to Col. H. Fuller until we encountered a squad of Germans on the main street. Houses and other buildings were afire and we took refuge in one of the houses with two or three other GIs.

As we viewed the area, two German soldiers ran across the road from us, a man with a machine gun, and his tripod carrier. I was the only one in the doorway with a weapon--a carbine. I fired at the Germans and they fell. Hugh and I then ran to an aid station and sought a ride on an ambulance with wounded leaving Clervaux. We were denied a ride because I didn't want to leave my weapon, which was prohibited on the ambulance.

To make a long story shorter, Hugh and I commandeered a 2-1/2 ton truck coming into Clervaux with a load of clean laundry for the rest camp from Wiltz. We turned the truck around and returned to Wiltz. Our experience together, and Hugh's actions of help, prompted me to request my superiors to keep him with the 28th Signal Company. Unfortunately he was returned to his unit.

I am very anxious to find Hugh after almost 60 years. I should have tried years ago. He may not have survived the Bulge. He may have passed away since the war, and he may still be alive and remember the event.

I'm sorry to say that I can't remember his last name or where he lived in the States. I do believe that he may have been in the 112th Infantry Regiment.

Richard W. Brookins

139 Wood Creek Dr
Pittsford, NY 14534
585-586-4642 ■

KITCHEN TRUCKS

*Dale Carver,
106th Inf. Div.*

The kitchen trucks were the Major's delight;
He kept them spotless, shining and bright,
Away from harm, mine and shell.
Miles to the rear he kept them well.

Now the winter soldier in time grew lean
On the Ks, the Cs, the canned beef and bean,
Sometimes warmed, more often cold.

One such a diet he grew old,
Grew weak and lost all will to fight.
An ambulance would haul him away at night.
Diagnosis: pneumonia, bronchitis, or flu.
(Poor food, exposure, all of us knew.)
Major kept his record clear.

His trucks were pretty
But the price was dear.
We had a saying we quoted then:
'We've never lost a kitchen truck,
But we've lost a lot of men.'

GERMAN PARATROOPERS IN THE BULGE

By Historian John Korman
17th Airborne Division
517 SG/CIC Det

[The following article appeared in the December, 2003, issue of *Thunder from Heaven*, the newsletter of the 17th Airborne Division.]

One of the intriguing aspects of the great military drama that was the "Battle of the Bulge" was Hitler's decision to commit paratroops into the attack to carry out sabotage and create confusion among the allied forces. The plan to do so was hastily conceived and poorly executed, growing out of the Fuehrer's penchant for security. Even so, the action had a significant psychological impact upon a surprised and initially disorganized enemy. While much is attributed to the role of SS Lieutenant Colonel Otto Skorzeny and members of the SS 600th Parachute Battalion in this affair and the Germans dressed in American uniforms, not much is known about another German airborne legend's participation.

It was Lieutenant Colonel Freiherr (a German term for Baron) Friedrich-August von der Heydte, who was charged with forming a 1,000-paratrooper force to be used in "Operation Kondor," the code name for the offensive. Von der Heydte had vast experience in airborne operations. He had participated in the airborne capture of the Belgian fortress of Eben-Emael in 1940, fought in North Africa, Crete, Italy and Holland. His tenacious action in Normandy against the Allies had given his 6th Parachute Regiment the title, "Lion of Carentan."

The German airborne was part of the Luftwaffe and under the command of the "Father of the German Airborne," General Kurt Student, who learned about "Kondor" only a week or so before that vast offensive was to be launched. Student then hastily ordered von der Heydte to put together a force of about 1,000 men to be trained and dropped deep behind Allied lines in the Ardennes to capture a number of key road junctures and carry out sabotage. Von der Heydte thought the proposal under the circumstances was madness and appealed to higher headquarters. Hitler, however, had given orders that no element of the plan, which he had personally conceived, was to be altered.

Von der Heydte worked feverishly to obtain, train and equip both men and air transport for the mission. For the attack, he was placed under the control of Colonel-General of the Waffen SS, "Sepp" Dietrich, a fanatic Nazi who commanded the 6th SS Panzer Army, but who was not highly regarded as being competent by Wehrmacht professionals and, furthermore, knew nothing about airborne warfare.

Briefed only the day before the attack at 6th Panzer Army Headquarters, von der Heydte had only hours to travel a long way back to his unit and issue orders for a drop which was to take place at 0200 hours the following morning. The Germans had not made a combat night drop before. What is more, this was to be done in highly forested, hilly country in wintertime. Inexperienced pilots and flight crews manned planes, which were in short supply. This was a far cry from the meticulously planned and executed German airborne operations of earlier years

in the war.

On the night of 15 December 1944, hours before take-off many trucks carrying the paratroopers did not arrive and with only a quarter of the force on the airfields near Hanover in central Germany, the drop had to be postponed.

They took off the following night with a total of more than 750 paratroopers in their battle group. Arrangements to guide them to the drop zones failed due to a variety of circumstances. A head wind complicated matters, many transports were scattered and others were shot down. Von der Heydte was only able to assemble a couple dozen of his men on landing in the dark.

It was Hitler's decision to commit paratroops into the attack to carryout sabotage and create confusion among the allied forces.

The Germans spent the next few days gathering additional remnants of their contingent, putting out patrols, carrying out sabotage, and avoiding larger American forces.

At one point, in desperation, he sent a group of American prisoners he had taken and some of his wounded over to the Americans with a note for General Maxwell Taylor, of the 101st Airborne Division.

In it he said, "We fought each other in Normandy and I knew that you are a gallant and chivalrous officer. I am sending the prisoners we took back. They also fought gallantly and I cannot give them proper care. I am also sending you my wounded. I would be grateful if you would give them the medical treatment they require.

Three days after landing, harassed and out of radio contact with German forces, von der Heydte ordered his remaining paratroopers to split up and try to make it back to their own lines. He, himself, surrendered to the Americans a few days later. ■

PAST PRESIDENT JOHN J. DUNLEAVY...

was recently sworn in by a District Court Judge to serve on the Committee for Veterans Services for the State of Virginia. (He had been unable to attend the original swearing in conducted by Governor John Warner, in Richmond, Virginia.)

This policy-making committee will be concerned with many veterans' concerns, i.e., medical/health needs, employment, cemeteries, discrimination, etc.

John will serve in this capacity for a three year period which will end July 1, 2006. ■

Reprinted from TIME Magazine, July 28th, 2003 WORLD WAR II Dissenting Voices

The war was popular, but there were 40,000 deserters. In 1945 a U.S. general estimated 13,000 troops were AWOL in Paris, many running black-market goods to the front lines.

HOSPITAL HAVEN

By Homer V. Wagon, Jr.
102 Infantry Division
407th Infantry Regiment
Company B

In early December, 1944, my unit was fighting its way through the Siegfried Line in Germany. Our assignment was to attack towns and villages on our front to consolidate our position on the western edge of the Roer River. The German enemy stiffened his resistance to our entry into his homeland and he fought with renewed vigor and determination. My company's last objective in this operation was the Town of Roerdorf that was situated on the west bank of the Roer River. During the attack, the nearby explosion of an enemy mortar shell wounded me in the right leg.

I was evacuated along with other wounded men to the battalion aid station where the battalion surgeon determined the proper care for each of us. In my case, I was transported in an ambulance along with three other men to Liege, Belgium, and the 298th General Evacuation Hospital. Here, we were well treated and our wounds attended to in the most satisfactory manner that was possible. Depending on how well we responded to treatment, and the severity of the wounds, the disposition of each man was made. Some went on to England, and some went from here to the United States--others stayed until well enough to return to the front lines. I was one of the latter.

While I was recuperating in the hospital and responding very well to the treatment, the Germans decided to give us a "greeting" with V1 rockets. Every three minutes a buzz bomb would fall somewhere in the vicinity of Liege. Fortunately the hospitals were on the edge of town and only received one of these thousand pound bombs occasionally. But that was enough.

On the 16th of December, two weeks after my injury, the Germans broke through our lines and created the Battle of the Bulge. They were headed for Liege, and the rockets were meant to soften the target. Soon a call came for all "walking wounded" to put on their uniforms and fall out. That order included me. Men from all hospitals who were able, and men from service units in the city, were organized into appropriate fighting units and sent to the outskirts of the city to form a defense against the oncoming German attack. We dug in our foxholes and prepared for the onslaught.

The attack against Liege never came. The German Army was stopped by the men in and around Bastogne, Belgium, in an heroic stand against a massive force of men and machines. We were saved to fight another day. On December 27th, my 21st birthday, I was returned to the front lines.

This was an incident in my WWII war experience that I thought might be interesting because it was unique and although fraught with dire possibilities ended up in retrospect as a comparatively pleasant "vacation" from combat in the front lines. After this one chapter in the hospital, I continued to serve in infantry combat until the end of the war without another scratch, but with many close encounters. The hospital was clean and warm and we had great food to eat. To be in the company of the doctors and nurses was a virtual blessing compared to the front line experience with dirty foxholes, unsanitary cellars, freezing cold weather, poor food and constant physical and mental exhaustion. It was almost worth being a casualty to spend the time in their care.

I know the soldiers in the Gulf War are having different conditions, but I'm sure they sure in the frustration I felt in my war. Still, we must persist in this effort as we did in the "Greatest Generation," because the alternative is unacceptable. ■

MY PLATOON LEADER

By Robert E. Foye
35th Infantry Division
134th Infantry Regiment
Company A

In January, 1945, I became a replacement in my company. On the 1st, I spent the night in a foxhole on the outskirts of Marvin, Belgium. The next day we moved into the Ardennes.

I had been trained in the use of a PL536 hand transmitter receiver. My lieutenant handed it to me and said, "stay close." We soon took a German captive and sent him to the rear. We were shortly surrounded by well entrenched German soldiers who opened fire. My platoon leader was shot in one hand and I received a bullet in the middle of my back.

An entrenched German with a machine gun was close and I said to my lieutenant that I would try to get closer with a hand grenade. His response saved my life: "If you stand up, you will never stand up again." Our engagement was over in a few minutes. The few of us who were still alive became POW's January 4, 1945.

My relationship with my platoon leader was so short I never knew his name. I am now 81 years-of-age and have thanked our Lord many times for sparing my life. I pray he granted my lieutenant the same privilege. ■

OSAMA BIN LADEN

[The following appeared in the March/April, 2004, issue of the VBOB Gateway Newsletter (our St. Louis chapter). We thank them for bringing us a chuckle.]

After his death, bin Laden went to Heaven where he was greeted by George Washington, who proceeded to slap his face and yell at him, "How dare you try to destroy the nation that I helped to conceive."

Patrick Henry approached Osama, punched him in the nose and shouted, "You wanted to end our liberties but you failed."

James Madison entered, kicked Osama and said, "This is why I allowed our government to provide for the common defense."

Thomas Jefferson came in and proceeded to beat Osama many times with a long cane and said, "It is evil men like you who provided me with the inspiration to pen the Declaration of Independence."

The beatings and thrashings continued as John Randolph, James Monroe, and 66 other early Americans came in and unleashed their anger on the Moslem terrorist leader.

As he lay bleeding and writhing in unbearable pain an angel appeared. Osama said, "This is not what you promised me." The angel replied "I told you there would be 72 Virginians waiting for you in Heaven. What did you think I said?"

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