

# BULGE MEMORIES

*BOBA has been collecting memories and photos from veterans who were there so many years ago. If you are a veteran member and have not been featured in our magazine before, we want to hear from you!*



## Lionel Adda 99 INFD 393 INF D

### "Christmas Dinner on Elsenborn Ridge"

Today is my 99th birthday (January 17, 2021), so it seemed appropriate to write a short account of something that happened to me, a member of the 99th Infantry Division, during the Battle of the Bulge.

Late in the afternoon of December 19 what was left of the First Battalion of the 393rd Regiment, after three days of repelling German attacks and even being subjected to friendly fire, moved to occupy positions and holes prepared by the Engineers. We were dug in just at the eastern edge of Elsenborn Ridge and expected enemy action at any time. On the 21st we came under heavy mortar and artillery bombardment, but we did not suffer any infantry or tank attacks. A few days later in our sector two enemy attacks using assault guns were repelled by our artillery. A few days later after dark the Germans mounted an infantry attack up the Ridge, with some of their infantry coming into small arms fire range of our positions. This attack was repelled with the aid of two of our light tanks. Our positions suffered no further infantry attacks for the rest of the week, although artillery bombardments remained frequent.

If history serves me the Germans then shifted their attacks to the south of our positions, so some of us were moved to different locations somewhat more distant from the eastern edge of the Ridge. I recall that on Christmas Eve I was digging a hole to protect myself from mortar or artillery fire. It was quiet, with no sounds of small arms fire or artillery. On Christmas morning clouds began to disperse and through the mist I could see the sun rising to the southeast over the bell tower of the church in the town of Krinkelt. Krinkelt had been the headquarters of the 393rd Regiment but was now in German hands. I did not realize it then, but it was obvious that we were clearly visible to a German artillery observer in the church tower.

During this period our rations (C or K) and water were delivered at night. We did not have our ration for Christmas day, but very likely I had an extra K ration.

As the day wore on I started hearing artillery explosions, three or four closely spaced in time, but also some distance from my location. This pattern continued with the shells falling at locations closer to mine. Suddenly I looked up from my hole to see two GIs, with blood-shot eyes and carrying vermiculite-lined cans used by our kitchens to



(Above) Discarded artillery shell casings litter a U.S. artillery position on Elsenborn Ridge, and Lionel Adda (below).



deliver meals. One of the GIs handed me a turkey drumstick, the other a slice of white bread and two pieces of hard candy. This was our Christmas ration and dinner! I eagerly took a bite of the drumstick, surprisingly still warm, when three or four artillery shells began exploding around our location. Choking on that first bite I now understood what was happening. The Germans were tracking those men delivering the meal, and every time they stopped they knew that at least one man was located at that position. The kitchen men moved on to another location, and again the pattern of fire was repeated. This happened what seemed to me two more times, and I did not see the men after that. As I looked down at the line of positions I hoped that no one subjected to the bombardments was wounded or killed.

After thinking about this I felt a sense of anger that some officer, to be able tell his superiors that every man in his unit had turkey for Christmas, ordered something like this, placing men in danger unnecessarily. Also as an infantryman I must give my respect, grudgingly, to the German artillery team that managed such an attempt in the first place.

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Photo: Wikipedia/Unites States Army Center of Military History