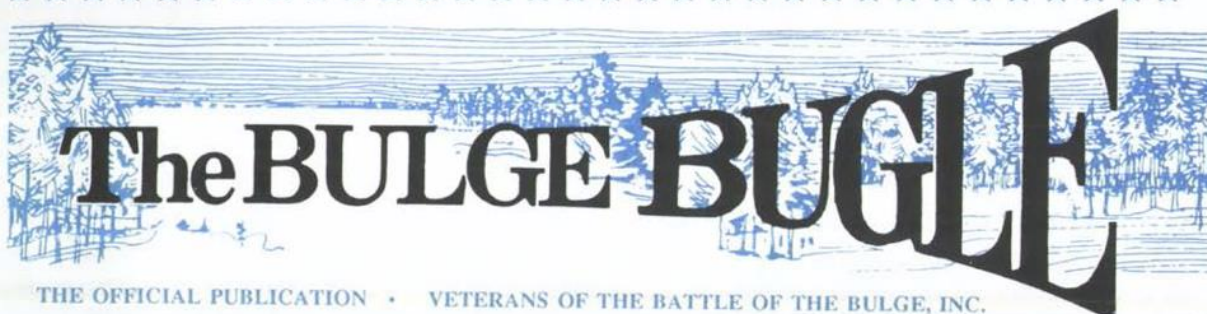


“This is undoubtedly the greatest American battle of the war and will, I believe, be regarded as an ever-famous American Victory.”

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL - Addressing the House of Commons following the Battle of the Bulge, WWII.



Presents

Voices of the Blue Ridge Division
80th Division *Battle of the Bulge* Stories

from the “*Bulge Bugle*”



Veteran Contributors: Denis E. Bergeron, Edgar Bredbenner, Bob Burrows, Walter Carr, Albert Dian, Joseph Drasler, George Ellig, Vernon Frazier, Guyowen Howard, Norman Katz, John Masterson, Lee McCardell, James Morgan, Richard Radock, Kenneth Roettger, Lionel Rothbard, Herman Skerlong

Edited by Leon Reed for the Battle of the Bulge Association

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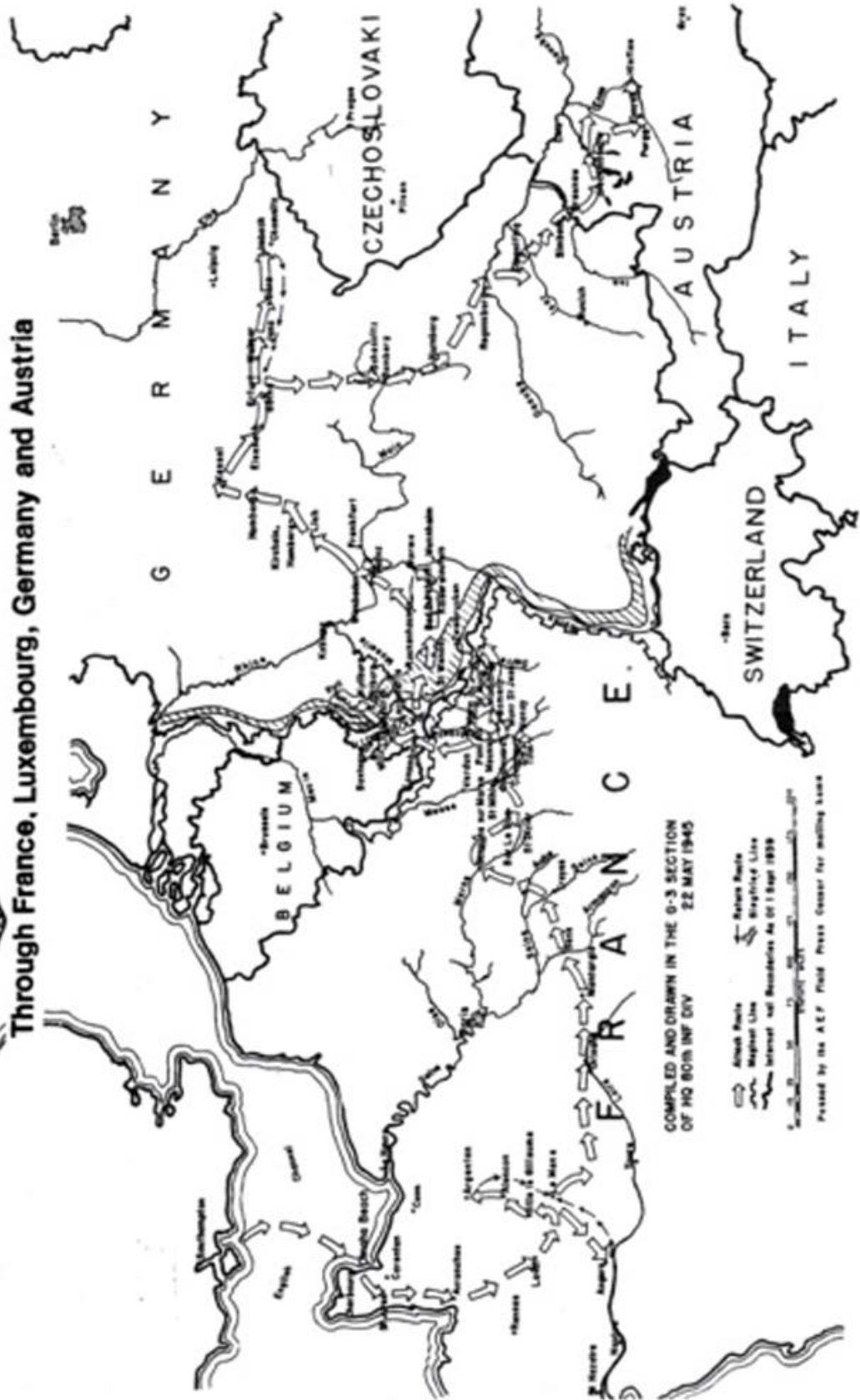
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THE BLUE RIDGE PATH

Through France, Luxembourg, Germany and Austria



COMPILED AND DRAWN IN THE G-3 SECTION
OF HQ 80th INF DIV
22 MAY 1945

- Allied Route
- German Route
- Maginot Line
- Strategic Line
- International Boundaries As of 1 Sept 1939

Scale: 1:50,000
Printed by the A.E.F. Field Press Center for mailing uses

80TH “BLUE RIDGE” INFANTRY DIVISION

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 80TH “BLUE RIDGE” INFANTRY DIVISION IN WWII

Reactivated: July 15, 1942 at Camp Forrest, TN. The Division later moved for training at Camp Phillips, near Salina, Kansas and in the California-Arizona Desert Training Center, near Yuma, AZ.

Overseas: Arrived Greenock, Firth of Clyde, Scotland on July 7, 1944. Landed on Utah Beach August 2-6, 1944.

Major Campaigns: Northern France, Ardennes-Alsace, Rhineland, Central Europe.

Days of Combat: 277

Distinguished Unit Citations: 6

Awards: MOH: 4; DSC: 48; SS: 671; LM: 13; DFC: 5; SM: 30; BSM: 3,357; AM: 121

Commanders: General Joseph D. Patch (July 1942- March 1943); Maj. Gen. Horace L. McBride (March 16, 1943);

Maj. Gen. Walter E. Lauer (October 1945)

Returned to US: January 5, 1946

* * *

During WWI, the 80th Division recruited soldiers from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia, hence the division’s nickname: “Blue Ridge Division.” The Division also adopted the Latin Motto, “Vis Montium” or “Strength of the Mountains.”

After arriving in the ETO on July 7, 1944, the Division proceeded south to Northwich, England via trains for additional training. Training included learning how to waterproof equipment for the upcoming channel crossing. The Division crossed the English Channel in LSTs and liberty ships, landing in Normandy on Utah Beach shortly after noon



on August 2, 1944, D-Day + 57 and assembled near St. Jores, France. A few days later on August 8, 1944, the 80th was initiated into battle when it took over the LeMans bridgehead in the XX Corps area.

By the end of the war, May 7, 1945, the 80th Division had seen 277 days of combat. It had captured 212,295 enemy soldiers. The 80th Division returned to the U.S. in January 1946, after spending time in Europe helping to restore and keep peace after the war. The 80th Division had been one of the stalwarts of Patton’s Third Army, but it cost them dearly. During their 277 days of combat, the 80th Infantry Division had 17,087 casualties (KIA: 3,038; WIA: 12,484; MIA: 488; Captured: 1,077).

Highlights — if you call them that — included the Battle of Argentan, Crossing the Moselle River, Piercing the Maginot Line, Battle of the Bulge, Relief of Bastogne, The Siegfried Line, Crossing the Rhine River, and the liberation of the Buchenwald & Ebensee Concentration Camps.

* * *

TO LEARN MORE: Visit the 80th Division Veterans Association website at www.80thdivision.com. More than 150,000 documents, images, oral histories & personal accounts (written & video), and PDF collections include Morning Reports (AUG ’44 through MAY ’45), General Orders, Unit Histories, After Action Reports, and Miscellaneous Reports all available to download.

JOIN THE 80TH DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION by contacting the Association National Secretary, CSM(r) Doris M. Wollett at csmwollett@verizon.net. The Association holds annual reunions in Richmond, Virginia in July/August.

Replacements

“French Bread and K Rations,” George M. Ellig, 317th Infantry Regiment, Company B
Bugle, November 1993

We knew where we were headed, it wouldn't take long. The Bulge had started.

...Then we began to see long trains pulling into the camp bearing wounded men. It was unsettling until we finally marched to a long string of boxcars and were jammed into them for a long journey to nowhere, or so we thought. Oddly, my car was American made if no more comfortable than the others.

That was about December 20 and the train slowly crossed snow-covered farmland, went through the outskirts of Paris in the night hours as temperatures dipped below zero and the snow kept falling. On the 24th we still had not reached our destination and it was truly bitterly cold. Ingenious GIs had scrounged old, discarded oil drums into which whatever wood they could find was stuffed to provide some heat while perched in the open doorways of the [box]cars. It was quite a sight to watch as the train rounded bends and 50 or more cars could be seen, each with black smoke belching from the makeshift stoves.

That lasted until early afternoon when by-passed resistance from the spectacular dash across France began stitching holes in the cars from machine guns emplaced along the right of way. In no time there were no stoves visible anywhere except beside the tracks. It seemed right at the time. Each of us carried duffel bags loaded with clothing, but there wasn't one rifle among us.

The old French engine coughed its way east, stopping only for more wood and water. It backed up faster than it moved forward and all of us wondered what was ahead. On Christmas Day the train eased its way into a French town of World War I fame, Bar le Duc. Snow continued to fall as the train groaned to a stop in town.

It was midday and women in heavy clothing materialized along the train carrying long loaves of fresh French bread. They were offered for sale provided they received American money. Whoever had any contributed it to a common pool and the bread changed hands quickly. To us it tasted like nothing we'd ever eaten before. It was especially good since we knew our Christmas dinner would be K rations again, and cold at that.

We had almost finished dipping our mess kits in drops of boiling water when a shout came from the rear to take cover. There were no delays in seeking ditches or diving under cars. Out of the sky had come a lone German fighter plane bent on strafing us from stem to stern. He made two passes at us, leaving a trail of wounded each time. We had nothing with us to fire back. We didn't even have rocks. Fortunately, there were medics not far off

and they came in a hurry to do what they could. The train continued with too many less than just a few hours earlier.

It was Nieuw Chateau next day and a full turkey dinner. Each man was allowed up to two pounds and it was probably the finest Christmas dinner I'd ever had before or since. Our final stop was Metz where all of us received final assignments and went to our units in which we served until it was all over, over there. There's more to this story.

Medics and Aid Stations

“A Christmas Story,” Lionel J. Rothbard, 305th Medical Battalion, Company B
Bugle, Nov 2014

On December 24, 1944, I was a Second Lieutenant, Medical Administrative Corps, commanding a platoon of ten enlisted men, equipped with ten ambulances and one jeep. Our company, the 587th, had spent a period of rest and recuperation after working in the Alsace region of France, north of Luneville. We received orders to move out and proceed to Luxembourg City.

A few days before we left I had observed very heavy traffic going north. Also, much to my surprise, the vehicles were being driven with their headlights on. Previously we had always driven under blackout conditions using cats eye illumination. Our company consisting of headquarters and three platoons left the area north of Luneville on December 24 arrived in Luxembourg City in the early evening and reported to a medical battalion headquarters. It was freezing cold!

Having been through more than a few Windy City (Chicago) December blizzards, I immediately located a Quartermaster store and bought an army trench coat to go with overshoes I had received from the company supply. The trench coat came down below my knees and I had to roll up the sleeves. I wore an O.D. shirt, an O.D. sweater, a field jacket, the trench coat, G.I. Boots, socks, a helmet with liner and was ready to travel in a jeep with the top down. My platoon was assigned to begin evacuating casualties from the Clearing Station of the 80th Infantry Division at Esch Sur Sur. (Not to be confused with another Esch in the south part of the Duchy.) One of my men of the Catholic faith had found a church and decided to attend Mass that evening. The entire platoon waited outside the church and watched as large flakes of snow started to fall. When Mass was over we began motoring north to our destination.

Security was very strict everywhere as there were rumors that the Nazi enemy was infiltrating the American lines with Germans dressed in American uniforms speaking English. Supposedly one of the Germans was Otto Skorzeny, Hitler’s favorite commando. At every village we approached, and there were many of them, we encountered sentries coming out of the darkness with loaded weapons challenging everything and anything. All of them had itchy trigger fingers. At one village, I was sitting in the passenger seat of my vehicle and as we stopped the driver was challenged with the usual sign. That evening it was “eagle” and it was to be answered by the countersign of “nest.” To my amazement my driver forgot both the sign and the countersign and froze speechless! The sentry kept repeating the sign louder and louder, all the while poking his rifle through the window closer and closer to me. I finally yelled, “You S.O.B. It’s NEST! NEST!” And he allowed us to proceed.

It bears mentioning at this point that the 587th was an unusual and unique U.S. Army formation. It was one of the few medical units composed of all black, now known as

African American, enlisted men commanded by all Caucasian, or white, commissioned officers. One of which was me! The Germans may have been masquerading as Americans, but they sure weren't black! The snow filled roads were treacherous, but we finally arrived at the clearing station, located in a Castle, in the early hours of December 25, 1944. Tired and ready to carry out our assignment, but not too tired, however, to refuse when the cooks offered me a nightcap. They had "found" some medical alcohol (normally used to make cough medicine and other liquid medicines), mixed it with some powdered lemon and Viola, a cocktail. It was the best cocktail I have ever had. I proceeded to find a space on the floor of the castle, spread out my bedroll and fall asleep.

Christmas Day. We were treated to a traditional repast of turkey with all the trimmings. The weather had cleared and when we looked up, we could see airplanes. To our relief they were American airplanes, the Eighth Air Force B-17s flying east to bomb the Germans. After a few weeks in Esch Sur Sur evacuating all kinds of wounded we moved up to Wiltz. Subsequently, we were ordered back to somewhere in France, assigned to what was left of the 28th Infantry Division and continued with our job of moving patients from Clearing Stations to Evac Hospitals.

It was a most memorable Christmas Season. I would like to pay tribute to the junior officers and enlisted men who by their bravery and perseverance won the battle, despite the miscalculations of higher headquarters.

James M. Morgan, 319th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Medical Detachment
Bugle, Feb 1991

This particular time we were in Heiderscheid. We went in behind the enemy lines and cut the main highway, and to hold it, we had to call our own artillery on our own positions. There was only the 2nd battalion, but we held it against overwhelming odds, it was "awesome."

Well back to me. My 2nd Lt. asked me if I would go pick up three (3) wounded Germans. He put it like I didn't have to, but I ought to. He said I might get a medal. I was told the road was a solid sheet of ice. Down the hill about 1-1/2 mile. I was under observation 3/4 of a mile. There was a bomb crater, took half of the road where I was to turn in at the first house, and I was told it was zeroed in, and to hurry. I put the jeep in second then to low. I cut the key off and jumped out. I outran the jeep, went through the door. No sooner than the door was closed, a shell went off right behind my jeep, blowed all my tires down, all but the left front. Even my spare tire was down. All my tire chains were cut into. I had 32 holes in my jeep.

I asked the boys if the Germans had been searched? They said, "Yes, they are clean." We loaded them, two were on stretchers. The other one sat up in the seat. I sure kept my eyes on them. Here was the problem. To drive a jeep one tire up and three flat. It would go right for a while and then all would Hop over, then would go left. The only way it would pull itself

was front wheel drive and low range, wide open, 10 miles an hour. When I finally got to the Aid Station with my prisoners, we searched them and found two loaded pistols on them. From that time on, I searched all my P.W.'s myself.

Oh yes, I got the Bronze Star for this trip.

*“The Enemy Was Everywhere,” James M. Morgan, 319th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Medical Detachment
Bugle, February 1995*

My job in the Army was a Jeep driver. I had the responsibility of moving the wounded from the front lines to the aid station. I was located in Heiderscheid, Lux, This particular night we had taken the town and were given orders to hold it at all cost. As a result, this was to be the longest night assault ever attempted for that time - six miles with one battalion.

When dawn arrived, we were terrified at the sight, the enemy was everywhere. We were able to fight them off and were told to hold our position. One of the officers became impatient and decided to move his company forward. We were told that we could be strafed by our own planes if this happened. When the officer moved his company, this indeed did happen. Our planes strafed them, assuming they were the enemy advancing. One of the soldiers was wounded from his fox hole while he was looking for enemy activity through his binoculars. He was struck in the leg just below the knee by a 50-caliber bullet. Both bones were shattered, and he fell to the ground. The weather was terribly cold, approximately 0-10 below. The ground was frozen with snow and ice. The warmth of the blood melted the snow and ice in the fox hole, so the leg and fractured bones became embedded in the slush and refroze. I was trying to lift him out of the fox hole but was unable to do so. I was very puzzled why I could not pull him from the hole since I had done this many times before. After I had attempted this again, I noticed each time I lifted on him the ground beneath also moved. I used a trench knife to dig him free from the refrozen ground. The freezing of the slush probably saved his life preventing him from bleeding to death. Once I was able to get him out of the fox hole, I loaded him onto the Jeep and transported him to the aid station.

Once we arrived at the aid station a sergeant was tending to him. He severed some skin and flesh from his leg. This was all that was left attaching his foot and boot. The limb was discarded in a back room that contained many more limbs. The wounded soldier rolled over and declared, I have a \$10,000 wound. I'm going home!

[I had the opportunity to visit the sergeant, that tended to the wounded soldier, in 1992. He remembered well that had happened on that December morning in 1944: the wounded soldier and the room full of limbs at the aid station.]

"We Never Got to England," Edgar Bredbenner, 318th Infantry Regiment, Company B
Bugle, May 1998

No stretcher bearers were getting through the waist-deep snow and the enemy had closed in behind our lines. Three of us started back, but without our weapons. One man had his heel shot away and the other had been hit in the back and none of us were bleeding, it was so damp and cold and in the deep snows. We found wounded men, trying to get to the aid station, that had been shot and killed by snipers and their equipment gone. We had a few fire fights, but when we returned fire, the enemy melted away in the woods. The medics had no blankets for the wounded, we had no overcoats, shoe pacs or any of the needed camouflage clothing. If wounded you walked out, if you stayed you froze to death. No fires were allowed, and no buildings were seen by us at any time. After a P-47 sprayed us, we reached the aid station about dark. We were checked out and placed in ambulances to travel to an air-evac hospital near the French-Belgium-Luxembourg borders. We were told we would be flown to England and probably to the USA. We all fell asleep in the warm ambulance and all of us had severe pain from frozen feet and legs and did they ever sting. We were placed on stretchers and put aboard the plane after a change of bandages.

About 500 feet up three German fighters fired a short burst and hit the plane. But we were lucky. They evidently saw the air strip lights and realized that this was a medical area and flew off. One engine was out, the plane was on fire, some of the men and nurses were wounded, or killed, and the co-pilot was out of commission. The pilot was wounded but brought the plane around and we landed back on the air strip. We were back mobile again and helped remove the dead and wounded. Ten minutes later the plane exploded. I was moved to an operating area, and I sat in a chair while a doctor gave me seven shots of Novocain and opened up my thigh to the bone. I sat there and watched him. Today, I would have probably passed out! We never got to England.

Christmas Season

Joseph Drasler, 317th Infantry Regiment, Company L

My most memorable moment, profoundly felt and everlastingly remembered, occurred on Christmas Eve, 1944, following the all-day battle engaged in by men of the 317th Infantry, 80th Division, to secure a hill in the vicinity of Niederfeulen, Luxembourg, which they would forever after remember as “Bloody Knob.”

The 305th Medical Battalion Field Hospital hallway and waiting room was jammed with wounded GIs, seated on chairs and lying on the floor – anywhere room could be found for another litter case. Hours later, after receiving treatment for my frozen toes, I was assigned a cot in the corner of the room facing a little, cheerfully decorated Christmas tree that captivated my emotions completely. One look at that little tree so symbolic of the season, triggered such a flow of tears and emotions I could do nothing but let them flow.

The thought of loved ones back home, recollections of the dead and wounded, assisting two of my closest stateside buddies (Sylvester Perciabosco, from Omaha, Nebraska, and Dick Thorne, from Elizabeth, New Jersey, both badly wounded), off the Hill – through all that I remained rational in control, but the sight of that twinkling little Christmas tree ... it was incredible.

Christmas Eve, 1944

“My Most Memorable Christmas,” Albert Dian, 318th Infantry Regiment, Cannon Company
Bugle, December 1992

Lo and behold, as we peered into the darkness, a mother, father and tiny baby were huddled there, terrified. We could only communicate with sign language-their native language was a patois of French and German and hard to understand. We shared our cold rations with them for several days until our kitchen truck could move up to a safe area and provide us with hot chow.

Mail finally caught up with us and I had a package from one of my sisters in Cleveland, Ohio. She had read that the little children in war torn France, Holland, and Belgium would not have any gifts of any kind for Christmas. She didn’t even know that I was in Luxembourg at the time.

Christmas Eve came, cold-no stars, cloudy weather. Despite legends otherwise, the guns were still audible, both sides. I finally opened the package, and it was an assortment of small, cheap trinkets. I believe my sister hoped I would distribute them at some orphanage.

By candlelight, I started giving little gifts, one at a time, to the little boy-"Edie"-the name I best remember. At each gift, the mother and father would cry and thank me with gestures. Was this a reenactment of that "Holy Night" in Bethlehem many years ago?

I know how the Wise Men of old must have felt since this tiny babe also lay in a bed of hay, smiling all the while. Perhaps, the angels were smiling from on high. I like to think so! Before falling asleep, we said our silent prayers—"Peace on Earth, Goodwill towards Men."

Race North to Luxembourg

“Relief of the Besieged U.S. Troops in Bastogne,” Richard Radock, 319th Infantry Regiment, 305th Medical Battalion, Company C
Bugle, May 1999

This story is about my division's (80th Infantry Division) role in the early shift of the 3rd Army troops from the Saar Valley and travel 150 miles from St. Avold, Bitche and Rohrbach which we were in this area for rest, refitting and maintenance of our vehicles, tanks, guns and equipment in preparation to assault the West Wall. General Patton ordered us to move north as fast as we could, the 4th Armored to Longwy, the 80th Infantry Division to Luxembourg City and the 26th Infantry Division toward Liefrange 14 hours later--this was on December 19, 1944.

We were to set up a defense to stop the German 7th Army from penetrating southward and we were to attack the southern German flank quickly. The only divisions located here were part of the 28th Infantry Division and the 4th Infantry Division also Patton sent the 10th Armored Division to Bastogne to help

We were assigned to General Milliken's III Corps.

We were to pull out of the 3rd Army front lines, load up all the infantry troops, extra gasoline, ammo, rations, medical supplies and get ready to travel 150 miles at a great speed as fast as conditions warranted and set up a defense perimeter around Luxembourg City and dig in about 10 miles north of the city as the Germans wanted to seize this communications center. We drove in a blizzard about 0530 hours, the roads were icy and covered with snow, it was so dark we took a chance and drove with bright headlights on so we could drive faster, it was Tuesday, December 19th, 1944, and with a long drive with the entire division. We moved in a very long convoy. Our 305th Engineers went first to check the roads, bridges and for mines. Our division MPs were road guides and kept the convoy close so none of us would get lost. Then came the trucks with our 3 Infantry Regiments (317th, 318th and 319th) and 702nd Tank Battalion, 633rd AAA Battalion, our Artillery Battalions (313th, 314th, 315th, and 905th). then the service companies, headquarters units, then the division headquarters. All of the tired vehicles had chains on all wheels.

The trip was long and tedious, stop and go movement. Thirty-three hours of driving. We had to get out many times to stretch, relieve drivers and eat cold K rations--there was no hot food or even coffee.

We arrived in Luxembourg City and found a lot of rear echelon troops of the 28th Infantry Division--mostly clerks, mess workers, cooks and headquarters troops. They were glad to see us.

We placed guards at strategic crossroads, billets and command posts and medical facilities.

Our infantry took up positions north of the city to defend and protect it from the Germans as they were ready to launch an attack against the city. One of our infantry regiments loaded up in trucks, moved north of the city, registered their guns and fired on the enemy on December 22, 1944. The rest of the division set up a defense north of the city and were ordered to attack at 0600 hours on the same day.

“My Guardian Angel,” John B. Masterson, 318th Infantry Regiment, Company G
Bugle, August 2002

My two brothers and I often talked about how lucky we were to survive World War II. After a number of incidents, we decided it was because we each had a "guardian angel" who protected us. This is my story about just one incident in which I survived because of my guardian angel.

In December of 1944, my outfit, under General George Patton, was attacking the famous German Siegfried Line leading to the invasion of Germany, near the Town of Strasbourg. It was very cold on December 16, 1944, when we were pulled back off the line and were told the Germans were making a large invasion to our north in the area of Belgium and Luxembourg. Adolph Hitler, the German dictator, was hoping to win a great victory, split the Allies, and ask for peace, thus ending the war. This was the beginning of the most decisive battle in Europe of World War II, known as the Battle of the Bulge.

My regiment was now taken off the line and moved northward in open trucks to Luxembourg and Belgium to stop the German invasion. This surprise attack by the Germans led to the huge bulge in our lines of fifty miles, thus this became the Battle of the Bulge. Our objective was to cut off their bulge and cut the invading German armies off from the rest.

We arrived at our destination around midnight, and it was already snowing and very cold. Around 2:30 a.m., we were told to dig fox holes and hold the line. For the next week, we were in rough fighting with the invading Germans under extreme cold weather conditions. Our planes couldn't get in the air to strafe the Germans because of the fog and snow.

“Grabbing an Opportunity,” Bob Burrows, 317th Infantry Regiment
Bugle, Aug 2013

16th December 1944, I was a Corporal, jeep driver in XII Corps, G-5 Section (Civil Affairs/Military Government). “Iceberg” Forward moved to Morhange, France that morning. A rumor had it that evening the Germans had attacked north of us in Luxembourg. It was not until the 18th or 19th in my mind, that here was an opportunity that I had sought twice previously but had not been permitted to join a line outfit.

I went to see Colonel Frank Veale, Corps G-1 personnel Officer. I said to the Colonel that, "He could not keep me back now!" He must have been in a good frame of mind that day! No negative response, nor had I intended to be insubordinate. In October this same Officer told me after I had volunteered once again for line duty that I "needed to stay as a driver." Apparently, those rumors we were hearing about clerks, band members, rear echelon troops being moved into the line to help stave off the German attack were true. He told me to wait a few minutes. He came back to his office, told me to report to the Corps Commander, Major General Manton S Eddy. After a few minutes' conversation with General Eddy, he said, I could go to any unit in the ETO. I said it made no difference which unit, (my intent was Luxembourg area). He then suggested the 2nd Battalion, 317th Infantry, 80th Division. He said to me that his former XII Corps Headquarters Commandant had volunteered for line duty the previous month and he was now the 2nd battalion, 317th Infantry, Commander. My orders were cut immediately. I left that afternoon for a Metz, France Replacement Depot.

I spent a few days at the 95th Division Replacement Depot awaiting ultimate transfer to the 80th. On the 23rd, I was picked up by Lieutenant Colonel George Ball and his driver, the 80th Division G-5, Civil Affairs Officer. We drove from Metz to Mersch, Luxembourg where we spent the night. The 80th was in Corps reserve at St Avold, France at the beginning of the "Battle of the Bulge". The Division began its move from St Avold, France area on the 19th, delaying my direct transfer from Corps to Division.

I had to wait until Christmas morning to become a line soldier as my new unit had been surrounded by the Germans Christmas Eve day and night, breaking out early Christmas morning. From the 23rd December to January 21, '45, the 80th spent its time mainly in defensive holding positions on the Bulge's south shoulder in the vicinity of Heiderscheid, Dahl, and Ettelbruck areas.

Ettelbruck

*“My Most Memorable Christmas,” Albert Dian, 318th Infantry Regiment, Cannon Company
Bugle, December 1992*

Somewhere about the 20th, we moved northeast toward Diekirch and Ettelbruck. On our way, we encountered our first Nebelwurfers, the "screaming meemies"-multiple rockets fired at us with an eerie sound that was terrifying. At the same time, the walking wounded of the 28th Infantry Division were moving to the rear while we were advancing to take up the positions they had held.

We passed by a typical guard house, the same type you see in old movies with the guards in their comic opera uniforms. As we approached the guard house, the Nebelwurfers came raining down and the sentinels disappeared "toute suite" in the direction of the castle of the Grand Duchess of Colmar- Berg.

Proceeding to our designated area, we dug in our guns. Although an infantry company, the Cannon Company had six 105-millimeter howitzers designed to give the infantrymen ahead of us close support.

We set up our command post in an abandoned farmhouse and started to run telephone lines to our gun platoons. The weather for days had been miserable-poor visibility for our air force. This probably was the greatest advantage the Wehrmacht had since they moved so rapidly on the terrain they knew so well. Somehow (maybe a break in the clouds), our position was revealed to a German forward observer, and we started to get hostile fire on our headquarters. Glass and mortar through the windows made it expedient for us to retreat to the potato cellar below the house.

*“Relief of the Besieged U.S. Troops in Bastogne,” Richard Radock, 319th Infantry Regiment,
305th Medical Battalion, Company C
Bugle, May 1999*

We attacked and advanced 14 miles in 48 hours in the deep snow and caught the enemy by surprise and slaughtered about two-thirds of a Grenadier Division of the Wehrmacht 7th Army.

The 80th Infantry' Division would move toward Ettelbruck, the 26th Division toward Wiltz and the 4th Armored toward Bastogne. The 80th Blue Ridgers destroyed an enemy artillery battalion in Ettelbruck, and we stopped the German drive on Luxembourg City. We also seized a 4 mile stretch of the German main supply road from Trier to Bastogne.

To Bastogne

“Relief of the Besieged U.S. Troops in Bastogne,” Richard Radock, 319th Infantry Regiment,
305th Medical Battalion, Company C
Bugle, May 1999

On Christmas Day, 1944, we slugged it out with the enemy for three days, but we held our ground. We captured many enemy soldiers and pounded them with thousands of rounds of artillery and mortar shells. Good news this day as the 4th Armored, 37th Tank Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Abrams, rolled into Bastogne through a narrow corridor. The besieged troops were glad to see them. Lt. Carr, of the 2nd Battalion of the 318th Infantry Regiment, with a four-man patrol, slipped through enemy lines and made contact with an engineer outpost on the outskirts of the Bastogne perimeter. He then was escorted to the 101st Airborne Headquarters and had overlays made of our defense positions, conditions of the wounded, supplies needed, and ammo.

The major crisis ended at Bastogne, but many tough battles were to be fought as the Germans had about 9 divisions and small units surrounding the perimeter around Bastogne. The next few days, the corridor to the city was widened and ambulances and supply trucks moved into Bastogne--all of the wounded and civilians were evacuated. Many fresh troops relieved the paratroopers and other besieged troops

Two battalions of our 318th Infantry Regiment were ordered by General Patton to provide infantry support to the 4th Armored Division. They loaded up on trucks and motored 22 miles toward Bastogne. The Germans kept up pressure on the Bastogne perimeter. The 101st Airborne Division and other troops were surrounded. The 80th Division fought with tenacity' and advanced 5 miles clear Merzig of enemy troops. On December 23, 1944, clouds lifted and our XIX TAC had a field day bombing and strafing the enemy. My Company C, 305th Medical Battalion Collecting Station was located in Ettelbruck, so I had to set up an ambulance shuttle post in Heiderscheid to cut down travel time for my ambulances which were assigned to the three infantry battalion aid stations of the 319th Infantry Regiment. My job was to evacuate the wounded soldiers immediately including the enemy and civilians, with great speed so the wounded would not go into shock or hypothermia. Other ambulances would transfer the wounded and drive them to our Company C Collection Station located in Ettelbruck. Since the 80th Division was ordered to move to Ettelbruck and join the XII Corps, the 35th Division took our positions.

“We Never Got to England,” Edgar Bredbenner, 318th Infantry Regiment, Company B
Bugle, May 1998

This was a day I will never forget, and it was probably the longest day in my life. The 80th Infantry Division had moved up from Central France to join the Third U.S. Corps, along with the 26th Infantry Division and the 4th Armored Division to attack the southern portion of the Bulge area. It was a long, cold ride in open trucks with no blankets or overcoats and we

spent almost two days without stopping. At that time, we had about 15-16 men in our squads, and we attacked Ettelbruck, Luxembourg, on December 22, 1944. We fought there for three days, losing many men, all officers and all of our automatic weapons. This attack was called off because of the cost in men and on Christmas Eve we again loaded on open trucks to join with the 4th Armored on their attack into Bastogne, Belgium. This was another long, cold night.

Early on Christmas morning we moved out and we were immediately fired upon. A burst of burp gun hit me in the neck and ear, took off my helmet and shredded the towel wrapped around my neck. Medics patched me up and we continued through the thick woods deep on the right flank. Tanks were on the road on our left, but we could not hear them; the air was so heavy and the snow swirling about. We had sniper fire from the rear, right flank and from the front. Artillery fire and mortars shattered the trees about us, but we kept moving forward into the attack, losing many more men. About 1:00 p.m. a tree burst hit me in the thigh and opened my leg up. A medic patched me up, gave me a sulpha powder and morphine and said to hike back to the aid station, which was five miles.

Relief of Bastogne

The Last Night of My Life: The World War II Adventure of Lt. Walter Carr, Combat Rifleman, Platoon Leader, Night Prowler (forthcoming)

Consequently, the commander of the 4th Armored Division asked his corps commander for more infantrymen from my division. III Corps commander Maj. Gen. John Millikin ordered the commander of the 80th Division, Maj. Gen. Horace McBride, to release two infantry battalions to the 4th Armored Division. My battalion was one of the two. As a result, on Christmas Eve morning, my battalion received word in Niederfeulen that we would leave by truck that afternoon for Belgium to help establish a relief corridor by breaking through the German encirclement of the 101st Airborne Division in Bastogne.

Late December 24, we moved by truck to Burnon, Belgium, ready to begin our attack toward Bastogne on Christmas morning. To reach the trucks that would take my battalion to Belgium we had to hike a half mile from Niederfeulen. On the way we passed through the remains of a German horse-drawn supply column that had been totally surprised and destroyed by tanks supporting the 319th Infantry Regiment's attack two days before on Dec 22nd. Until we came across this scene, we didn't know this surprise attack had happened. Shattered wagons and supplies as well as mangled and frozen bodies of Germans and carcasses of dead horses littered the road for a block. We were fortunate the temperature was below freezing. Otherwise, the stench from the decaying human and animal flesh would have been almost unbearable.

After we loaded into the trucks, we traveled a very roundabout route west to Arlon, Belgium, then north toward Bastogne. By the time we reached Arlon, early winter darkness had overtaken us, and we were surprised to see the city lit with Christmas lights and its citizens doing their last-minute Christmas shopping. This was the first time in Europe we had seen people engaged in "normal" life. The area in France where we had been fighting hadn't been liberated from German control long enough for normal commercial activity to be restored and we had been traveling and fighting since December 19. Belgium had been cleared for a while before the Germans returned, and obviously the German counter-offensive hadn't reached Arlon. The Christmas decorations made some of us very homesick and we wondered if we would live to see decorations at home during later Christmas seasons. Too many wouldn't.

From Arlon, we turned north toward our destination, Burnon, Belgium, located about seven miles south of Bastogne. Although the distance was only 35 miles from Niederfeulen to Burnon, our progress was slow. At night, we had to drive with only our blackout lights, follow a circuitous route to avoid the Germans, be careful of the hazardous snow and ice on the road, and stop frequently to ask directions. The trip on frigid roads took six hours.

We arrived in Burnon after midnight; Christmas Day was beginning. Burnon was the furthest north point currently held by the 4th Armored. The division had advanced further north to Chaumont but had been forced to retreat by German 88 mm guns.

Enroute to Bastogne

“On to Bastogne,” Ed Bredbenner, 318th Infantry Regiment, Company B
Bugle, May 2005

On Christmas Eve those of us in Company B, 318th Regiment, moved by open truck, and it was very cold with no coats or blankets, to an area near Bigonville, Luxembourg.

Early Christmas morning we attacked. We were on the right flank of the highway deep in the dense woods. We were being fired on from the right, rear and the front. We did capture Tintange, Belgium, after a severe fight, losing many men. We continued the advance until December 28th when we were relieved by units of the 35th Infantry Division. We did not have enough manpower to continue. We never did get to Bastogne but reached an area near the village.

We had moved from an area in France after slogging through the mud for many months to finally get relieved after 129 days of combat. This was December 8, 1944. We went into Corps reserve for six days training in river crossings and the taking of pill boxes. We moved into the Saar area ready to hit the West Wall.

This was the 16th of December. Then, we were alerted to move north and fast, which we did—traveling by open truck for two days and nights. We were over-strength and had about 220 in the company. General Patton knew we would have heavy losses in the attack. We had new replacements and casualties returning (wounded men returning to action). When we were relieved, 20 men remained in the company. We had moved from France in 15 trucks and returned in one truck. We were led by a PFC. We returned to Ettelbruck and three days later we were back in action. I do not know how the men survived the cold, no blankets or overcoats, but they kept on advancing. We had lost many men in three days’ fighting in Ettelbruck before joining the 4th Armored Division in their attack on Christmas Day. We were told to hike out or stay and freeze to death when wounded.

As for myself, I was wounded in the thigh and out of action. The medics told us to walk out since the medics were not getting through the deep snows and the enemy closing in the rear. Three of us hiked to the aid station about five miles. We took our rifles and had a few firefights on the way. I spent over two months in the 50th General Hospital in Commerce, France, and then right back into action. It was so cold that none of us were bleeding.

The losses were heavy for all the units fighting up from the south. The 26th Infantry Division and the 80th fought in very rugged country with many streams and steep hills, fighting uphill into heavy defended areas. When spring came and the snows melted thousands of German and American bodies littered the area. The German cemetery, near Hamm Cemetery, has a common grave where over 7,000 men are resting.

The Last Night of My Life: The World War II Adventure of Lt. Walter Carr, Combat Rifleman, Platoon Leader, Night Prowler (forthcoming)

The struggle for Chaumont brought tragedy not only to Americans attacking the village but also to its Belgian residents. How well I remember the elderly, heartbroken Belgian couple who huddled in their small basement where some of us had taken shelter Christmas night. They had scrimped and saved for a lifetime to be able to buy a new house for their retirement. After suffering through the long German occupation of 1940 to 1944, they had been liberated by the Allies. Now the Germans had returned. Preparatory to an attack by the 4th Armored CCB on December 22 or 23, an armored field artillery battalion shelled the village and fighter-bombers from the XIX TAC “hammered” it. The vicious fighting over control of this village had wrecked everything the elderly couple owned.

The entire village of Chaumont, five miles south of Bastogne, was almost completely leveled after having exchanged hands at least four times between December 16 and December 25. It was a key village U.S. forces had to control in the corridor along the road we were opening as we moved northward from Burnon to relieve and reinforce the encircled American defenders three miles away in Bastogne.

The elderly couple’s house had been destroyed by the repeated shellings that had preceded one or more of the four exchanges of the ghost-like village. In addition to the Belgian couple, those who planned to sleep in the turnip-storage basement were Medical Technician Robert L. Schackle, several company runners, and me. Before we lay down, we ate what should have been our Christmas dinner. The still intact concrete floor of what was left of the living room above served as a ceiling for the basement and provided fairly solid protection from artillery fire.

The best I could offer the elderly couple for Christmas dinner was a can of cheese and some crackers from one of my K rations. Their sad eyes brightened long enough to make me feel as if I had served them turkey and dressing with all the trimmings. What a difference a few miles made. Barely 20 miles away, people were rushing to finish Christmas shopping, while here was a struggle for survival.

I also ate a cold K ration, which was all any of us had to eat. We had no way to heat the food. We had no Christmas tree. No one offered to read the Christmas story from a Bible. We were all too sad to sing Christmas carols. And our only candle was too short to burn very long. Some Christmas dinner! Some Christmas! But we were alive.

Air Drop

The Last Night of My Life: The World War II Adventure of Lt. Walter Carr, Combat Rifleman, Platoon Leader, Night Prowler (forthcoming)

At that moment, I was distracted and perplexed by a dull roar in the distance that gradually grew louder and louder. Just as I was about to conclude that the Germans had a new secret weapon, the entire sky suddenly darkened with a mass of low flying American C-47 transport planes. I quickly realized they were flying a re-supply mission to the encircled 101st. Visibility had improved enough to make the desperately needed mission possible.

In the distance I saw the vari-colored parachutes descend on Bastogne. Each color indicated the type of supplies attached to the chute, such as food, ammunition, weapons, or medical supplies. This system enabled any retrievers who might be working under enemy fire to quickly locate the most needed supplies.

Their mission accomplished, the planes wheeled around and roared back over us. The crewmen of a plane disabled by German anti-aircraft fire bailed out and began drifting toward German lines. Would the Germans kill them as they descended? Or capture them after they landed? Or would we be able to rescue them?

Now they were coming down in no-man's land between George Company to our left and our company, but they were going to land closer to German than American lines. First Lieutenant Gabriel Martinez, in George Company, feared they would fall into enemy hands. He quickly led a three-man patrol under German fire into no-man's land to rescue them. For this act of heroism, he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross, our second combat medal immediately below the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Patrol to Bastogne

The Last Night of My Life: The World War II Adventure of Lt. Walter Carr, Combat Rifleman, Platoon Leader, Night Prowler (forthcoming)

“Carr, we’ve selected you to lead a crucial patrol,” Capt. P.W. Foreman, the battalion S-3 told me. “Right now, we’re about three miles south of Bastogne. After several more days of fighting, we expect to contact the 101st Airborne. We need to know exactly where their defensive positions are, so we won’t shoot each other up when we try to make contact.

“We want you to take a patrol into Bastogne tonight to bring back information on the positions of the 101st. But you’ll have to be very careful.”

“We know you’ll have a tough time getting through to the 101st then back to us. But you’ve accomplished tough assignments before. “

On the way back to my company from battalion HQ, I analyzed my patrol’s mission. We would have to sneak through the Germans facing us, then then through the Germans surrounding Bastogne, contact the Bastogne defenders, then reverse the sequence to get back to battalion before it moved out the next morning. We would have to cover a total of six miles in less than 10 hours.

The most difficult task would be making peaceful contact with the Bastogne defenders. We might be able to hide from the Germans while sneaking through their lines. But we couldn’t avoid contacting the Bastogne defenders, and they might shoot at anything that moved toward them across the no-man’s land between the Germans and them.

The time was a problem as well. We had to be careful, but if we were too slow, our outfit might have already moved out by the time we returned.

Surely this was the last night of my life. The odds against success seemed overwhelming. I frankly didn’t know how we would make contact with the 101st. The only thing I could do was play it by ear.

My patrol needed to be small – so it would be as inconspicuous as possible. But it needed to be large enough to provide security in all four directions. I decided on four members, including myself, so I could use the diamond formation: one person forward and one back, one to the right and one to the left. I would bring up the rear. If the others got captured in an encounter with the Germans, I would be in the best position to escape to continue the mission alone. With the permission of my company commander, Lt. Wellinghoff, I went to my former platoon to get individuals I trusted. I had known the name of every man in my first platoon before I moved up to second in command of the company November 9, 1944.

Of course, I also had to touch base with the platoon leader, who was now Sgt. Virgil Miller. I didn’t have to talk with Miller long to decide he would be an excellent second-in-command

for the patrol. He convinced me by volunteering. Because he would know the best men to take, I let him pick the other two.

I briefed my men: “I’ve already explained our mission and have shown you on the map how to get to Bastogne. You will have to carry on if anything happens to me. I’ll give the red and green flashlights to the point man to use if we encounter Germans, and I’ll rotate who’s the point man.

“I’ll bring up the rear of our diamond formation. From that position, I can more easily see and direct you.”

“We need to remain in visual contact at all times. We’ll spread out going across the snow-covered fields and close up going through woods. Look at me frequently so I can direct you with arm and hand signals. I don’t want to alert the Germans with voice commands. If we tangle with the Germans, whoever survives will continue the mission.

We then trudged off toward Bastogne, an objective I considered virtually impossible to reach. But I kept my pessimism to myself. It increased as we started across the huge expanse of open terrain. The snow made the night so bright we felt very conspicuous. Later we would enter a large forest and would feel safer.



Acting 101st Airborne commander Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe and
Lt. Col. Harry Kinnard, 101st Airborne Operations Director

In the middle of the night when we arrived, the few soldiers in the street had no way of knowing how to react to us. We went immediately to the headquarters of the 101st Airborne Division, located in a large basement. I was amazed at how packed it was with busy personnel. We were escorted to a lieutenant colonel; I think it was the G-3, Col. Kinnard.

I explained my mission to him. Then I got the first indication that someone was glad we were there and trusted us. He handed me an 8½” by 14” mimeographed copy of a sketch map showing the perimeter dispositions of the 101st Airborne.

Folding the map, I told my patrol members to observe carefully that I was putting it in the upper left pocket of my field jacket. "If anything happens to me," I said, "whoever survives is responsible for removing the map from my pocket and getting it back to battalion."

From Assenois we hiked back across the snow-covered fields toward Hompre. We were not aware at the time, but the battalion had given up our patrol for lost. We arrived as they were getting ready to renew their advance toward Bastogne. As I walked through the door of the room where Capt. Foreman had briefed me the previous afternoon, I heard a voice say, "Captain Foreman, it's Lieutenant Carr. He's back." I saw an expression of disbelief on Foreman's face. I unbuttoned the flap on my jacket pocket. I unfolded the map and said to Foreman, "here it is – exactly what you ordered." He couldn't believe what he saw.

"The Day Santa Flew a P-47," Kenneth Roettger, 317th Infantry Regiment, Company E
Bugle, May 1997

A few hundred riflemen shivered and crouched in frozen holes waiting for death. For over two days we had neither food nor sleep.

Starting at about half strength, our battalion in two days had lost nearly half of the remainder and many weapons. Foxholes were so far apart men had to shout to each other and this one thin line was the entire depth with no way to stop armor. Through the still winter air came the unmistakable sound of German tanks. It was but minutes until we were overwhelmed by hundreds of enemy.

It was Christmas morning of 1944.

It all began 10 days before, when Hitler launched the last great Nazi offensive which developed into the Battle of the Bulge. At that time, I was a rifleman.

Piled 25 to 30 men in open trucks, we skidded over icy and crowded roads for the entire day and night. Fog, dampness, and cold added to the misery.

Huddling together without food we didn't know or care that this would be called one of the most astounding moves of modern warfare. General Patton pulled three divisions from one attack, moved them 150 miles over poor roads under terrible weather conditions, and attacked in a new direction in less than two days.

During the night, fog and enemy air attacks caused the trucks to become lost but by morning all had reached the battle area. Debarking without sleep, we dug in in front of the towers of powerful Radio Luxembourg. With the German Army drive blunted, the regiment turned to the offensive.

This began a three-day period of probing by both sides in the midst of the Ardennes Forest. Every day seemed the same: miles of marching, intense cold, swirling fog, mysterious woods, and general confusion.

The Ardennes landscape under overcast skies resembled the dark abode of evil spirits from tales of the Black Forest. Every rock became a menacing danger in the misty shroud. The forest was so thick that an entire army could hide among the hazy firs. The unreality was heightened by the utter silence as the fir needle floor and banks of fog muffled sounds. Adding to the difficulties were the many steep hills and the narrow streams that niched between them.

Marching was especially hard because of the weight we carried, about 30 pounds of combat equipment including a rifle, grenades, and ammunition.

But the worst was the clothes. I wore (starting from the skin out) shorts, two sets of long underwear, two pairs of wool pants, two wool shirts, a sweater, field jacket, scarf, and overcoat. On my feet were two pairs of socks, combat boots, and overshoes, while on my head was a cap, towel as a scarf, helmet liner, and helmet. Two pairs of gloves completed the outfit. We kept these clothes on 24 hours a day for weeks, for even with all this we were constantly cold.

But the army decided men could carry more. Because the Germans were infiltrating dressed in American uniforms, everyone was issued the one item of U.S. equipment the Germans didn't have—gas masks. Later, passing through a field, we could see where each man had hit the ground when a German machine gun opened up. Almost as though it was planned, each soldier shed his gas mask right there and that was the end of that plan.

Despite the weight, we stumbled 10 to 15 miles each day with temperatures dropping to 20 below zero. The water froze in our canteens but on the night of December 21 snow fell and we ate that to slake our thirst. Most of us also drank from open rushing creeks until at one we discovered bodies in the water upstream. Food was mostly the hated "K" rations. Fires were forbidden since they would draw enemy shells, so everything was eaten cold.

At night it was necessary to dig a hole to stay alive. Foxhole digging in the frozen dirt was a tiring, discouraging project. The ordinary folding shovel we carried soon broke in the hard crust but soldiers the world over are natural scroungers. Within a few days nearly every squad had a full-size shovel or pick taken from an overturned truck, a burned-out tank, a deserted barn, or a captured enemy position. Even so, it took over an hour for two men to chop out a shallow hole.

At night, if possible, blankets were brought up to our holes but frequently this could not be done and two men just huddled together in each hole, it might seem hard to sleep sitting up fully dressed in a frozen hole but each night, after the day's trials, it was almost impossible to stay awake. Yet our lives depended on one man staying awake. All had heard of men found in the morning with German bayonets in their chests.

So one man would sleep an hour while his buddy watched and then they would exchange throughout the long night. It was a wonderful feeling to be alive when dawn came but then, with the realization of what the day would bring, one questioned the very value of life.

As I climbed stiff and frozen from the hole to march on aching feet, I wondered if hell wouldn't be welcome as a chance to get warm again.

After three days we were completely exhausted. Except for a few minor brushes and occasional shelling no real battle had been fought but casualties mounted. Each army felt for the other in the fog shrouded fields and forests of the Ardennes. Were not our minds numbed, it would have been eerie, as if two giant ghosts played hide and seek in the swirling gray mists.

The fourth morning seemed no different than the others but somehow, we knew things would happen. Orders had been received for the regiment to attack the ridges south of Welschied, Luxembourg, which were occupied by strong German Forces.

Throughout the gloomy days, as we moved forward, we saw more and more signs. Smoldering buildings, abandoned meals in emplacements, and tracks in the snow all indicated the nearness of many of the enemy. The final proof came late in the day when we were joined by five tanks as the entire battalion crossed a wide field. The tanks looked so strong that we felt naked in comparison. They seemed to be protective big brothers.

Suddenly spears of flame seemed to shoot out from three of the tanks. A moment later came the boom of the hidden 88s. The men in the tanks never had a chance; they were cremated instantly. The fires were so intense riflemen nearby were badly burned. The two surviving tanks were ordered to leave as we continued.

Now we entered the very wildest terrain for which the Ardennes is known. Rugged, almost vertical hills covered with thick fir forests became darker like a scene from a horror movie. It was the start of one of the most terrifying nights I have known.

As the official army history of the battle' reports: "Sometime after midnight the forward battalion started into the assault over a series of rough slopes where each man was outlined by the bright moonlight reflecting from the glazed field of snow. The enemy, waiting with machine guns on the reverse slopes, had all the best of it."

As one of the lead companies in the action I will never forget how as the battalion crossed a small field between hills, machine gun fire tore into the ranks. From then on we kept to the woods and hills as sporadic firing by both sides and flanking probes continued.

The night in the forest became so dark that our wide-spread formations became a single file line with each man trying to keep his hand on the man in front of him. Up a steep ravine the line clawed until fiery tracers caused an angled descent. We started back up another

incline and then shells began to fall over the entire area. Each explosion gave a bright light that blinded us for minutes. The routine became climb, duck, climb, duck. Hitting the ground while climbing a steep hill consisted of just holding onto a tree or brush since we were already against the ground.

Another fire fight caused us to go down again. Here it was so steep we couldn't walk but simply slid down the icy slope, banging into trees and crashing through brush. At the bottom our battalion was a confused mass of men. Some weapons and ammunition were lost, and a few men became separated and hurt.

As the confused group started up in still another direction, I found myself near the end of the column. Everyone was so exhausted from the all-day and night maneuver that we had to stop the climb every few minutes to rest.

At one rest a man fell asleep and didn't warn the end of the column when the unit moved on. As a result, a dozen were left behind, lost on a steep hillside. Panic was near as we realized we were in the middle of enemy action with no idea of which way to go and able to see only a few feet. Shells continued to fall and rifle fire was heard from what seemed like all directions.

Waiting several hours until dawn, we climbed straight up through the forest. The sound of digging came from the top but it was impossible to tell if it was our outfit or Germans digging in. As we crept closer, a string of GI curses was a most welcome sound. It was our men, and we were saved.

Saved, that is, until full daylight revealed our plight. During the night movements we had deeply penetrated the enemy lines and now sat on top of a ridge, completely surrounded. We had not eaten since noon of the preceding day, and now we knew we would get no food until we worked out of the trap.

All that day we prepared our defensive positions, waiting for the enemy to attack. We could hear their horses and wagons as they brought up ammunition and weapons. Except for artillery and a few patrols, they left us alone.

During the day the weather improved as the clouds began to break. Possibly the Germans wanted to wait for it to clear up before hitting us. Above the clouds came the noise of aerial combat and then the sound of a plane diving under full power. The ground seemed to shake when it hit at least a mile away.

That night it was decided that we could get out of our trap the same way we got into it. For hours we crawled down through the woods from that ridge. Every time a flare went off or a shell exploded, we froze, but this time darkness and the rough country were our allies.

Almost like a miracle we made it to a field where foxholes were completed shortly before dawn on Christmas morning.

As the sun came up we were overjoyed to see it and a perfectly clear day. Our joy was short-lived as the position became obvious. We were stretched across the middle of a wide-open field at the foot of German-held hills. Any artillery observers on those hills could look right into our holes. Quickly orders were given to move back.

But it was too late, and the withdrawal became a rout as the entire field seemed to explode. Mortar and artillery fire fell everywhere. The frozen ground splattered the shells so almost all the metal fragments flew around instead of digging large holes. I felt a blow on my foot but kept running. When the survivors reached the edge of the field we hid behind trees and in ditches until the firing ceased.

Then we dug holes and formed a thin defensive line waiting for the attack we knew was coming. No one was thinking of Merry Christmas—but then our present arrived.

A low roar grew to thunderous proportions as a squadron of American fighters circled over at low altitude. Then, swooping single file so low over our holes that we felt their propwash, they fired rockets into the German area. More came with bombs and finally they strafed with their guns.

The smoke from the hills told the story. The German attack forces had been smashed. While the Battle of the Bulge meant many more weeks of brutal fighting under impossible conditions, this was the turning point of the battle for our outfit.

I've never seen any artist portray Santa Claus flying a P-47, but he must have been at the controls on that Christmas morning, for he brought us the greatest gift possible—our lives.

S/Sgt. Guyowen H. Howard, 317th Infantry Regiment, Company B
Bulge, Winter 2021

26 December 1944 – last day in combat – After a cold sleepless night we hit the road at about 6 o'clock. It was still dark. We walked to the east and circled north along a big bank looking down into a deep ravine. We finally held up in a wooded patch just on the edge of a field. In front of us were tanks and the infantry boys of L Co. 2nd Bn. Artillery and mortar were coming in. There were dead and wounded every place. Tanks were burning and planes were overhead. One Jerry plane came from the east but a couple of P-38s got on his tail and in two minutes, the Jerry was headed into old mother earth. The pilot must have been hit because he never tried to get out. We waited around for some time. Once in a while someone would get hit by shrapnel. One man had a piece go through his steel helmet and you could see his brains pushing out the top of his head. But it wasn't too bad. A runner came up from the rear with a walkie talkie and asked me if I would take it to the C.O. who was up front with L Co. Coming out of the woods to the last small hill south of Chaumont and where L Co. was dug in, I see the C.O. and handed him the radio. Then I sat in an already dug foxhole near the edge of the road coming up out of the ravine. Once in a

while a shell would come in close, but I just hit the bottom of the hole and came up after the explosion. I had an extra pair of socks so thought I would make a change. As I got one shoe off a German came from my right front with his hands up. He had surrendered and the boys just sent him back. I told him to sit down in the hole beside me while I finished changing my socks. He asked if he could take his shoes off, so I let him. I asked him how Hitler was, he *no compre*. He was a young kid about 16 years of age, neatly shaved and his hair was just cut, but his feet were coming through the soles of his shoes, and he was afraid. Some lieutenant came past and gave me hell for letting the Jerry sit in the hole with me, but I told him he was my prisoner, and I would take care of him. After I got my shoes on, I told him to put his back on and started back. I never was rough with them, I figured neither one of us was there because we wanted to be. Of course, this didn't go over so big with the other boys. Before I got back to the wooded spot where the rest of the Co. was, I had 27 more Jerries who had joined in with the one I already had. I tried to get someone to take them back to the town in the rear, but no one would go. Finally, a lieutenant from a tank which was knocked out, who was wounded, said he had to go back anyway so I let him have the job. I went back to my hole.

We waited around all the rest of the day. Our own wounded were coming back on and off all day. Some were being carried by Germans who had surrendered. Late in the afternoon we got the order to dig in near where the boys had been sitting around all day in the woods. No more had we got dug in than the order came that we would have to relieve L Co. It was about 4 P.M. L Co. moved back through us. The poor boys had taken quite a beating. We moved up and dug in just below the top of the hill. I was on the right and the last hole. Hall was in back of me and the other men were on an even line to my left. After we had been dug in some time, the call came for litter bearers to get 4 tankers who were wounded to our direct front, more to the left from me. I did not volunteer, I don't know why, but I just sat in my hole and 4 other men went. Soon Collins and the lieutenant came up. Collins gave Hall his Luger pistol and said he and the lieutenant were going up over the hill and he had a feeling he wouldn't be needing it anymore. The platoon was to move up as soon as they had looked over the situation. Soon I heard the lieutenant call for help. I told Hall I was going up to help. He said don't do it, but I went anyway. As I worked my way up to the lieutenant, I finally got close enough to ask him if he was hit. He said no but Collins was. Collins was about 75 yds out ahead. I told the officer to keep me covered and I worked up toward Collins. Soon as I got close enough, I asked him where he was hit. He said in the guts. I didn't dare to move him, so I worked back and got a medic. The medic and I started toward Collins but was fired on. I located where the shots were coming from and kept the bastard down while the medic got Collins back to the rear and below the hill. Then I told the Lieutenant he had better get out. I said when you start out of that hole, take off like a bat out of hell. It was his first 3 days of combat. After he was off the hill, I took off. There was no one to cover me and I got one through the coat collar.

But no damage was done. I got back to my fox hole and about 10 minutes later, without warning, I was knocked cold. I wasn't out long, and it was lucky I wasn't because the blood was running out a good flow. I was covered. I got my first aid packet out and slapped it against my cheek and took off for the medic. When I got there, Hall was dying and two of

the other boys were in bad shape. The medic was busy, and I wasn't too bad off but another medic came up from the rear and fixed me up. We were only about 100 yards back of my fox hole under a bank. The medic wanted me to lie down but I said no. Then I happened to think of my pistol in my pack. I took off up and got it and when I came back, I dragged my pack with me. I made up my mind no Goddamn German was going to eat my K-rations or sleep under a blanket and shelter which I had taken with me that morning. I brought them back and gave them to the boys and started to the rear on foot. I was picked up by a jeep and taken to an aid station about 7 miles back. When I got there, Collins was there also. Only he was lying on a stretcher. That was the end of that.

S/Sgt. Guyowen Howard lived the rest of his life in pain, but continued to work at the General Electric Company and took an early retirement at age 60. He died in 2000 at the age of 89. Collins survived and also lived his life in pain and died in 1989. Hall died. Hall told Howard he was dying. Howard later said that Hall didn't have a mark on him--Howard figured he died when the concussion of the shell got his heart out of rhythm.

Bloody Knob

"My Guardian Angel," John B. Masterson, 318th Infantry Regiment, Company G
Bugle, August 2002

Around 4:00 p.m. on Christmas Day, despite the cold and snow, we launched an attack from a wooded area, hoping to capture a small town. At the time, our company was down to just 15 men when we attacked across the flat, snow-covered field with the German machine gunners on our right flank. As I was running forward firing my rifle, suddenly I went flying through the air. The first thing I remember saying was: "You clumsy Ox, you have tripped over your own big feet." As I hit the ground, I then realized I hadn't tripped, but was shot in my legs by the German machine gunners.

Now, I made my first big mistake. As I lay there in the snow, I decided to turn over on my side, raise up and take care of my wounds. We were trained to carry a small package of penicillin and pour the contents on your wounds to keep down infection. The other soldiers in my outfit, who weren't wounded, kept running toward the town, so I was a visible, easy target laying in the snow. Now, the German machine gunners saw I wasn't dead and opened up again hoping to finish me off. I tried digging with my hands in the cold, snowy earth and hung close to the ground without getting hit. The German machine gun bullets were hitting little puffs of snow all around me. I remember closing my eyes, and praying with all my heart: "Please, dear God! Don't let me die now. I am still alive, let me get out of here." I know I prayed harder than I had ever prayed before in my life.

After it seemed like a long time, probably about five minutes, I made my second mistake because I raised up again to see whether or not some of my wounded other buddies may be near me. The German machine gunners saw I was still alive and started shooting again with bullets all around me. I again started praying and decided I would not move anymore until it was dark, hoping my sergeant, Frank Rivera, or some medic would come out looking for me. As I lay there, it was getting colder and darker. I kept thinking to myself, "What a way to spend Christmas."

When it finally got dark and much colder, I felt sure my sergeant would come looking for me. Sure enough, Frank Rivera, came out and found me. However, there was still a problem of how to carry me. I was 6'4" tall and weighed about 217 to 220, so I was a load to carry. Frank solved that problem easily, he came with a wheelbarrow, hoisted me up, and wheeled me into the medic aid station in the town. Later, I was taken by ambulance to Luxembourg City, to be operated on, then flew to Paris and then landed in England on New Year's Eve a very happy soldier. In March 1945, I was sent back to a different outfit in France, supposedly to get ready to go to the Pacific area to finish the war with Japan. Luckily, Japan surrendered in August of 1945, so I didn't have to go to the Pacific.

After the war, my brothers and I all talked about incidents like this one and wondered why we weren't killed. We all decided that we had a "guardian angel." I personally later thought

about at least four other incidents, besides this one, where someone had protected me. It must have been my “guardian angel.” I truly believe we all have one.

Herman Skerlong, 317th Infantry Regiment, Company K

I was a machine gunner, part of Patton’s army. The only thing you had in the infantry was the holes you dug – the foxholes. That’s all. No time to eat or sleep. Time didn’t mean anything because you didn’t care. Day or night was all that mattered. You lived on two rations: K ration and C ration. That’s all you ever saw – no salt, pepper, or butter since you left the States.

Once we got into a pretty big battle – we got ambushed twice. A sergeant ahead of me got machine gunned in both legs. I was able to crawl back very slowly until I came across the captain, a runner, and the radio man. The Captain says, “We gotta get that sergeant out of there.” Nobody says anything and finally I said, “Captain, let me try.” I was scared. Not shaky but scared. So, I crawled as slow as I could right on back, bullets flying overhead, got a hold of both his legs and dragged the sergeant back along the hill. And, boy, the captain, he smiled when he saw us coming. Right away, he got the medics working on the sergeant, and he patted me on the back and said, “You got the Bronze Star.”

Wiltz

*“80th Division Takes Heights in Ardennes,” Lee McCardell
Bugle, Feb 2003*

With the United States Third Army, January 7, 1945. The fire clad hills rise to a height of more than 1,500 feet where the main highway from Ettelbruck to Bastogne crosses the Sure River in the heart of the Ardennes. The river flows through a narrow gorge. The road zigzags down one steep side of the gorge, crosses the river on a high, double-arched stone bridge and forks, just before it begins to climb again.

The right fork zigzags up a steep mountainside, then strikes off across a high plateau toward Wiltz. This plateau commands the high ground of the battle area in that sector. Captured yesterday by the 80th Infantry Division, it is held tonight by the same men who took it—troops commanded by two young Maryland officers.

The Germans counterattacked them fiercely at 3 o’clock this morning. They shelled them again this afternoon. The snow was black and grimy from the smoke of the exploding shells. From the hills you could look down into the deep river gorge and see the complete pattern of shell bursts, black against snow.

Little Other Activity

Little other activity was reported in the Third Army zone. West of Bastogne, our infantry had advanced about one mile northward on a 3-mile front near the village of Flamierge. Southwest of Bastogne, the 35th Infantry Division had thrown back a counterattack by a German battalion with twenty tanks, knocking out six of the tanks near the village of Harlange.

But the Sure River crossing was the day’s big news. We peered out to look at it. The icy roads were still burdened with snow and sleet. More sleet was falling in fine, white, frozen pellets. It reminded us of pictures we used to see of the Russo Finnish War.

Preparations for the river crossing began the day before yesterday. Engineers sanded the icy zigzag road leading down to the bridge whose two high stone arches, had been blown by the Germans. They took up the mines which our infantry had planted on this side of the bridge as a protective measure in the early days of Field Marshal von Rundstedt’s winter offensive.

Started to Build a Bridge

When it first became dark the night before last, a company of engineers commanded by Lt. Joseph Lelevich, of Kulpmont, Pennsylvania, began putting a Bailey bridge across the first of the two broken arches of the old span. Half an hour later the Germans began shelling the engineers and finally drove them back up the road from the bridge abutment.

Most of the engineers were New Englanders, but there were a few Southerners, among them T/5 William G. Rose, of New Castle, Virginia, a bulldozer operator; PFC Paul Rash of Pulaski, Virginia, a platoon runner; Pvt Charles Walls, of Narrows, Washington, and Private Robert Williams, of Charleston, West Virginia.

"It was pretty hot for a time," Rose said today. "I hit the ditch. I guess we all hit the ditch."

German artillery was zeroed in on the bridge site. One shell hit the center pier of the ruined double arch.

Later that night, the engineers went back to the river with steel treadways for another type of bridge. They thought the construction of the treadway would be less noisy than the building of a Bailey bridge. But the Germans kept dropping time fire in the bridge site. They were still shelling the site this afternoon.

The Sure River isn't very wide here, not more than 90 feet, but it's deep and swift. And it looks mighty cold down there in its gorge.

Meanwhile two infantry forces, one commanded by Lt. Col. Hiram Ives, of Baltimore, and the other by Lt. Co. Elliot Chestor, of Annapolis, had rendezvoused in the village of Heiderscheid, 2 miles south of the river. They were scheduled to cross the Sure at 4 yesterday morning. They crossed about two minutes late.

Used Secondary Road

Ives' infantry climbed the opposite heights, using a narrow, secondary road whose hairpin turns make it a series of steep switchbacks. So narrow was the road and so sharp its turns that some of the American tanks which tried to follow the infantry slipped over the edge. One had to be abandoned,

A mile beyond the river is the village of Goesdorf. It was Ives' original plan to deploy his force when approaching the village and enter it only after the American artillery, firing from below the river, had worked it over.

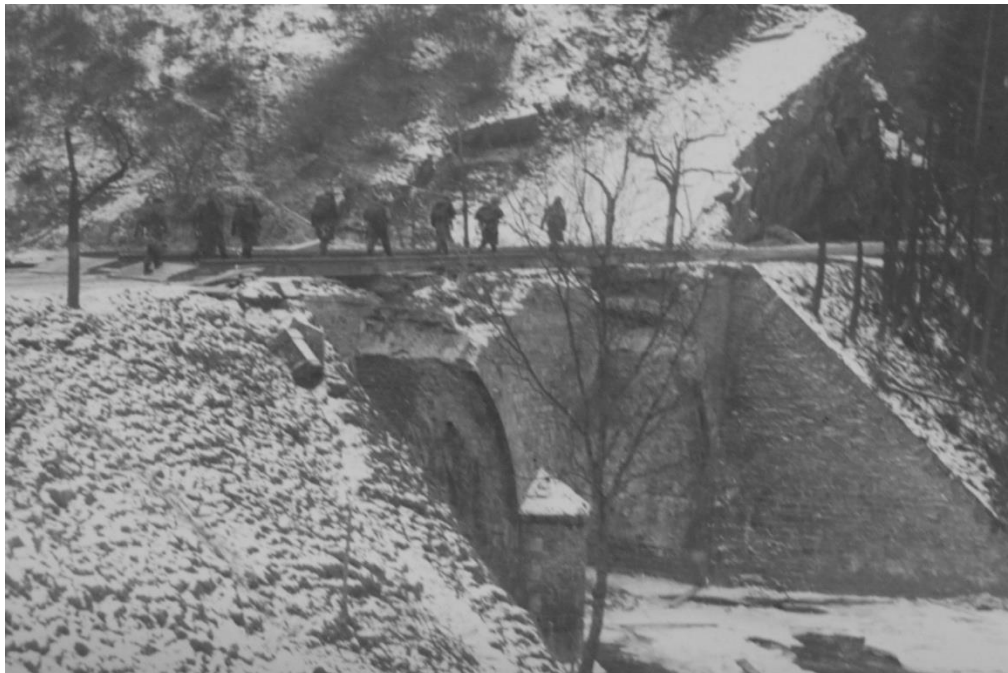
"But it was getting late," Ives said today. "It was almost 7:30 when we reached the point where we were to deploy on either side of the road. We talked it over and decided to try to slip in without any artillery preparation. Luck was with us."

Move in from the West

"Our force moved around and in from the west side of the town. The rest of us went up the main road, entered the town, turned east on the crossroad at the village church and had almost reached the eastern edge of the town before a single shot was fired. The other force drew fire as they entered. It took us about two hours to clean out the Germans from the place."

Of the force of about 50 Germans in the village proper, Ives men killed eight or ten and took most of the remainder prisoners. From the talk of the prisoners we later learned that the American attack came at a time when the Germans holding that sector of the enemy line were being relieved by other troops. As a result, there was considerable confusion and disorganization.

While Ives' force was advancing on Goesdorf, Cheston's infantry was moving parallel to the Bastogne road, up the narrow stream's valley along the foot of the wooded hills. A mile or two upstream it turned northeast, climbed the snow-covered cliffs and struck out for the village of Dahl, one mile north of Goesdorf.



80th Patrol Near Goesdorf

Took Germans by Surprise

"It was a little rough making that climb in the dark," Cheston admitted today. "But we spread out when we reached high ground and took the Germans in the village by surprise. The villagers told us there were only 36 Germans in the town itself and when we finally counted up the dead wounded and prisoners, we had exactly 36."

Five German tanks or self-propelled guns north of Dahl were destroyed by American artillery fire. Our infantry had neither tanks nor tank destroyers with them in the initial assault. The only road by which armored vehicles could follow our troops was under enemy observation, and they caught one tank destroyer.

Bad Day for the 317th

*“Grabbing an Opportunity,” Bob Burrows, 317th Infantry Regiment
Bugle, Aug 2013, Fall 2021*

My worst day as a soldier and one of the battalion’s worst days of the war happened on January 21, 1945, in the closing days of the campaign. The 80th's first big retaliatory offensive (we had many minor skirmishes in between!) in Luxembourg against the Germans began at 6 A M, 21st January ‘45. Our Battalion’s assigned objective that morning was Bourschied, along with sister Regiment 318th on our right flank. We moved out on time from the vicinity of Ringel and Tadler area. The battalion moved in Company file, with Fox and Easy Companies leading, closely followed by Battalion Forward Headquarters, George Company immediately behind in reserve with Howe Company, mortar and machine gun sections bringing up the rear.

Our approach started on a farm trail, but we left the farm trail and turned down into and through a gully. We thought it would be protective cover from enemy observation. About an hour into our attack, we began receiving casualties from mines hidden in the snow. This was only the beginning of a long and disastrous day.

About an hour after leaving our line of departure, lead elements of Fox Company had triggered “Bouncing Betty’s” mines. This stopped our forward movement for a short time. We apparently had been under German observation from daylight and those exploding mines gave them a definite location to begin their harassing fire against us. From that time until 11 A M we were continually battered by their artillery and mortar fire. Machine gun and heavy rifle fire commenced on the two attacking rifle companies. The terrain certainly was no help as it was rough, with steep ridges and valleys, small trees and scattered brush, with approximately 10-12 inches of slippery, cold snow, making for tough movement and climbing.

Our Battalion Commander Lieutenant Colonel William J Boydstun leading the Forward Command group received a message by his executive Officer, Captain Gerald Sheehan, from battalion rear headquarters, which was located in a barn near our departure point at Tadler. He reported about 10 A M that our sister regiment, the 318th had captured Bourscheid with very little resistance. Our objective was then changed by Regiment to take and hold a bridge over the Our River at Dirbach, move north to capture Girschend and Beschend, two small Luxembourg villages.

In the interim, we had really been catching heavy enemy fire! Our casualty rate had increased dramatically. The medics could not keep up administering their aid and carrying wounded back to our battalion aid station. Litter bearing itself was a backbreaking task.

Colonel Boydstun’s small command group consisted of his radio operator, T-4 Alexander H Hirsch, PFC Ernest H Fuller and myself. (To this day I do not recall why Ernie and I were with the Colonel. Runners? I sure felt like running that morning!) The Colonel had

summoned the 313th field artillery Forward Observer, Lieutenant Joe R Clark Jr, of B Battery with his radio operator Sergeant Emil Tumolo, to confer about the direction and location of this infernal, devastating, incoming German fire.

Fox and Easy Companies in the meantime had spread out through this rugged wooded area slowly moving toward our new objective Dirbach. Both Companies were also receiving this same terrific heavy weapons fire. All units were now Robert H Burrows, calling for additional medics and stretcher 80th ID, 317th IR, HQ bearers, also for our artillery to do something about the enemy fire power! Those of you veterans who were there and suffered similar circumstances in combat can certainly picture in your mind the difficulty of like situations.

The time was now about 11 A M, our small group were in a circle with the Colonel and Lt Clark kneeling, looking at a map. Sergeant Tumolo was near the right top of the circle with T-4 Hirsch to his left, the Colonel six or seven feet to my right with Lt Clark almost facing Col Boydston. PFC Ernest H Fuller was lying on his stomach, his right shoulder touching my left shoulder. Tumolo, Hirsch, Ernie and I were all on our stomachs watching and waiting for instructions. The snow seemed deeper, but probably was my imagination, of course the ground was frozen solid as this had been an unseasonably cold winter. German fire power seemed to have escalated tremendously in the past few minutes!

At that moment a roaring noise like a speeding train overtook us as we cowered to the frozen ground. Ernie and I dropped flat to the ground shoulder to shoulder facing toward the colonel and lieutenant with the radiomen very close to their officers as this terrible roaring noise exploded over us. (It was later determined that this last round of the morning came from a German railroad gun that frequently lobbed their shells upon our forces.) I was deafened and for how long I do not recall. When I finally came to my senses all was quiet. I was covered with debris, cordite, and snow. I was hit behind my right knee, but the pain was not as severe as I would have expected, more like a numb stinging feeling. I reached back, expecting to feel a warm, wet leg. No blood, I could not believe my good luck. Whatever hit my leg was not shrapnel as I had anticipated. I came up on my hands and knees. I looked at Ernie, he made no movement, nor did I see any condensation coming from his mouth or nose. I tried to turn him over to see where he had been hit, I saw no blood or sign of physical injury, but he was completely lifeless. Somehow, I knew he was dead. I remember yelling for the medics.

All of this was happening in milliseconds. I began to hear low moaning sounds. The concussion of the explosion must have killed Ernie and his body had to have been my protection from most of its shock. Five brave Americans were killed. I was the only one in that circle of six to survive, and untouched at that. We weren't the only ones with high casualties. The entire battalion suffered: G Company, which started the day in reserve, had 86 casualties out of 147 men.

Today I still ask myself. Why me? From reports, the scene was soon swarming with medics and troops from G Company, but I frankly don't remember them. The shock of the explosion itself plus the realization how close a call I had left me in shock, I believe.

G Company First sergeant Percy Smith recalls in his diary that he and his Company Commander Lt Damkowitz came up immediately to see if they could be of assistance. As they were only a few yards behind us, their Company had also been taking similar punishment. Percy said that a member of the Command group was "walking around in a dazed state." That was possibly me, as I was the sole survivor of this group! (Some say, I am still in a dazed state!) Medics tried to save Colonel Boydston and Lieutenant Clark, both had survived instant death. A short time later, both died of their extensive wounds. Sergeant Tumolo, T-4 Hirsch and PFC Fuller were killed instantly. Meantime during those moments mentioned above, I had felt a stinging to the back of my right leg. Reaching back I was thinking to myself that I would get a warm, wet handful of blood! No luck! No million-dollar wound! 68 years ago, and I still remember most vividly those moments. I have much to be thankful for!

This one-sided battle was over for us. That was the last artillery round the Germans fired in our direction for the remainder of the day. They had totally disrupted our attack. The battalion lost its Commander, Fox Company Commander, Captain Ira Miller was also killed. The battalion as a whole then became litter bearers for our wounded as we slowly moved back toward our starting point of the morning.

Buddies Sergeant Gerald V Myers, G Company of that day's reserve Company recalled, "morning reports for January 22, reported 86 casualties out of 148 men that had begun the attack the previous morning." His platoon had only 4 men left of the 26 who started out that morning that were not casualties! PFC LaVerne Schock had been wounded by rifle fire. This Fox Company had been so overwhelmed, with the most seriously wounded, that Vern who was not able to walk because of his wound. Medics and riflemen were acting as litter bearers. Even then they were short of help to carry all our helpless. He stayed in the woods overnight cared for by a medic. It was not until afternoon the following day before he reached the Battalion aid station!

On the 23rd I led a Grave Registration team to our area of devastation to recover our battle dead. The Team consisted of an Officer and 5 or 6 enlisted men. A weapons carrier, two jeeps, all vehicles pulling trailers. Ernie was found lying in the same position that I had left him. Evidently concussion was the cause of death as I had earlier surmised. The Colonel and Lieutenant had been worked on by the medics and were stretched out close to the position where they had been kneeling. Tumolo and Hirsch lay as I had remembered, leaving them to the medic's care.

It was not a very pleasant day that I had with these fellows, nothing personal. They had a miserable job! Spreading out through our one-sided battlefield they began retrieving bodies, by tying wire to the ankles and arms of our dead Comrades frozen bodies, limbs askew, dragging them through the woods and deep snow to waiting vehicles. We had

arrived at the battle site pre-mid-morning. I did not assist them in their grueling task. A tough wait! It seemed long hours before they figured all our dead had been recovered. We arrived back at our starting point about dusk. To this day I am not sure all the bodies were retrieved. I know the three trailers and the weapons carrier were stacked with 2nd Battalion men. From my observation they were very conscientious, maybe because an outsider was with them that day but, it did not appear so. The battalion had been spread out over many miserable acres of rough terrain; they had worked up a sweat despite the cold!

I often wondered from where the order came that I should be their guide or why there should be a guide. XII Corps history book shows a picture taken on the January 25th of Major General Manton S Eddy and many Officers of XII Corps Headquarters in attendance at the Colonel's interment. He was well respected at Corps, also by our Battalion and regiment.

Two days later the German Ardennes Offensive ended. The 80th as a whole came through the ordeal with loss of many fine American men and Officers. Two men of the 80th Division were awarded the Medal of Honor during this battle.

One award was earned at Chaumont, Belgium, Christmas Day. PFC Paul J Wiedorfer, G Company 318th Infantry. The second Bulge MOH was awarded to: Sergeant Day G Turner, B Company, 319th Infantry at Dahl, Luxembourg, 8 January 1945. Both men survived the Ardennes battle but, Sergeant Turner was killed the next month in Germany! Day is buried not too far from the grave of General George S Patton Jr, our Third Army Commander, at Hamm, Luxembourg, American National Cemetery.

Dahl

"Further on Day G. Turner, Medal of Honor Recipient," Vernon "Red" Frazier, 319th Infantry Regiment, Company D
Bugle, May 2001

In order to illustrate the battle conditions that precipitated Sgt. Turner being awarded the MOH and his later death, I have taken in part from my personal journal description of the actions in which our units of the 1st Battalion, 319th Infantry, were involved.

I was an instrument corporal in a heavy machine gun platoon (Company D), supporting a companion company on the same extended line with Sgt. Turner's Company B.

Starting January 6, 1944, our days of intense combat started another phase in the 80th's efforts in the reduction of the Bulge. We opened with an attack and capture of the Village of Goesdorf, Luxembourg. Company B supported by Company D's 1st Platoon attacked up a secondary road meeting heavy machine gun fire, while we charged up the main road into the center of the village.



319th Patrol Near Dahl

With the village secured by 1300 hours, the battalion was ordered to advance and occupy a portion of the Village of Dahl, that had been taken by our 3rd Battalion.

Taken in part from the "After Action Report" of the 319th Infantry: "Dahl had been taken by the 3rd Battalion by 1400 hours and the 1st Battalion was ordered to move from Goesdorf to Dahl and relieve units already in established positions in defense in the north and northeast sectors of the town.

"January 7th, the enemy launched a number of probing attacks, but withdrew after fierce encounters. January 8th, at 0500 hours, the enemy delivered preparatory' barrage lasting 45 minutes. Under this cover an estimated battalion of infantry supported by tanks and other armor advanced to assault the position of Company B. A withering crossfire from the tanks assisted the advance Despite the apparent overwhelming enemy forces. Company B delivered violent fire on the attacking elements.

On the company's right flank an estimated company forced an outpost to withdraw to a house which became a strong point in the defense. Despite the constant reinforcement of the enemy, the men in the house with staunch determination retained their position. They fought room-to-room and the enemy suffered heavy casualties. Save for the squad leader, all the defenders were wounded—but the enemy lost the initiative due to their own casualties.

Due to the rolling terrain the enemy approached within 150 yards and posed a threat to the defense line. Both sides rushed in reserves. Company B committed its reserve platoon as the Germans repeatedly pushed into the weak point. Company Headquarters section was rushed to the threatened flank and won new positions. (Company C and our 2nd Machine Gun Platoon was brought up behind Company B's line and waited for commitment which proved unnecessary.)

Heavy attrition cost the enemy the attack and attempted to withdraw under smoke cover, but the wind dispersed the smoke screen and caused a disorderly rout. Murderous artillery mortar, and machine gun fire pursued the retreating enemy.

While I have no first-hand knowledge of Sgt. Turner's death, I can only relate my own experience occurring at the same time and the combat conditions that contributed to his death.

February 7th, at 0500 hours, 1st Battalion with Companies B and C, the assault units. We crossed the Our River under hazardous conditions—conditions aggravated by intense enemy artillery fire.

Once across we had to cross 200 yards of open, plowed, muddy ground, and under intense heavy machine gun fire from the ridge top pillboxes, the mortars and artillery would soon begin.

By 1000 hours the rifles had cleaned out part of the ridge top knocking out several pillboxes and bunkers. Each pillbox had to be demolished or occupied because the enemy would try to reoccupy them later. This required very close-in fighting because of interlocking fields of the pillbox fire and open trenches.

I remember my platoon leader and I observing two of our machine guns pouring torrents of red tracers directly into the gun ports of a pillbox from only 100 yards, keeping it buttoned

while the rifles approached with satchel charges. The next thing I knew the Lt. was standing up and blazing away with an M-1 at the same target. This is the last I ever saw him! He just disappeared from the line, and he never returned—no explanation.

The satchel charges did the trick, and we could finally get in, the whole insides were burned to a crisp—nobody survives two charges like that!

This type of action was going on all across the ridge. Company B, Sgt. Turner's outfit, and Company C were to be heavily involved with extremely intense conditions that would last for the next seven days, until a bridge was finally constructed on February 14th.

"A Nice Warm Bed And More—Well-Earned!" Norman Katz, 319th Infantry Regiment, Company B
Bugle, Aug 2017

I turned 18 in January 1943. Three months later I got my "Greetings from Uncle Sam." After three months of basic, I was assigned to ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program.) At graduation we become engineers. Lucky for me, I ended up at Yale, and went home to Brooklyn every weekend! Alas, after five months, they canceled the program. The army needed "cannon fodder." Off to another basic training for five months as a light (30 cal.) machine gunner. In September 1944, I was on the Ile de France for eight days, dodging subs, until we landed at Grenoch, Scotland. By train we arrived a day later in Southampton, England, and then went immediately by ship over the channel to Le Havre. By truck, I arrived at Company B, 319th Infantry Division, 80th Division as a replacement, carrying 2 boxes of ammunition and my M1 rifle. Two days later, I traded my M1 for a carbine and then a 45 pistol, because I was now a second gunner.

We were in a small town near St. Lo and stayed in a large school building. Three days later I read in the "Stars and Stripes" paper that a bomb from German planes had demolished the entire building! Wow!

In the ensuing months, I was now first gunner. We pushed the Krauts back towards Germany, taking many towns and cities along the way. In December 1944, we were in eastern France overlooking the Siegfried line, near Saarbrucken. Advancing through one town and another, encountering little or no resistance. The scuttlebutt had it that we'd be home for Christmas. Yea, sure!

While having our coffee one morning, our lieutenant ran in and said, "The Germans have broken through in the first Army sector, matching us man for man, plane for plane, and tank for tank! We have to go there and stop them!"

After three days in open trucks in nine-degree weather and plenty of snow, we ended up in Dahl, Luxembourg, just south of Bastogne. Two days later we were up in the attic of a large house. When we looked out the window, we saw several hundred Krauts lined up about 50

yards out. I opened up with my machine gun and my buddies with their M1s. I don't know how many we got, but they retreated quickly. However, I looked to my left, and down the road was a Tiger tank taking aim at us. I told the guys to "get the heck downstairs!" When things quieted down, I went back upstairs and the entire loft was in ruins, including my gun. But the tank was now a shell—some of my company must have knocked it out! Wow!

The next day, we left Dahl and moved into some woods nearby. As we marched through, with a new machine gun on my shoulder, we encountered fierce fire from snipers in the trees. The first gunner "Zel" (Steve Zelnak from the other squad) was shot and killed, and our sergeant was wounded in the hip. I opened up on the snipers and got two of them. Then orders came down to go back to Dahl. On the way, my second gunner was shot, and he died in my arms. It was a horrible day. Thank God, I was spared!

A few days later, we marched through those same woods with no resistance. A week later the Battle of the Bulge was over! I was very lucky. *** Now, I have a story on the lighter side. About a month and half later, we came to a small town in Germany. Along came our Captain Scott saying, "Boys, do you want to sleep in warm beds tonight?" We all said, "Yes, sir!" So he said, "Let's take that town!" We did, amidst very little resistance. When the town was secure, our captain told me to find a nice place to rest. Me and one of my buddies started looking around town, and in a short time we came across an 8-foot wall. Finding the gate, we wandered in, and found a 40-room mansion! I rapped on the large wooden door with my pistol. After a while, it was opened by a tall gray-haired man, who said "*Was ist los?*" I put the barrel of my gun to his head and commanded, "Shut up!" He scurried away, and we started looking around from room to room. Finally, we went down to the cellar and there we found, from North, South, East and West, Champagne bottles as far as the eye could see! Needless to say, we ran back to our company and told them, "We have a GREAT place to sleep tonight!" After pouring bubbly for a couple of hours, we all hit the sack in nice warm beds, not feeling any pain.

A month later, our captain Scott was killed as he attacked a German battalion. I will always remember him.

"In Front of Patton, A Battle of the Bulge Diary," Denis E. Bergeron, 80th Signal Company, Tactical Combat Radio Team
Bugle, August 1996

There is usually a prelude and a sequence to our BOB experiences. In other words, we didn't just start out our military career in the Ardennes just before Christmas in 1944. My 80th Blue Ridge Mountain Infantry Division had left New York harbor on July 4, 1944, on the Queen Mary. After becoming part of the newly formed Third Army, we landed at Omaha Beach, August 4, 1944. It was continuous fighting at the Falaise Gap, the Moselle River, and the Alsace Lorraine after landing. Our division was actually getting a rest with hot showers, clean clothes, hot food, and entertainment on December 14, 15, and 16. We went back into combat at Bitche December 17 but got the word we were to move north to

Luxembourg City post haste. The Germans had broken through the Allied lines and started what was termed as "The Battle of the Bulge." and our help was needed immediately. The entire Third Army responded to the new threat. Our division, regiments, battalions, and companies all got ready in a few hours, and we became part of a seemingly never-ending convoy. The convoy moved 24 hours a day for more than two days. I was in a tactical radio team of four; we had kept voice and Morse code operations going 24 hours a day since we landed in France, and we kept it going 24 hours a day during the Bulge.

Our regimental CP stayed at Luxembourg City December 20 through December 22, and then moved to Mersh. some 20 miles north. We set up operations in a cafe. Sounds pretty good, huh? But no, darn it, the place was all out of spirits and beer. But it did have a store and it was warm. I spent Christmas Day and New Year's Day at that location. There was a lot of artillery noise most of the time. There were a lot of planes in the air most of the time, including bombers heading into or returning from Germany. There were a lot of local plane fights between the American Mustangs and the German Messerschmitts; I saw several ME 109's shot out of the sky by our planes this one day when our planes didn't even swerve off their course. We were all buried in winter weather. One of our regiments was the first to relieve the GIs in besieged Bastogne on Christmas Day. Meanwhile, we got attacked by some of our own planes. I guess it was pretty mixed up from the air. At first, we painted our vehicles white as an effective form of camouflage. Later, we all put on those large Chinese red displays on our vehicles so that our planes would know we were friendly. The only trouble was that the Germans started to put the same kind of displays on their vehicles and that really confused the situation. Anyway, we were all very proud that our division had been in first on the Bastogne rescue. The entire Third Army, with its divisions, regiments, battalions, and companies proved again how maneuverable it was by relocating the entire army from one battle zone to another 150 miles away in a couple of days.

We went further north to a little Luxembourg town named Oberfulen. We were just about buried in snow. We painted all of our vehicles and visible equipment white since the camouflage nets didn't really camouflage anything in the snowy world we were in. We worked the same as always. There was incoming shellfire at night, and there was strafing by enemy aircraft during the daytime. We had hot meals, but it was zero-degree Fahrenheit weather outside. We occupied the house of a former collaborator, so we didn't feel one bit guilty taking advantage of the comforts it had to offer. We met a few of the civilians but it was difficult to converse with them since they spoke a mixture of French, Belgium, and German, which results in their native Luxembourg tongue.

One afternoon we observed the shelling of the next town. It was intense shelling. It seemed as though every burst sent half a rooftop flying. Next, we had shells coming in some 50 yards from where we were, aimed at some of our artillery pieces. We got ours, too, about one o'clock in the morning; there was the familiar shriek of the 88's, about 20 in all in about ten minutes. Just for the record, that's a lot for one spot.

Our next move over snow covered wintry looking scenery took us to Wiltz in Northern Luxembourg, a few miles from the Belgium border. We stayed there a few days. There were

many airborne infantrymen in the area. I also got many Heinie souvenirs. Realize that all of the places we were in were full of ammunition of all types, full of all types of knocked out vehicles, full of all sorts of equipment. The war debris lined the roadsides, and were evident in the fields, the houses, and the ruins. War debris was just an accepted part of the scenery, so much so, that I omitted describing it before. We would pick up and save souvenirs, never anything prohibitively large but small things we could hold onto until we got a chance to pack, mail, and ship them home. Souvenir collecting was a great habit for just about everyone; each of us would try to imagine how the folks at home would react when and if we could send them this or that souvenir.

The Battle of the Bulge was just about over, and our division went to Larochette. Luxembourg, to rest, clean up, and relax. The points of penetration made by Hitler's supermen had been retaken. The battle line was again straightened from St. Vith to Wiltz. The radios and the GI newspapers described how Von Runstedt's last chance was destroyed by the victorious American troops. To the citizens back in the States, this victory meant that the Germans could be put back on the defensive which was true. But to the cold, hungry GI's fighting in the Bulge area, it meant a few days of rest with hot showers, clean clothing, hot chow, and maybe a movie or two. It was a chance for everyone to take stock of what was happening. It was a chance for just about everyone to do a lot of talking; you'd be surprised at how much the GIs wanted to talk, and now that we weren't just trying to stay alive from minute to minute, there was much conversation.

GIs talked and joked in Wiltz this one night. The front was several miles away and the soldiers were resting. They had endured a long while of warfare in cold, snow and discomfort, and they had survived. We were in this hovel that had once been a six-room house but now consisted of rubble and a few walls. But the GI's had made the place almost livable. Their roof was a canvas. Their stove was made from several pieces of steel, a chimney of sections of sheet metal found here and there in the ruins. They had C rations. K rations, potatoes found in cellars, and plenty of coffee. There were about ten guys in this hovel of comfort. And, of course, everyone smoked. Cigarettes were such a continuing part of the scene that I simply omit to mention them. Many stories were told in the course of the evening and night. I'm sure many such conversations took place all over the front, but these guys had stories which were common to all infantrymen; their stories were comical and exciting. Their philosophies were representative of the infantry GI's. Their feelings were historic.

World War II battles involved great numbers of soldiers, but the numbers can be broken down into armies, corps, divisions, regiments, battalions, companies, and platoons. This places the soldiers into smaller and smaller groups; and many small episodes result. Each soldier recalls the general outcome of battles, but specifically remembers his own work, surroundings, operations, and escapades. So, each guy will tell his family and friends details about his particular experiences in the Battle of the Bulge when he gets home. The battles called for numerous instances of individuality and courage and the American soldier was found to be the key determining factor of battle.

Our GIs in this hovel in Wiltz knew that Wiltz had been taken by the Germans in 1939, retaken by the Americans in 1944, and hadn't suffered the destruction of many cities until the past few months. But Wiltz was ruined now as a result of constant aerial bombing and artillery shelling followed by the battle involving tanks and infantry. The entire area is hilly, almost mountainous, covered with pine and fir trees, and covered with deep snow and ice at that time. You entered the city via narrow winding part paved snow-covered icy roads with steep grades and cliffs on both sides. In the center, considered the center of North Luxembourg, there is a swift flowing river. There were continuous cement walls with buildings built into each other in the center of the city. Again, not a building had escaped total or partial destruction.

So, with a cozy hotel, plenty of hot coffee, and time to converse, we recalled how we were in the Lorraine area only one month before, how the people were so frightened, and how we'd like to see them again after the war. Most GIs didn't realize that we were in on relieving the Bulge until we were actually on the move north. One of the guys told about riding on the tanks, or on foot clearing mines, roadblocks and enemy positions. It was an arduous slow-moving trek with the Germans trying to stop us but not able to cope with all the firepower we had. The infantry would lead and clear for the armor, and then the tanks would take the lead until more infantry action was necessary. And the cold weather was so much worse than the Lorraine. Everyone knew of different guys who had suffered from frostbite; some cases of frostbite were so severe that there was danger of gangrene setting in and the guys had to be sent to the rear for treatment, or even worse, amputation of limbs. We hated to even think of amputation. And we reminded ourselves that there were still a lot of GIs still sleeping, eating, and fighting in the snow that very night.

One doughboy told about the fighting near Ettelbruck north of Mersh. The Heinies were there with all of their battle tricks. It was rough infantry fighting all the way, for every field and town and village. Movement was slow and each yard had to be fought for. The GI's had to dig in: they dug foxholes in the ice and snow using dynamite blasts. They used heat tablets to warm their rations. It was bitter cold, and they stayed in the same frozen foxhole for days at a time. When the shells came at them, they did what seemed natural, they prayed. They couldn't do much else. Someone had written that there are no atheists in foxholes, and we all agreed with that. Just about every infantryman had walked from Luxembourg to Wiltz; truck moves just weren't practical in the kind of close combat that had been going on. They had dug in a hundred times, maybe more. They thought that maybe the fields and woods were better, though, than the vulnerability of being in the towns because of the constant shelling.

Those of us who had been set up in the towns a lot compared our exposures to the infantry, and we agreed that it was better to endure the shelling than to stay out in a foxhole in this winter weather. We did have guys get hit trying to get rations at a CP, and we did have shelling, strafing, and direct tank fire. But very few shells hit the actual structure we were operating from. So, the infantry guys got our respect for what they had to endure.

"About those tanks getting loose," broke in a dough, "I wouldn't say they were really loose but sometimes they'd get through our positions or by them. Our TD 's (Tank Destroyers) took care of them though. There isn't much use trying to stop one with an M-1 rifle but the bazookas took care of them. One of my buddies was on a bazooka team, and he used to say that if a tank got close enough for him to use his bazooka, he'd want to get somewhere else fast. Well, sure enough, he knocked out a tank one evening during a small counterattack. He did it with two shells, too. He got hit by shrapnel about five days ago and he is in England now. Imagine, he'll probably see the States soon. But me, I just hope I last this whole thing out and get to see Hitler's grave. I don't want a Purple Heart." About that time, each of us thought about the guys we knew who had gotten hit, got the Purple Heart, and were still in hospitals somewhere.

There were many ways that the hospitals became crowded during the winter of 44-45. Here and there, now and then, someone else was getting killed or wounded. The front was rarely a solid line of Hini facing a solid line of Americans. The front was many miles deep and it was replacements, positions, CPs, guarded roads, small towns, and fields.

We remembered this town that was occupied by the infantry and then by elements of attached units. One anti-aircraft truck was leaving a field after it had been in it a few days when it hit a mine, leaving the front of the vehicle in shambles. Medics ran to the scene to aid the injured driver. One of the medics hit an anti-personnel mine and he became a casualty. Before any further movements, engineers cleared the mines from the area.

We talked about booby traps. What a heck of a way to become a casualty, being tricked by the enemy. When we first got into combat, we were very cautious in any sort of structure of house or shelter, very cautious about booby traps, slowly, as the war progressed, we realized that booby traps were rare indeed. So, the vigilance relaxed. But every once in a while, someone would turn on a faucet, or just open a door, and get zapped by a booby trap. We still had to be especially aware when the Hennies had just left a place.

The subject turned to experiences of being strafed by enemy aircraft. We'd all tried to get a look at them, but we all took cover fast as we could. All of our firepower was used hoping to do some damage. But we'd all seen gas trucks blow up, vehicles get knocked out, and more casualties.

We talked about our perception of how things worked. We were part of an infantry division. The general idea is to get our doughs going and be with them to support them. All work centers on their successful action. Therefore, when we were in towns half Heinie and half American, there were many casualties on the infantry back up supports. We talked about getting hit by shelling or shrapnel, taking chances, and related philosophies. One guy would be outside, working, come in to protection and a few minutes later his vehicle would be hit. We'd all be pleased if our stuff was going towards the enemy, but you feel you're too young to die when the 'whistling screaming 88s are coming at you. We all agreed that the 88s made a crunching sound as they landed, like "HUUURUNHUUURRHCHPE." Some spelling but that was the consensus.

We talked a lot about fighting, surviving, and how so many got killed or injured. In spite of all of this, we were proud of the Third Army. We never doubted the capabilities of the higher staff and we marveled at the outcome of our battles so far. We started to wind down the conversation with discussion of home, letters from home, and questions like, "Where I'd be tonight if I weren't here." Speaking of home, we agreed that we had to beat the enemy in order to get back. In battle, self-preservation is basic; you want to take the enemy, not be taken. Also, you realize that there is no other possible way to get back home except by defeating the enemy.

The end of the Battle of the Bulge did not end the war for most of us. There was still the Maginot Line, the Siegfried Line, the Breakthrough into Germany, the fighting all through Central Germany, the linkup of our troops and the Russian troops, and the fighting south into the Nurnberg area, and into the Austrian villages. My division was at Brannau, Austria, on D-Day; that's Hitler's birthplace and we got souvenirs in the house in which he was born. The division became an occupation force in Bavaria until we were all shipped home in December 1945.

BOBA Mission Statement

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The Battle of the Bulge Association® (BOBA) is a membership organization instituted to:

- Perpetuate the memory of the sacrifices involved during the Battle of the Bulge.
- Preserve historical data and sites relating to the Battle of the Bulge.
- Foster international peace and goodwill.
- Promote friendship among the survivors of the Battle of the Bulge and their descendants.

Join BOBA

As a member of the Battle of the Bulge Association®, Inc. you will receive an **emailed PDF copy** of our quarterly publication entitled *The Bulge Bugle*® which contains stories about the battle written by our veterans, and updates on member activities such as tours of Battle sites, reunions and chapter activities. You'll be joining a network of Veterans, their families and friends, and history enthusiasts, all with a shared interest in keeping connected, and keeping the legacy of these brave service men for future generations.

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BOBA

- Sponsors an annual reunion and an annual commemorative ceremony in Washington, DC, and Arlington, VA
- Produces the *Bulge Bugle*, which contains the soldiers' stories and other news about the Battle;
- Sponsors an annual conference in Gettysburg that highlights the latest scholarship on the Bulge campaign;
- Has more than 20 local chapters that meet regularly and sponsor local commemorative activities;
- Has a Speakers Bureau that promotes appearances by veterans and other BOBA members.
- Sponsors periodic trips to tour battlefields in Europe;
- Maintains personal and professional relations with other related organizations, including veterans associations, research institutes, and museums.

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