

## **George Kane Interview**

Company A, 318th Inf Reg

*(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Abbie Grotke)*

(MS Word Audio Transcript [NOT edited, just transcribed])

00:00:05 Speaker 1

This is Abby Grotke with my partner, Cassie Ammon. It's May 28th, 2004. We're on the mall in Washington, DC at the National World War 2 reunion, and we'll start by asking the name and birth date and where he's from of this gentleman.

00:00:21 Speaker 2

I'm George W Bill Kane. I was born October 29th, 1922, raised in Pennsylvania in a small comoving town called Cold Glen.

00:00:31 Speaker 2

And I spent 20 years in the army and now reside in Winter Park, FL.

00:00:34

Now we're babies.

00:00:37 Speaker 2

Been there for a little over 40 years.

00:00:40

Warner.

00:00:42 Speaker 1

If we could have you share a story that you'd like to share today.

00:00:47 Speaker 2

The one story that I'll never forget and is most vivid in my memory is the battle of the Bulge which occurred during World War 2.

00:00:55 Speaker 2

And it was in Belgium and Luxembourg, and the Germans had penetrated our position, defense, our position and attempted to split the ally.

00:01:04 Speaker 2

Lies by taking Antwerp, Belgium, and hoping that one of the allies, Britain or the United States especially, would sue for peace and they were beaten in this battle. It lasted about 5 weeks.

00:01:16 Speaker 2

From December 19th 1944 to January 25th 1945 and during that period of time when this battle occurred, there was over 1.1 million participants. That's Germans, Americans, British Canadian every.

00:01:32 Speaker 2

And during that period of time, the American Army suffered 81,000 casualties.

00:01:39 Speaker 2

19,000 were killed in action Americans.

00:01:42 Speaker 2

And 17,000 suffered frostbite.

00:01:46 Speaker 2

And during a 10 day period from December 20, December 19th to December 29th of 45, my rifle company and I was a second Lieutenant rifle platoon leader, went from 187 men down to 38. They were all either killed or wounded.

00:02:05 Speaker 2

And.

00:02:07 Speaker 2

We attacked the Quinta Bastones or leave 101st Airborne, which was surrounded there.

00:02:12 Speaker 2

By Germans, we attacked Christmas morning of 1944.

00:02:18 Speaker 2

And.

00:02:22 Speaker 2

It was a rough 10, about 10 days. We spent there and that's where we went from. My company went from 187 to to 38, either killed or wounded.

00:02:23

The.

00:02:32 Speaker 2

And some of the experiences during that time, I could go on forever, I guess.

00:02:37 Speaker 2

But.

00:02:38 Speaker 2

When we attack Christmas morning.

00:02:42 Speaker 2

Our orders were and I'll never forget this.

00:02:45 Speaker 2

There's some American soldiers about 10 miles down the road. They're surrounded by Germans. We're going to get, get them out and we attack it. 0700 and we did.

00:02:54 Speaker 2

And as we crossed the snow covered field about out about 100 yards from where we had spent the night dug in in a foxhole.

00:03:04 Speaker 2

The Germans opened up with machine gun and rifle fire. Withering fire was very intense, so we all hit the ground instinctively.

00:03:12 Speaker 2

And we looked like raisins in the snow, and so somebody had to do something. There were two platoons attacking. I don't know where the other Lieutenant was. Doesn't.

00:03:20 Speaker 2

Matter.

00:03:22 Speaker 2

And I got up and went around jerking men up by the rifle and got into the fire on the German position.

00:03:29 Speaker 2

And finally, the Germans withdrew for that action. I received the Silver Star medal.

00:03:35 Speaker 2

And then we continue the attack the next day.

00:03:39 Speaker 2

And we were exiting a patch of woods.

00:03:42 Speaker 2

And there was a huge snow covered hill in front of us.

00:03:47 Speaker 2

And I estimate there was somewhere around 100, a 150 Germans, probably the remnants of a German rifle company. Now they look like raisins in the snow, and I know.

00:03:58 Speaker 2

But virtually none of those Germans made it over the Crest of that hill to get away from us. We left them in the snow.

00:04:05 Speaker 2

And continued on in another instance.

00:04:08 Speaker 2

Is we're attacking down the gully, little gully and the German machine gun opened fire and the grounds made a path in the snow boat right in front of my feet about 3 or.

00:04:18 Speaker 2

4 feet from me.

00:04:20 Speaker 2

And there was a patch in which to our right rear.

00:04:24 Speaker 2

And you couldn't locate the German machine if they had smokeless powder and they had obviously had snow camouflage on which we didn't.

00:04:31 Speaker 2

And we had one tank with us.

00:04:34 Speaker 2

I got in touch with the Sergeant and commander.

00:04:36 Speaker 2

Of the tank.

00:04:38 Speaker 2

And pointed out where I thought the machine gun position was at the corner of the Patch Woods to our right rear and he fired one round that corner of the patch Woods.

00:04:48 Speaker 2

And I have never in my whole life heard such a thing and iced screaming and yelling as I did that morning, and Sergeant fired one round and he got it.

00:04:59 Speaker 2

Like.

00:05:01 Speaker 2

And then I received a Purple Heart. Also during this time.

00:05:06 Speaker 2

And we just captured the germ Luxembourg village, and we were digging in outside the town for the night, digging a foxhole.

00:05:16

Yeah.

00:05:16 Speaker 2

And for some reason I instinctively fell to the ground on my stomach and at the same moment a German tank fired and landed about 10 or 15 feet in front of my head and blew my helmet off, fortunately.

00:05:30

Well, that's good.

00:05:33 Speaker 2

Blew my helmet off and cut up my face with piece fine pieces of shrapnel because most of the shrapnel went over me and it was bad enough that I went to the battalion aid station and.

00:05:43 Speaker 2

It's like an emergency room.

00:05:46 Speaker 2

They cleaned me up and made sure there was no fine pieces in my eyes to repair my vision and I got a clean shirt too because it was all messy.

00:05:55 Speaker 2

Planning.

00:05:56 Speaker 2

So that's what I got. The Purple Heart for you.

00:05:59 Speaker 2

And then later on we were in Apache Woods.

00:06:04 Speaker 2

And we were to attack the window based on I didn't have any idea where we were. If I didn't have a map or didn't need one.

00:06:12 Speaker 2

Lieutenant, the Toon leader didn't need a bath and we were in this patch which and I found out later we were about 1/2 mile from bastone which.

00:06:21 Speaker 2

Was our objective.

00:06:24 Speaker 2

And there was a patch of woods off to our right. Well, maybe a couple 100 yards and there were no friendly troops there. We knew that.

00:06:31 Speaker 2

And so our artillery was to land on that patch, which, if there were any Germans.

00:06:35 Speaker 2

To keep them occupied. But we went on into bastone.

00:06:40 Speaker 2

That our own artillery fired on us.

00:06:44 Speaker 2

And I can tell.

00:06:45 Speaker 1

So he had friendly fire.

00:06:47 Speaker 2

Great. I can tell you there are no words.

00:06:51 Speaker 2

In any language that can describe the feeling that you had, especially with your own artillery landing in those streets out and shrapnel, the shells exploding and shrapnel coming down on your like grain.

00:07:05 Speaker 2

It's.

00:07:05 Speaker 2

So.

00:07:07 Speaker 2

Fear and anger. Helplessness can't describe it just in indescribable period. We were not unable to attack because we didn't have enough men.

00:07:17 Speaker 2

And I counted the number of men we had left as remarks of vehicles to go back to our regular regiment, which was in Luxembourg.

00:07:25 Speaker 2

They moved us to Belgium. I counted the number of men we had left.

00:07:31 Speaker 2

And out of about 187 that was full strength on the 19th of December.

00:07:37 Speaker 2

This is 10 days later on the 29th, there was 38 of us left.

00:07:42 Speaker 2

All the rest of them were killed or wounded less, but almost about 150 a 148.

00:07:47 Speaker 2

Actually.

00:07:48 Speaker 2

So in 10 days we lost 150 men.

00:07:51

Right.

00:07:52 Speaker 2

That's about 15 a day in just one company.

00:07:55

No.

00:07:56 Speaker 2

And so that that's a vivid memory that I will never. I could go on all afternoon that's you know.

00:08:06 Speaker 2

That that really I'll never forget.

00:08:09 Speaker 2

Those things you will never, ever forget with the other individual have been going around US schools in Orange and Seminole counties in Florida. The last four school years, we've been in touch with 31,336 students from 5th grade into college.

00:08:18

Back.

00:08:25

Yeah, that's OK.

00:08:28

OK.

00:08:29 Speaker 2

And the thing that interests me, and I was pleasantly surprised about two things doing this that the interest of the students is phenomenal and they're really interested, no question about it. I've had teachers tell me many they like to hear their stories.

00:08:46

Right.

00:08:46 Speaker 2

And the other thing is that the girls.

00:08:51 Speaker 2

Are interested in asking us good or better questions than the boys. Now. To me that's interesting because when I was that age, the girls didn't even like biology classes, you know, you know, so, but that's why I found that very interesting with the girls.

00:09:07 Speaker 2

Especially we're interested.

00:09:11 Speaker 1

So how do you feel about the events down here on the mall and the memorial?

00:09:14 Speaker 2

Opening up, I think it's a great effort. Someone went to a lot of effort and a lot of work and I'm a veteran of course, of the Battle of the both.

00:09:23 Speaker 2

And.

00:09:25 Speaker 2

They've done a man's magnificent job arranging tours and that kind of thing.

00:09:31 Speaker 2

And for this particular area, I congratulate Bob Dole and Tom Hanks for what they've done and everybody else that's involved of.



00:09:40 Speaker 2

Course.

00:09:41 Speaker 2

But I think it's it's fabulous. It's just a great.

00:09:46 Speaker 2

I think it's a great thing to be an American.

00:09:51 Speaker 1

Well, we thank you very much for your interview today and hope you'll did you have anything else you wanted?

00:09:55 Speaker 1

To share sure, sure.

00:09:56 Speaker 2

I'd like to make one more comment, if I may.

00:09:59 Speaker 2

One of the things I usually point out to the students when they're talking.

00:10:03 Speaker 2

Is I have a grandson who's in the army. He's been in about 12 years now and he's a chief Warrant Officer in Army intelligence. He's been in Afghanistan.

00:10:13 Speaker 2

And he's back from Iraq now.

00:10:16 Speaker 2

And.

00:10:18 Speaker 2

I'd like from what he's told me, the American soldier today has the same characteristics that I think that they average the most, very, most American soldiers had in world.

00:10:24

Thank you.

00:10:28 Speaker 2

Or two.

00:10:30 Speaker 2

And you know, they one word, I'll summarize it with his character. You know, they were trustworthy, honest, you know, and that kind of thing. But one word that.

00:10:38 Speaker 2

Character.

00:10:39 Speaker 2

And I'm confident that the soldiers today, from what little I know about them, are still the same.

00:10:46 Speaker 2

And you know why? I think they do the same. Because they're Americans, that's why.

00:10:53 Speaker 2

I just convinced them.

00:10:55 Speaker 2

OK.

00:10:56 Speaker 1

Well, thank you very much. That's a nice way to end. So we'll stop that here and thank you for your time today and enjoy the weekend.

00:11:02 Speaker 2

You're welcome. You're probably wondering how.

00:11:04

Right.