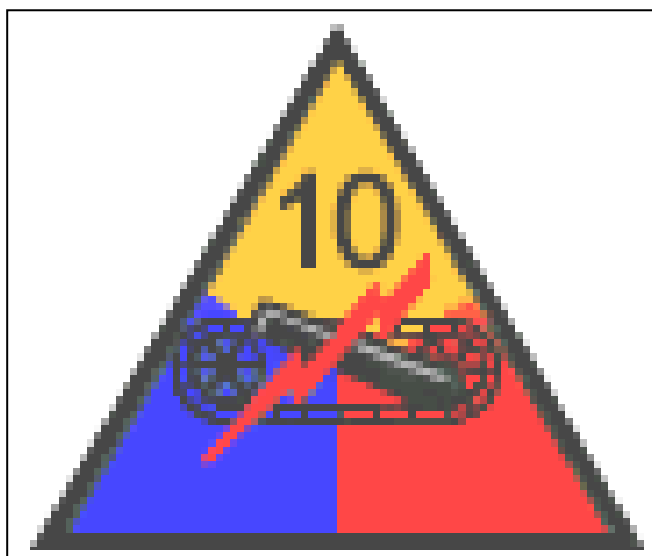


Battery Adjust





To Eleanor

For our Grandchildren

The actions in this story actually occurred. The statements are as recalled and are fitted to the action. This is a remembrance of war.

Melzar Pegram Booker
October 1998





Prologue

“Bulge, Battle of the (December 1944-January 1945), last German offensive in the west during World War II. Following the Normandy invasion (June 1944), Allied forces swept rapidly through France but became stalled along the German border in September. On December 16, taking advantage of weather that kept Allied aircraft on the ground, the Germans launched a counteroffensive through the hilly and wooded Ardennes country and advanced 50 km (31 mi) into Belgium and Luxembourg. Their aim was to divide the Americans and the British and retake the vital seaport of Antwerp. They created a “bulge” in the Allied lines, but their advance was halted near Meuse in late December. Managing to avoid being cut off by an Allied pincer movement, the Germans withdrew to their own lines in January, but heavy losses, including some 220,000 casualties, contributed to their final collapse in the following spring.”

Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia

This is an account of the combat B Battery of the 420th Armored Field Artillery engaged in during the Battle of the Bulge. The 420th was part of Combat Command B of the 10th Armored Division. Combat Command B was commanded by Colonel Roberts and consisted of a tank battalion, an infantry battalion, an artillery battalion and supporting anti-aircraft artillery. The 10th Armored Division was part of the Third Army under General George S. Patton.

Combat Command B was the first United States unit to reach and defend the little city of Bastogne, Belgium. As a result losses were very heavy in tanks and infantry, but the command was able to slow the German juggernaut for a day and a half before the 101st Airborne Division arrived and completed the defense of the city.

Each of the incidents reported in this account actually took place, some of the story is as I can best recall. Hopefully it gives a realistic account of the artilleryman’s feelings and behavior during a battle. It is just one episode illustrating how dedicated citizen soldiers perform when they are convinced in the cause and are supported by their country as a whole.

This was the last “Great War”.



December 16, 1944 - Near Wehrgarten, I Corps Reserve

Yesterday we moved into position, laid the guns and settled in to rest and enjoy life after the rigorous moving and firing for the last six weeks. We were ready for this and understood that we would stay in place until the great push east began.

It is cold as blue blazes. The ground has begun to freeze making it hard to start digging fox holes, but the entire battery now went through this exercise cheerfully having seen up to this time how useful they could be. The executive crew began to dig our command post and until that gets done, we will use the Executive Officer (XO) half-track for the command post (CP).

Our battery commander, Jim Lane rode into the battery area and pulled up to the CP.

“Hey Book, are you settled in”?

“Yes sir.”

That was almost true.

“My section will join HQ along with the other BC’s. No action is expected until after Christmas and we already have a telephone line into your CP from HQ.”

“Yes sir.”

I already knew that. Our wire crew runs the line and they had told me how nice it was that HQ had set up in several houses. They are sort of jealous because the firing battery always had to be located in the open where it had a clear field of fire.

“HQ is planing to have a Christmas tree and dinner for the entire battalion in their dining room. Have Sergeant Harford come up and plan it with the HQ mess sergeant. You can plan on the battery coming up on a part time basis, leaving enough crew to man the guns and the battery operations. The Colonel is pushing this so we will do it up right”.

“Yes sir”.

Jim left. Now to call each section and pass on the *good news*.

Hardly had Jim left, when Colonel Browne’s jeep approached.

“Oh my aching back! Elwood, call each section and tell them to look busy and sharp the Battalion CO is coming to inspect us.”

I reported to the Colonel and we made a quick walk around. He seemed satisfied except he wanted one outpost moved. Colonel Browne was the picture book copy of a commander. A tall West Point graduate and deadly serious in all ways. I respected and liked him. Nevertheless, I was glad to have him leave. Now we could chow down for supper.

It looks like we will have a rest since the battery is quiet and a Christmas observance is being planned by HQ. If only we get a mail delivery, it would mean so very much for our morale. Anyway we are in good shape. The First Sergeant has checked the foxholes, a latrine has been dug and our perimeter guard is set up. Before I finished being satisfied, the EE-8 telephone rang. Elwood passed me the handset.

“Book. This is Jim.”

“Yes sir”.

“Bad news; the Krauts have attacked through the Ardennes forest and have overcome the defenses there”.

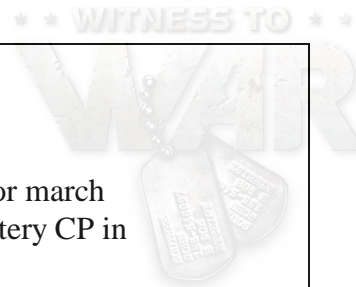


First Sergeant Garrison, Myself and Mess Sergeant Harford

“My God”.

“We leave north tomorrow early, so prepare the battery for the march order. I’ll call you back with details after the BC meeting”.

“Yes sir”.



“Damn; Elwood, have the First Sergeant order each section to prepare for march order tomorrow morning and have all section chiefs meet here at the battery CP in and hour for further instructions.”

Wow, it was hard to even consider missing mail, Christmas, and the rest we needed and deserved after the last six weeks of continuous combat.

The EE-8 rang, and it was the BC.

“Book, the Nazis have destroyed at least two divisions and are headed west. The 10th Armored is located nearest the break-through and we have been ordered by General Patton to march north and attack the krauts on the flank and stop them. Other forces are to follow. The 420th is to be part of Combat Command B, along with a tank battalion, one of armored infantry and one of support. We have no maps, but we will head for Luxembourg City. Just follow the main road north, which passes our position. The Battalion order of march will be the HQ battery, Able, Baker, Charlie and Service. The battery commanders will march with HQ. Baker Battery is to hook onto Able Battery at 0700 tomorrow. It should be light by then, if it doesn’t snow. I’ll join you somewhere later in route. Any questions”?

“When shall I have the wire section pull the line to HQ”?

“At 0630, Good luck. Oh yeah, radio silence.”

I climbed out of the XO’s half-track and repeated all that the BC had given me over the phone. The section chiefs had arrived.

“Order of march will be First Sergeant in the jeep, XO half-track, gun sections 3, 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6; then ammo section, kitchen and finally the maintenance truck.”

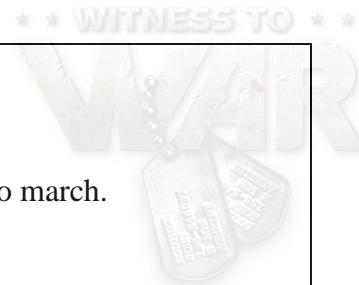
“Harford, how is the ration situation”?

“Sir we had a delivery two days ago and I believe we have enough for maybe five days.”

“Sergeant Packard, how do we stand with ammo”?

“All gun sections and trailers are fully loaded as well as the three ammo half tracks. We haven’t fired a round here of course.”

“The First Sergeant tells me that Service battery filled us up with water and gas last night. Be sure all vehicles are fully gassed up. No telling when we will be



supplied again. Outposts to be pulled in by 0700 and we will be ready to march. Any questions”?

“Where will we hit the krauts”?

“Don’t know, hopefully it will be after we make Luxembourg City.”

“How far to Luxembourg City”?

“Don’t know, no maps. We keep going until we get there. There will be no lunch break. Sergeant Harford’s crew will make sandwiches tonight and you can pick them up in the morning. We have to move fast tomorrow, following convoy discipline. Pack up and try to get some sleep.”

I slept sound in my down sleeping bag and didn’t even dream.

December 17, 1944 - In Convoy

The First Sergeant waked the battery at 0500 so that everybody would have time for the breakfast that Harford’s crew had prepared and the kitchen could be packed up before 0700.

At 0655, I walked to where all vehicles could see me and after making a circle motion:

“Turn them over”.

The powerful M-7’s thundered alive, driving out all other sounds.

“Move out”.

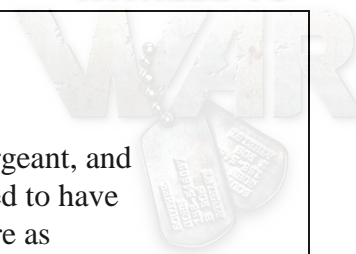
I mounted the XO half-track and we followed the First Sergeant out and then halted the column at the road as A Battery was passing by. Once A Battery passed, we pulled into the road and turned left to the north. The adventure had begun.

It was about 29°, the sky was lead gray and low. There was no wind. I turned to Elwood and said:

“I believe you are right, it looks like snow.”

I looked back and all was in order, a vehicle commander was standing on the right side of each, and it looked we were off to a fine start.

The XO crew looked like they were going to sleep, or were already asleep, like all soldiers. A warm feeling came over me. I was proud of these civilians turned soldiers,



just boys. At 25, I was probably the oldest of B Battery, except for the First Sergeant, and they had proven themselves during the last six weeks of combat and they seemed to have adjusted to me. Their performance had been good even though I knew they were as scared at times as was their XO. I couldn't afford to let it show. It was there. I glanced back and there was Worley with his red cross helmet over his eyes and his Red cross kit between his legs. What a guy, the first one to get his fox hole dug yet immediately able to answer the frightening cry "WORLEY!", when someone had been hit.

The column was in good order but it was becoming cold as hell. I pulled my goggles down and felt better.

Whoops! A Battery is signaling slow down, stop and dismount. I passed the signals back to the battery and got out of the half-track. It was noon, past time for a break.

"Stidham, do you want some driving relief"?

Munching on his sandwich, he replied,

"No sir".

I thought that would be his answer, but I didn't want him to get too tired. Elwood was his assistant driver and a capable one, but Stidham was jealous of such help.

A Battery signaled, mount up and move out. I checked my watch, a 10 minute break? Well that is as it should be under the circumstances.

It got colder. The road was icing up but so far no problems. I figure we are averaging about 30 miles per hour. The countryside of small villages, fields and fir trees was passing by, well organized and beautiful even with the low lead clouds above. Sure looks like snow. And the convoy drove on and on.

A Battery slowed down, paused and moved on. Soon I understood. We were passing a sign that said *LUXEMBOURG 10 KM*. Wow, am I glad! We should have time to assemble and bed down before dark.

Houses began to appear on each side of the road, becoming closer to each other as we roll along. Our road becomes a street with row houses down each side. People are waving from the windows and doors. Standing on the sidewalk and yelling, *Welcome Yank*. What a surprise, it made goose pimples break out on my back. They seemed sure we were going to stop the Hun threat! They obviously knew about the kraut break-through.

For some reason the column ahead halted and A Battery gave the signal to cut motors. I'll bet the Battalion CO and Battery CO's were checking for a place to put the battalion for the night. The men poured out of the vehicles. Should I do anything about it? I didn't. They were invited into some of the houses.



Elwood returned with a grin and said,

”Lieutenant, the lady wants you to come in and have a glass of wine”.

Well why not celebrate before the battle, there might not be anything to celebrate later. I walked up the stairs and was greeted by this nicely dressed woman who led me to a buffet, poured a glass of wine from a decanter and handed it to me saying *skald*. Language didn't seem to be a barrier. Everyone was smiling, laughing and chatting away. This was too good to last and it didn't. Before I finished my second glass, A Battery signaled to move out. I gave the ladies a fond 'thank you' salute and sadly mounted the XO half-track. What a warm feeling, to be so enthusiastically welcomed when we had been fighting in German towns without similar happy greetings.

The convoy moved along the street, which soon became a road, and then we were out of Luxembourg. We could see A Battery turning off to the left. A road marker was waving us to the left and we came by Major Crittenberger, the Battalion XO, standing by and saluting each vehicle as we turned into what looked like a recreation park. There was our Battalion Commander and crew who led us to our parking area beside A Battery. Jim walked up to my half-track.

“Hey Book, how did it go”?

“Okay except it was sort of tiring. This is a great place. I wish we could spend a few days here.”

“Yeah. Can you have chow down at 1900”?

“I believe so, Sergeant Garrison had Harford start the meal while en route. The 6x6 does well as a kitchen while rolling “.

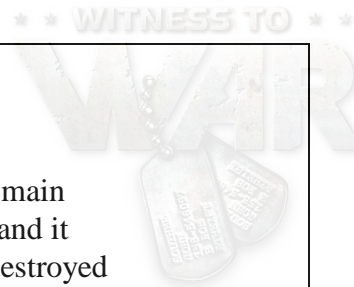
“We will have officers call at 2000, I will join you for supper along with my crew a little later”.

“Okay”.

The Battery Commander looks a bit tired.

After supper I went to HQ Battery which had erected a perimeter tent for the meeting. By 2000, all the officers were assembled. “Attention”, someone called out, and Colonel Browne strolled in, returning our salutes. He looked good, just as a West Pointer should appear when briefing his men on a pending battle.

“Gentlemen, I have been with Colonel Roberts today (Combat B Commander) and a bit of the situation is clearer. Our tanks and armored infantry are arriving in



Bastogne late today and will move into attack positions tomorrow. The main German thrust appears to be on an east-west highway north of the town and it appears that they will bypass Bastogne. It also appears that they about destroyed two divisions when they attacked through the Ardennes. The remnants are retreating this way. We are not going to be alone. The 101st Airborne will leave Paris by truck and get to Bastogne by the 19th.

The 4th Armored along with two other divisions are to move north ASAP and attack the south flank of the German thrust.

I don't have any idea when they will get here. But we must move fast tomorrow before the Germans change their plans and attack Bastogne directly. I will move out before dawn with the BC's, tank forward observers and recon officers. The rest of the battalion moves out at 0730. Service Battery will gas you up tonight. Colonel Roberts will keep in touch with Division HQ by short wave and we may have more information tomorrow".

"Any questions"?

"Yes sir, what about maps"?

"Colonel Roberts' G-2 has located a source and we should have them by tomorrow. Any other questions? If not, I'll see you in Bastogne."

"What happened to Combat Command C"?

"They split off from Combat Command B at Luxembourg and will attack to our right. Anything else, if not, you are dismissed."

I was relieved to see that Sergeant Garrison had assembled the section chiefs at the Battery CP where I repeated the Colonel's briefing. I was told that gassing up had begun and Harford would issue C rations for lunch en route. Breakfast would be at 0530 tomorrow.

Everything seemed in order. My thoughts focused on tomorrow. I wondered how we would react to this situation because our combat experience had been with the krauts withdrawing. Now they were on the attack. How would the battery react? I decided not to worry, they were well trained and combat was not new to them. Nevertheless, I again felt goose pimples along my spine. Sleep was what I needed, so I slipped into my bedroll and started thinking about my family, Eleanor and little Book. I knew that would ease my concerns and I faded into welcomed sleep.



December 17, 1944 - Luxembourg en route to Bastogne

The morning came and it was much colder. We moved out behind A Battery and were on our way to whatever was to happen

Daylight came and again the low heavy ceiling promised snow. We rolled on behind A Battery and began our march to Bastogne.

The terrain was interesting in spite of winter, with neat farms and grazing cattle and patches of fir trees. War had not touched or even passed through this area. We had become accustomed to the shelled and bombed towns and villages, this was a welcomed relief.

The cold wind was cutting my face, so I pulled my goggles down. I looked behind me, six M7's were rocking along and their section chiefs were standing at the right front. I knew they were getting cold. No doubt the crews had snuggled down, trying to sleep.

During a fire mission, the chief stood at the right rear wearing a telephone headset. From there, he monitored the crew and passed on the fire commands. The gunner corporal stood behind the shield at the left front above the tank driver and his job was to move the tube right and left for deflection. On the opposite side of the breech was the Number 1 man, who set the elevation, operated the breech block lever and pulled the lanyard which fired the gun. The Number 2 man set the fuse, loaded the round and grabbed the ejected shell casing. The other cannoneers uncrated and unwrapped the rounds, set the charge and passed it to the Number 2 man. The driver remained in his seat ready to start up if the deflection was so great that the M7 had to move the gun.

I knew that each crew was well trained and now with six weeks of combat experience they could perform like a well-oiled machine.

About mid-morning, the G-3's jeep was parked along the right side of the road. A major slowed us down and handed me an envelope.

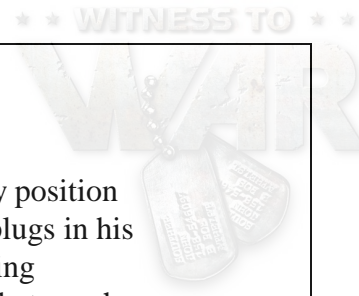
“Here are your maps.”

“Thanks.”

I saluted and we continued to roll. The maps are the best example of cartography. Here we are on this road and there is Bastogne.

“Hey Elwood, we've a great map for you to put on our plotting board. The right scale and all! Everything!”

Corporal Elwood is the XO instrument NCO. He is an interesting young man, tall and thin with black hair and gray eyes. He takes life as it comes and is very serious and



responsible. He is a big help to me. His first job when occupying a new battery position is to set the XO line and switch board, see that the man from each gun section plugs in his line from the gun into the board and that we have communications ready for firing commands. I am running to a central position where I can sight the aiming circle to each gunner. After centering the magnetic needle and setting the direction of fire, the deflection is called out to each gunner, the piece is traversed and the gunner sights back at the aiming circle. Now all six guns are laid parallel.

“Aiming stakes 1800, report when ready to fire”.

The circle is divided into 6400 units called mils, instead of degrees.

Each gun sends two men out with the aiming stakes which are aligned by each gunner. The deflection is read on each sight and reported as base deflection to John Holmes who is the XO recorder. John is excellent with arithmetic and keeps the deflection and all the fire commands on the recorder’s sheet. The wire crew and jeep are laying wire to the Battalion HQ. The cannoneers are getting ammunition ready for firing. All those who are not directly involved in these activities are busy digging fox holes. To a stranger is must look like mass confusion. But it is organized confusion.

Damn it is cold, I try stamping my feet. You can depend upon this overcast being essential to the kraut’s plan. Without air support it will be hard to stop them. I shudder to think about it.

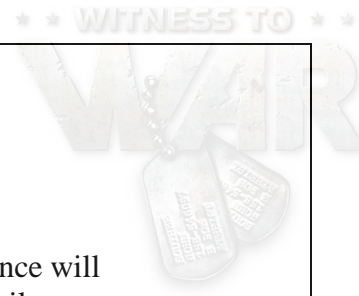
We are rolling along through a quiet, but interesting country side. The terrain is becoming hilly and the road is frozen. Villages are a little larger but there is little or no sign of life. No doubt the people have heard of the Nazi break-through and are awaiting the outcome behind building walls.

Before long we pass a sign *BASTOGNE 10KM* and before we realize it we are in the city outskirts. Here Captain Lane stopped us.

“The battery is to go into firing position. I’ll lead you.”

I gave the signal ‘prepare for action’ which is conveyed to the column with both arms bent at the elbows and fists pumping up and down. This is one of the artillery man’s greatest thrills. The blood really starts to rise. The M7 is rolling, the Number 1 man crawls out in front and removes the gun cover, the gun is unlocked from the traveling position, the gunner gets the panoramic sight out of its case and sets it in the sighting sleeve, the aiming stakes are unsheathed and the cannoneers ready the ammunition. The blood pounds.

Jim waves us off the road into position. Now comes the excitement of laying the battery and getting it ready to fire.



“Jim, the battery is laid northwest and ready to fire”.

“Good, I’ll report to Fire Direction. If we have a fire mission, radio silence will be broken by fire commands to you. Tomorrow we all will break radio silence and I’ll lead you to another position. Move out in the morning at light on this road and stop in town. I’ll give you instructions from there. Good Luck!”

Now we had to get our security guards placed. I called Sgt. Garrison and we agreed to set out three security posts, of two men each.

Sergeant Garrison was an interesting person. He was the “old man” of the battery at 38 and an example of the peace time Army with some of its hang ups, but all in all a steady and dependable man. He has a round serious face, is of medium height with a wrestler’s build. As First Sergeant he tends to the morning report and all the other paper work. He stays with the battery during combat. The paper work is handled by his corporal clerk who remains with the division rear echelon. Garrison is a busy man; he locates where the latrine is to be dug, burns the excess powder bags when we are firing and checks to see that all the men dig fox holes. He listens to the men’s gripes and doesn’t mind giving orders. His sense of humor seems to be somewhat lacking and it is perhaps because he just doesn’t appreciate mine.

The chiefs are assembled and the situation explained along with the daylight start.

“Tomorrow we will start blowing up krauts”.

“When does the 101st Airborne start helping Combat Command B?”

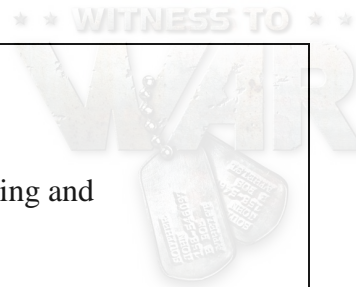
“Captain Lane tells me they begin to arrive tomorrow morning and will be scattered beyond and around the town to form a perimeter defense. You know they have no tanks. Just small arms, bazookas and mortars. But these are tough babies and accustomed to being surrounded”.

“If you have no other questions, get a good sleep ‘cause you’ll need it”.

Now I’ll crawl into the half-track which. It has the canvas top up, with the trouble light burning. The radio will be turned on to the battalion frequency. Stidham, Holmes and Elwood will take two hour guard shifts with the job of starting up the half-track and running it for ½ hour each two hours to maintain the batteries.

December 18, 1944 - Bastogne Belgium

At 0800 the battery turned right on to the road. The clouds are very dark and low. I’m cold already. The road turned into a street with buildings on both sides; two to three stories high with peaked roofs. The column halts at what looks to be mid town. Several streets and buildings are south to our left. To the north the map shows the east-west



highway about a mile and half away. That is where the kraut drive is spearheading and where small arms fire is beginning to crackle.

Suddenly a screech sounds and a round explodes north of the buildings. Another screech, and a shell lands on the roof of the buildings on the street parallel and south of us.

“Uh-Oh, their artillery has bracketed us. Get down low in the half-track”.

Boy they began firing for affect with a battery of about four guns. The shells landed all around us. It must have been twenty rounds before they ceased. There was a pause and then “WORLEY!”. Worley was out of our track with his kit in a flash and running toward the waving hands on Section 4. I dismounted and followed. As I climbed up on the M7, I heard “Sir, sergeant Cohen has been hit”. My heart sank. Worley had about stopped the bleeding and had given Cohen a shot of morphine. Little moans were coming from Cohen. He opened his eyes and looked at me.

“Lieutenant I’ll be all right and I’ll be back”.

“Sure you will Sergeant”.

“Sir he’ll have to have surgery. I saw an ambulance turn down the street below where the CCB aid station must be”.

“Take him down in the First’s jeep. Here he is alongside”.

It was difficult getting Cohen from the M7 into the jeep, with him in such pain, and then off they went.

“Look back there Lieutenant!”

Back there was ammunition Sergeant Packer, standing up in the ammo track number 2 tossing out smoking and burning ammunition with his bare hands. Obviously a round had landed in the full load of creasoted ammo round covers and set them afire. My God, how did this happen!

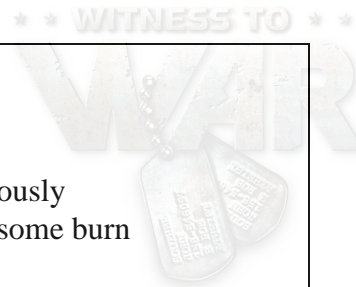
When I arrived beside the ammo track, Packer was still aboard.

“Do you need help?”

“No sir, I believe it’s all out, thank goodness!”

“Are you hurt”?

“No sir, just a little sore”.



“Packer you did a great job. I’m proud of you. Sergeant Cohen got seriously wounded. As soon as Worley gets back from the aid station he will get some burn salve on your hands. Now I’d better get back up front”.

Jim Lane had not called in. Damn it to hell, we can’t stay here like defenseless, cornered rats and get wiped out. I pressed the mike button.

“Baker 6, this is Baker 7, over”.

No answer. I gave the signal to crank up and move out.

“Baker 6, we are being shelled”.

“Baker 7, this is Baker 6, I’m coming back”.

“Baker 6, we are moving out and will meet you, out”.

Oh my aching back; leaving us in the heart of Bastogne and damn it to hell then not meeting us soon enough. As a result we have lost a top notch chief of section. Cohen was one of the best, an all around artilleryman, with a well-trained crew. But I expect his gunner will be able to take over.

Wow. I hear the incoming behind us. If we were still there the battery would have been devastated! Thanks to God we got off as light as we did.

Well here he comes. He pulls around and drives along side.

“Follow me, the position is a mile and half from here”.

I saluted...

Bastogne was on a plane of high ground which extended to the west and then turned south. We followed it. When Jim stopped and gave the “prepare for action” signal, I passed it on back. We turned right and pointed the track north. We were waved into the new position. The adrenaline was surging. I jumped out with the aiming circle, ran while signaling north as the direction of fire. The M7’s were arranged in the firing position and were rapidly laid. When I got back to the XO track the guns were checking in with Elwood.

“Elwood are they ready to fire?”

“They will be in two minutes”.

The radio was on the fire direction channel.



“Chu Chu 3, this is Baker 7. Over”.

“Chu Chu 3, Baker is laid and ready to fire. Laid on North. You have our position”.

“Roger Baker, we will be in touch”.

The gun position is about forty yards from a south band of trees that run east to west. The band shows on the map and measures 50 yards long and 25 yards deep. The road passes our position heading south and passes the left end of the band of trees. From there it falls off sharply to the south.

Sergeant Garrison and I decided to make a strong point at the end of the trees along the road with a bazooka and a 50 caliber machine gun covering. We were worried about a possible tank attack up the road from the south. The mines would be laid, if tanks attacked.

I looked back to the open space behind us and there was a gaggle of civilians approaching, carrying bundles, with and wagons and baby carriages loaded. They were leaving the area that they expected the krauts to occupy. Good Lord, refugees! Since Bastogne had been shelled, they expect the krauts to whip us. They were passing the battery position now heading south on the road. I tried to stop them but we had a language problem and they were determined and radiating fear. Maybe the krauts won't kill civilians.

“Hey Lieutenant look what is coming down the road by the battery!”

It is a 6x6 pulling a 155 howitzer, and headed south. I don't believe by eyes! I'll have to turn them around. I leave the CP and wave them down, they stop but keep the motor running.

“Turn around, you can't go down this road. The Krauts have us surrounded”.

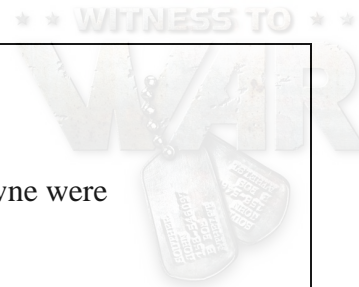
A man put his head out the window; a major by gosh.

“We are moving on”.

“Didn't you understand, they are probably at the foot of this hill. Turn around now while your can”.

The major's face was strained and full of fear.

“Our battalion is destroyed or captured except for us. We are leaving”.



And they pulled away. I couldn't pull a gun on the major. I wish Colonel Browne were here. Well, it's their funeral. So be it.

Packard began unloading his ammo half-track, and distributing our ammo reserve to the six guns. Sergeant Packard is a unique member of the battery. He is the perfect soldier in every way. Spit and polish and super military courtesy. I'll bet his parents put him through a military school.

Sergeant Harford comes up to tell me that he was going to set up a buffet and have the men slip to the kitchen for food when they could be spared. That makes sense.

Fire direction calls.

“O-1 is falling back with what is left of our tanks and infantry to a new position. C Battery will adjust fire there. We will give you target data and C Battery shifts for you to follow in case we need to fire the Battalion”.

“Roger”.

Now look at this scattered bunch of GIs wandering up our road, some with their M-1s and some without. I'll have to stop these guys. Before I could get to them, Colonel Browne roared up in a jeep and blocked the road. He jumps out and yells,

“Where do you think you are going?”

“Sir, our unit has been destroyed and we are out of ammunition and everything else. We are just exhausted and looking for a safe place”.

“Damn it, you are not going to run any further. Lieutenant Booker, can you feed these men? Get them armed, provide blankets and see that they shape up. Then load them in half tracks and take them to the 101st HQ in Bastogne”.

“Yes Sir, the kitchen has food ready and we have accumulated what they need from left over equipment along the way”.

“Lieutenant battalion fire direction is calling”.

“This is Baker 7. Over”.

“Baker 7 change your direction of fire to the northwest. I know you will have to crank up and move the M7s for a shift like this. Over”.

“I'll re-lay the battery. Out”.



The aiming circle was reset to the new firing direction and deflections called to each gunner who, after setting his sight, began to guide the M7 driver in backing and turning the tank. This is like threading a needle. The gunner gets the new line of sight to bear on the aligned two aiming stakes by moving the M7 itself. This has been done before many times in past combat, and over and over in practice. When accomplished each section called in the new base deflection to the CP and reported ready to fire.

“Chu Chu 3 this is Baker 7. Battery ready to fire. Over”.

I don't like our battery position. We are too near the band of trees to cover the approaches from the south. Making me more nervous is the terrible fact that there is no real defense against a Kraut attack from the south except us, and we aren't trained or armed to do such a job. Who the hell chose this position?

The lead sky is beginning to drop feathery snowflakes. I don't know whether this is good or not.

The wire crew jeep rolls up and they connect with the EE-8. Thank heaven, now we can talk directly to fire direction unmonitored. They answer my ring and the radio crackled.

“Chu Chu 3 this is O-1, we have tanks and infantry attacking our position. Fire Mission! Over”.

“O-1, we will adjust with Baker Battery. We have your location. Give us targets. Over”.

“Reference No 2, 200. Short”.

“100 right. Over”.

The telephone rings.

“Baker, Fire Mission. Base deflection right 70. HE. Fuse quick. Charge five. Adjust one gun elevation 280. Advise O-1 when you fire. Over”.

Now I ring the guns. All answer.

“Fire Mission. Base deflection left 70. Shell HE. Fuse quick. Charge five. Number 3, one round, elevation 280”.

The gunner sets the deflection on his sight and shifts the tube.

“Set”.

The number 1 man sets the elevation.



“Ready”.

The section chief reports to the XO.

“Read to fire”.

“Fire!”

The gun booms out.

“O-1 this is Baker 7. On the way over!”

“Roger. Out”.

“Baker 7, adjust 100 short. Fifty left. Fire for effect. Over”.

“Fire direction to Baker. Right 10. Elevation 285. Fire battery five rounds. Report on the way”.

“All gun sections. Right 10. Elevation 285. Fire battery five rounds. Report rounds complete”.

All hell booms out and this brings my excitement to a fever pitch.

“Lieutenant all sections have report rounds complete”, says Elwood.

“O-1, this is Baker 7. Five rounds complete. Over”.

The cordite odor wafts over the position.

“Baker 7, this is O-1. Right on target. It is raising hell. Can I have Battalion? Over”.

“O-1. This is Chu Chu 3, A and C Batteries are laid on target and have followed adjustments. We will give you Battalion. Five rounds. Out”.

“Hello Baker. Good shooting. Five more rounds of the same”.

“Will do”.

“Battery adjust. Repeat data. Five rounds. Report when complete”.

Holy mackerel those guns are roaring. The battalion response should give the krauts hell! I can hear their thundering explosions.



“O-1. This is Baker 7. Rounds complete. Out”.

The snow is coming down fast and it seems colder. There will be no air support.

“Booker, we are sending a team out at dusk in attempt to slip through the ring. They are to locate and bring back howitzer ammunition. The snow should help cover their exit. The Battalion is getting low on ammunition. I’ll be in touch. Keep blasting the bastards”.

“Yes sir”.

The XO crew had finished digging the CP trench and moving the radio, telephones and firing control devices inside. The new CP was shoulder deep and covered with logs and a tarp which will shortly be white with snow. We are lot safer dug in. A Bunsen burner is going and already has taken the chill off the inside.

The guns have finished their missions and all is calm, when suddenly the sound of incoming artillery screeches overhead and bursts on top of us. It scares the hell out of me. That must have been at least four rounds. More screeches and bursts. Pray that every one is in their fox hole. We all lay flat in the CP dugout. The phone rings.

“Section Three, we’ve been hit”.

Worley is out with his aid kit before I hang up. Number three section is close by. Thank God they haven’t repeated the last salvo. When I climb up on the tank tread and look over the side, I see Worley and the section chief huddled over the driver’s seat.

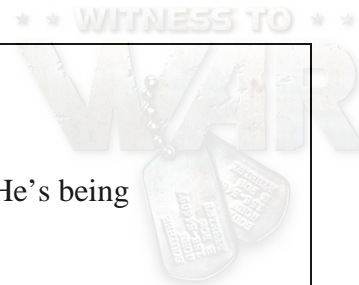
“It’s Young sir and it looks bad. I can’t get any blood pressure or pulse and he has a bad wound on his neck. I’ll try to stop the bleeding, Oh Hell, there is none. He’s gone, no use!”

Sergeant Allison looks at me with an agonized expression, his eyes fill up and tears begin to run down his face and freeze.

“Worley, get him out of the M7 and take him to the Battalion aid station. I’ll send the First Sergeant over with a jeep”.

I slid down and banged my head against the M7. But the tears still came as I returned to the CP in the haze of a heavy snowfall.

I said, “They got Young”, as I entered the CP. I cranked the EE-8 and got fire direction on the line.



“We have had heavy counter battery fire and one man has been killed. He’s being taken to battalion aid. Advise Baker battery commander”.

A soldier expects death but it is also unexpected. It’s never supposed to happen to you or yours. Young was a good driver and soldier. He and I were the only men in the battery, probably in the Battalion, from South Carolina and I couldn’t help but keep an eye on him. Until now this had been a glorious artillery day in spite of the snow. Now the glittering excitement was replaced with hard determination.

The CP flap opened and in walked the Battery Commander along with a gust of snow.

“Book, we’ve had a terrible loss but I know the battery can take it”.

“Yeah”.

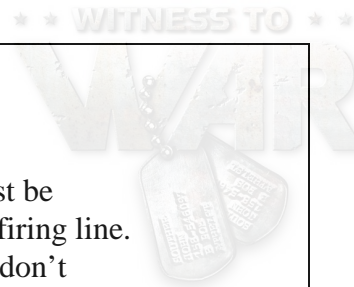
“Look, I know how concerned you are about the lack of defense in those woods to the south. Something is going to be done about it. Colonel Browne has gone to Combat B and the 101st HQ with the problem. I know we will have help if we can find the men. They are trying to set up a strong point defense all around Bastogne drawing the perimeter of the defense nearer the city. O-1 and the team he is with did a good job and our artillery was the main support. They drove the Nazi’s back with losses of their tanks and infantry during two attacks on our strong point. We were finally forced to withdraw with losses and wounded. Since night has finally come, things should be quiet until morning. I’m going back to HQ to see what news Colonel Browne has. It’s snowing damn hard. I’ll see you”.

“Elwood, let’s set up a gun chiefs meeting here for 2000. Garrison, will you notify the other chiefs?”

This has been one hell of a day. If it will just stop snowing, and clear up enough for us to get air support we just might make it. We have never needed or wanted their support before, but great heavens above we need it now. The men are exhausted and our ammunition is getting low and that is my greatest concern. The Krauts probably won’t attack at night. Besides they probably are licking their wounds after all the attempts to break through today. The telephone rings.

“Lieutenant Booker speaking”.

“Jim here. Browne is back and a defense is to be set up east to west along the woods. A Lieutenant Brown, along with a squad from the 101st is to be augmented by our battery commanders and one man from each section of each battery, plus one 50 caliber machine gun from each battery. They are to start digging in before dawn tomorrow and will leave their vehicles parked about your battery position. Hope this makes you feel better. I’ll see you in the morning”.



HQ must not have overlooked this vulnerability. Oh my aching back. They must be scraping the bottom of the barrel if they are putting battery commanders on the firing line. I'm glad I'm a battery XO. I wanted to become a BC but not now thank you. I don't think I'm the infantry type!

The section chiefs begin reporting in. Garrison reported all were squeezed in. I gave them an account of all that Jim had said and told them to select one man from each section to report to Captain Lane tomorrow at the band of woods with shovels and their weapons.

“Sir, what about our 105 ammunition? We are getting low”.

“We can't count on the team we hope slipped by the Krauts. If it clears up they can drop ammo to us. If it doesn't we will just have to sweat it out until the 3rd Army breaks through to us. I'm advised that it probably will stop snowing tonight and maybe clear up in a couple of days. What is your situation Sgt. Harford?”

“We will set up meals the same way as today. Also we are getting low on food supplies. Maybe two more days”.

“That's all except stay in your dugout or fox holes if we are not shooting”.

After they left Waltermehrer said, “I'll go for this section”.

I was surprised at the volunteer, but glad. Glad I didn't have to select somebody.

Now to doze. It will be a sleepless night after today.

December 19 - South of Bastogne

The defensive team began to dig in a line along the south side of the woods. Thank heavens it has stopped snowing, leaving about six inches on the ground. The ceiling is still dark gray but it is higher.

A crackle and the radio comes alive.

“Fire Direction, this is Able Recon. Over”.

“This is Fire Direction. Over”.

“Get ready for fire mission. Over”.

“Roger, Able Recon. Contact Baker 7 on this channel. Able and Charlie batteries are on mission. We have them on telephone and they are tied up. Out”.



“Baker 7 this is Able Recon. Over”.

“This is Baker 7. Over”.

“Fire Mission. Infantry and tanks. Reference six. 200 left. 300 short. Request phosphorus. Over”.

“Roger. Out”.

To the guns.

“ Prepare for Action. Battery Adjust. Shell white phosphorus. Charge five. Right 150. Number three one round elevation 260. Fire”.

“Able Recon this is Baker 7. On the way. Over”.

“Baker 7. 100 right. 100. Over”.

To the guns.

“Left 10. Shell HE. Elevation 255. Fire”.

“This is Baker 7. On the way”.

“Baker 7. Request fire for effect”.

To the guns:

“Battery four rounds. Fire”.

“Able Recon. On the way. Rounds complete. Over”.

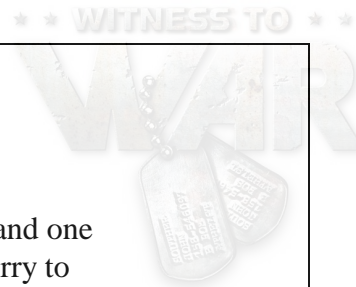
“Baker 7. On the money. Looks like two infantry companies plus two tanks. Infantry in white with the tanks painted white. Our artillery is tearing the infantry up. We’ll get the tanks with bazookas. They are hesitating, now they are falling back to quit or regroup. They are coming again. Repeat last fire for effect. Over”.

“Roger Able Recon. Out”.

To the guns:

“Battery five rounds. Elevation 255. Fire”.

“Able Recon. On the way over”.



“Baker 7, man they are running back, leaving white lumps on the snow and one tank on fire, that we got with bazookas. Don’t think they will be in a hurry to charge again. Out”.

I called all gun sections and gave them a blow by blow account of Baker Battery’s fire. This is a reward well deserved and they are pleased with their efforts to hurt the enemy. The sections are most competitive. Each wants to be the first to fire and the first to report rounds completed. I’m very proud of these brave and hard working cannoneers.

Our infantry defense strong point assembled this morning and began to dig in. Lieutenant Brown sent a paratrooper and got wire pulled from our CP to his.

Fire direction called and gave us the firing data for a target Charlie Battery was adjusting on. Then he called Baker in for five rounds battalion for effect. The men are near exhaustion. But what concerns me more is the 105 ammunition supply. It is low and there is little hope of any re-supply. It is getting dark and the rattle of small arms is slowing down, as is the snow.

The EE-8 rang.

“This is Brown, I presume you are Lieutenant Booker”.

“That is correct”.

“Well, we are pretty well dug in and I have sited the three 50 caliber machine guns and our 30 caliber machine gun so that we can take care of a direct infantry attack. It will probably be early tomorrow if it happens. They won’t do it at night. I know those characters pretty well. By the way, I’m the Adjutant of a 101st glider battalion. We’ve been through a lot with those bastards and being surrounded is not new for us”.

“That is good to hear and I’m relieved that we have a defense along those woods. I’ll convey any messages you have for the 101st HQ via our Battalion HQ. Good Luck!”

Now that it has stopped snowing it is turning colder. A cold front is apparently moving in. We are well fixed with tanker type overalls and zipper jackets. They are tan wool corduroy with a blanket like lining and knitted at the neck, ankles and wrists. With long johns and underwear our bodies stay warm but the hands and feet stay cold. Wool gloves and boots with two pairs of socks don’t contribute to real comfort.

It looks like a quiet night, if we don’t get any more counter battery fire. I curl up in our dugout and try to doze. I’m awakened by a telephone ring, it is Brown..



“I’ve checked the line and all are well dug in so I guess we are set”.

“Good”.

“I can hear the sounds of the enemy digging in so they mean business. No sounds from tanks, so I expect we are facing only infantry. I’ll call if I hear anything else”.

Time to snooze again.

December 20, 1944 - South of Bastogne

The EE-8 rang again and interrupted my snooze. I looked at my watch. It was 0100.

“Baker 7 here”.

“This is Brown again. I can’t sleep and I’m cold. Let’s chat.”

“OK”.

So we begin the story of our respective lives, covering education, home life, marriage, children, jobs, Army training and combat experience. It is now 0400. Our lives have been covered and we finally agreed to try and sleep”.

The battery began chow about 0700. I then inspected each section. Almost all had group dugouts now warmed by Bunsen burners. The men were in good spirits and enjoyed bragging about their action during the fire missions yesterday. However, they are concerned that the HE ammunition was so low. So am I, very!

It was 0830 and no fire missions when Brown called.

“The Germans are beginning to move toward us in a staggered line. They have white uniforms or sheets over them and their helmets have been painted white. I must say they blend well with the snow. I’m not going to fire our machine guns until they start firing or they are about half way to us. This is one awesome sight blended as they are with the snow. Now one squad starts firing while lying down and another dashes forward. We fire the 30 caliber machine gun and the 50’s join in along with individual weapons. Their charge is slowed down and confused. Our fire is wreaking hell with them. So much that they are withdrawing to their lines, leaving casualties and dragging some wounded with them. They may come again. I don’t believe we need any artillery support from the 420th yet”.

I report this action to HQ and before I finish, there is that terrible and unearthly screech of incoming artillery. They were firing for effect, having adjusted on the line of woods the day before yesterday. They must have fired forty rounds, some of which landed in our



battery. For the most, the shells exploded in the trees sending deadly fragments down on top of the men dug in along the tree line.

“Medic, Medic, WORLEY” come calls of desperation from the trees. Worley with his kit is out of the CP in a flash. The fight was heard all over Baker Battery. Sergeant Packard tears up to the trees with two empty ammunition half-tracks. Worley and the two medics are administering to the wounded. I call HQ, brief them on the action and ask to have our surgeon and medics stand by. The wounded would be brought down in our half-tracks. We do not need the ambulance. Then I pray that we don’t have another artillery attack. We didn’t, why I’ll never understand.

The two medics went with the wounded. Among the seriously wounded was Captain Kite. Battery Commander of Charlie Battery and our Waldermayher. Among the dead was Lieutenant Brown. I couldn’t believe it. My eyes flooded. Not the one that I became a buddy with this morning! A soldier came up carrying a .45 caliber pistol.

He saluted and said.

“I want to give this weapon to you. I was in Lieutenant Brown’s CP during all the time you two were carrying on like old friends. He thought a lot of you and I’m sure he would want you to have his weapon”.

All I could do was weakly return his salute while my eyes filled up with blinding tears. Oh God!

Why the krauts did not repeat their artillery fire I’ll never know, but they didn’t. we enjoyed a bit of peace and quiet which we were more than ready for.

A call from Fire Direction broke up our reveries.

“Baker 7, there is a fire mission coming for you. Able Battery is adjusting a mission and you will be called in on the battalion fire for effect. The target is infantry dug in”.

“Roger. Baker 7”.

Fire Direction called in the target location. The guns were given the firing data and then.

“Elevation 275. Six rounds. Fire!”

“On the way”.

Section Three calls in.

“Sir, we only have four rounds of HE left”.



“OK. All sections fire all your HE”.

To Fire Direction.

“Complete. NO HE left! I’ll report later”.

Boy are we in trouble. No HE rounds. All we have now is AP and red smoke. We need help. They will have to break the kraut ring or airdrop HE by parachute to us. We haven’t heard anything from the team sent to try and break thorough and bring back ammo. They are probably shot up or captured.

The clouds have risen higher and thinned out. Maybe we will have sun tomorrow and sorely needed air support. This quiet is hard to get used to after all the past firing and explosions.

“Elwood, I’m going to drop by all the sections. Listen out”.

“Yes sir”.

Other than we were out of HE and they were cold, all the gun sections were proud of the part they had played in our artillery performance. Sergeant Harford reported that he could scrape up enough food for maybe two more days. So be it!

Jim Lane appeared at the battery CP.

“I don’t know what’s next with our strong point. Get me the Battalion HQ”.

“I’d like to speak to Colonel Browne”.

“Colonel Browne, what happened with our strong point?”

“Yes, I was coming up there, this will save me. I’ve just returned from GCB and 101st HQ’s. We have decided to pull our defenses closer in. Have the paratroopers report to 101st HQ and all the others return to their units. You come down here. I want to move Baker Battery closer in so we will select another position. Understand?”

“Yes sir”.

Jim looked at me and said, “I’ll see you”, and disappeared leaving me full of questions and concern.



The men of our strong point had begun to flow down the road. Our cannoneers came home. It was a relief to learn that we have had only one of ours wounded. It was devastating to have lost Lieutenant Brown and Captain Kite wounded.

It was mid afternoon when Jim called.

“You are to move to the new position about dusk at 1700. Return on the same road you came in on. I’ll meet you about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile along it. The new position is open with vision in all directions. Any questions?”

“Later perhaps, we will get ready to move”.

“Sergeant Garrison, have all chiefs meet here in 15 minutes”.

When they assembled, I reported what Captain Lane had given me.

“You are to prepare for march order and we move out at 1700. Sergeant Harford can you serve chow and clean up by then?”

“I think so”.

“When we get there we will move into firing position in hopes that we get ammo. Dig deep foxholes and dugouts. Spend your time cleaning up and oiling the equipment since we won’t be in action right away. I’ll signal when it’s time to move out”.

By the time we packed up and ate supper it was time to move.

“March Order, Follow Me”.

“Turn ’em over”.

“Move Out”.

The column took a left and drove down the road for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and there was Jim waving to our right. We turned in and occupied the position in the customary fashion. I laid the battery. We established inter gun communication and the wire section connected our line to the battalion HQ. It was after dark by then. Soon all I could hear were shovels digging fox holes.

December 21, 1944 - Near Bastogne

Last night’s sleep was a blessing. I made myself struggle out of the warm sleeping bag to find it still dark. The crew was going to the kitchen truck for breakfast and Elwood returned with my mess kit filled with grits and dehydrated eggs. The coffee hits the spot.



Elwood said,

“Sergeant Harford said to tell you that from now on we would have to eat C Rations as his food supplies are gone. He is passing the word around”.

“Thanks Elwood”.

Now our food supply is exhausted along with the HE ammo. We’ll manage.

The XO crew had finished digging our dugout so we moved the fire direction equipment and communications into a fairly comfortable battery CP. The good news was that the clouds had lifted and thinned out. The sun was beginning to filter through. Then it burst through in spots, what a wonderful relief.

Suddenly we heard a faint motor noise which grew louder and louder. It was an aircraft, ours we prayed. Yes, it was a P-47 that broke through the ceiling. The entire battery came out of foxholes and waved and yelled. Hallelujah! The pilot swung low over our position, so low that we could see his face and recognized his thumbs up gesture as he wagged his wings to us. I’ll put this down as one of the most dramatic episodes of my life. Now in our hearts each of us knew that we could hold out with the air support that would be forthcoming. Thank God above.

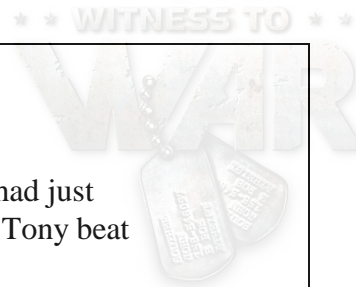
Then POP, and seconds later, WHAK, that is a mortar. POP and WHAK again. Then POP, POP, POP, WHAK, WHAK, WHAK, the fire for effect. Like alarmed rabbits we scurried for our holes. No one was hurt, but several blasts were scattered around our position. Then it became quiet again. I crawled out of the CP and searched the surrounding terrain with my binoculars, but I could not see the source.

I reported the counter battery mortar fire to the Fire Direction team. I told Major Benson that I had been unable to find the location of the weapon. He told me to lay low and they would get back to me.

In a short time, Lieutenant Tony Wojchowski drove up with his recon crew in a half-track. A mortar barrage began immediately. The recon crew crowded into our CP.

“Tony, I’ve been unable to locate those mortars. When you all get dug in we’ll talk”.

“They sent me down here thinking I could climb that transmitter tower at the edge of your battery position. They can see that tower from HQ and thought I might be able to climb it high enough to spot the mortars’.



In a bit the firing stopped and Tony ventured across the snow to the tower. He had just reached up to climb when, POP, WHAM, POP, WHAM the shells came in and Tony beat a hasty retreat to the CP.

He said,

“I can’t climb that thing without getting killed, so I’m not going to”.

I called Major Benson and reported the scare that Tony had gotten.

“Well you order him to climb up”.

“Major, I refuse to order Tony to climb to his certain death. Retract that order”.

“This is the Colonel’s idea. I’ll pass this on to him”.

“Tony, we agree that there will be no climb. Anyway if you did, chances are that their mortar position is so well hidden that you couldn’t find it”.

Very soon a jeep roared up with Colonel Browne. I came out of the CP and saluted.

“Sir, they have observation all over our position. We can’t move without drawing fire and I searched the area with my binoculars. I can’t find them.”

He didn’t answer and began to examine the area with his glasses.

POP.

“Colonel, lets get in the dugout”.

WHAM, it exploded beyond us. POP.

“Come on sir”.

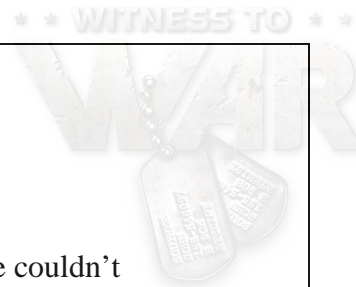
WHAM, this one fell short. I pulled his sleeve,

“Sir please!”

“You go, that is an order”.

So I did and barely fell into the CP before POP, POP, POP, POP, and then a pause followed by WHAM, WHAM, WHAM, WHAM as the shells exploded.

I looked out of the dugout in time to see Colonel Browne collapse.



“WORLEY the Colonel has been hit!”

I followed Worley out. He was taking the Colonel’s pulse. There was none. He couldn’t locate the wounds.

“Get him down to the battalion surgeon”.

We loaded him onto the jeep with Worley attending and they took off.

I called HQ.

“Alert the battalion surgeon this is an emergency. Colonel Browne has been seriously wounded. They are taking him to the aid station. Get back to me”.

They did.

“The Colonel is dead.”

My god, my god. The Colonel thought he was immortal and I had begun to believe he was. I couldn’t stop the tears from rolling down my face. What a terrible loss.

I fell into a reverie of the past - about three weeks ago. My dearest friend was the Baker Battery recon officer, Robert N. Bell. We were firing from this little town in Germany. The krauts were giving our tanks and infantry a hard time. Such that Colonel Browne was desperately trying to get observation on the enemy so our artillery could be directed on them. He selected what he thought was a likely observation point from the map and ordered Bell there.

Bell and crew took off in a half-track. The route took them across a vale and as they started up the hill an antitank German gun had a perfect target and hit the vehicle broadside. I was called from the aid station and hurried there. Recon Corporal Heiss lay stretched out on a cot with a wound in one side and another in his arm. Robert Bell was stretched out in a small room, dead. I cried hard and an aid man walked me to a seat where through my tears I saw Colonel Browne come in and walk over to Corporal Heiss.

“Corporal you are a hero. I’ll pin medals on you for this”.

“You can take your medals and stick them up your ass”.

At first I let my grief for Bell interfere with my respect and admiration for Colonel Browne. However, as the days went by, I realized that he was doing his duty as he saw it and one of his most important jobs was to see that the artillery had sufficient observation. I couldn’t help but think it was ironic that the Colonel should die under these circumstances.

HQ called me and I listened a bit. Then I turned to Tony,

“We are to evacuate this position”.

I called all gun sections.

“Prepare for march order, Pass the word to all vehicles. The usual order of march. Vehicles to leave site at two minute intervals. Lieutenant Wojchowsky will lead and be shown our new position by Captain Lane”.

“March Order. Lead off, Tony boy”.

As soon as the first M7 moved off the POP, WHAM of mortar fire began again. The krauts undoubtedly hated to see their shooting gallery move out and scattered their rounds all over the place. It only helped to spur everyone’s departure. When the maintenance truck passed by, I followed in the XO half-track. Nobody was hit, now to calm down my goose pimples.

When we arrived at the new position, Tony was already laying the battery. We’ll be ready to shoot if ammo comes in. This is like pointing an empty gun at a burglar.

Much to my surprise we were only about fifty yards from the battalion HQ. HQ was in a two story building whose walls were thick stone and it appeared to be an old structure. Our position was on the edge of Bastogne, but we still had an open field of fire. To our north and east were woods. Below us and to the north is Charlie battery and this is the first time we knew another battery’s position. The road we turned in on continued by our position, down a slope and passed by Charlie Battery. Everyone dug foxholes immediately. No longer did Sergeant Garrison have to check up on that



Captain Shanks, CO Service Battery, Me and Colonel Crittenberger



Captain Lane dropped by and announced he would spend the night in the XO Command Post dugout. I think he is still shook up from the artillery barrage that hit our “strong point” in the woods before.

After a few hours of clear skies, welcomed night came. Sergeant Garrison put out our guards. Later he and Sergeant Harford came by the CP to say that Harford had found an abandoned bakery in town and had loaded up the jeep with sacks of flour, lots of it. Harford planned to fix a meal of pancakes for mid-morning and during mid-afternoon each man would be issued C rations. Would that be OK? “Of course, that’s great”. He would also heat a GI can of water in the morning so the men could shave. Judging from my itching beard we all could use it.

Tony and I moved our sleeping bags into the blacked out half-track and crawled in, hoping to find sleep.

December 22, 1944 Bastogne, Belgium

What a relief to awake and see the sunrise flashing through the trees and a sky free of clouds. Small arms fire rattled and tank fire sounded around the distant perimeter. The weapons fire was surpassed by the sound of aircraft that increased until they circled over and around us at about 2,000 feet with a roar. Some 20 P-47’s spread out and hunted armored vehicles. It was easy to tell when they found a target - they dove down at about a 30° angle and fired their rockets. When they hit a tank there was a resounding explosion. Most of the action was along the east/west highway, north of Bastogne, along which was the main enemy drive. This spectacle was watched by all the Battery. What a show. It was like being a spectator at a gladiatorial event. So far anti-aircraft fire had not been brought to bear on our planes.

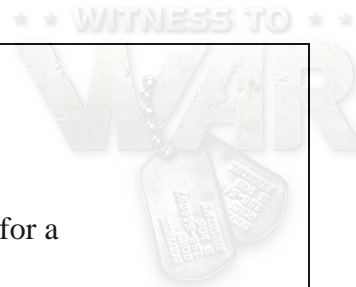
Elwood answered the telephone.

“It’s for you, Captain Lane”.

“Baker CO here. OK, I’ll be there. There is a Battery Commanders call at HQ now. As soon as I shave I’m off”.

Captain Lane left. It was 0830.

The men were either shaving or writing letters. That means before dark the First will collect lots of letters and bring them to us to censor and if we ever get out of this mess, to be mailed. All out going mail had to be read by officers who signed in the left corner, having snipped out any security violations. Not much snipping this time since the world knew where we were and what we were doing. No one likes this requirement of having personal matters read by a third party. But mail flow was necessary for morale and so we subscribed reluctantly.



Jim called in about an hour and asked all section chiefs assemble at Battery CP for a briefing.

Jim began by saying that Major Crittenberger was now the Battalion Commander and went on to say how devastated the Major was by the death of Colonel Browne. That he knew the entire Battalion shared his view. That he also knew we were aware of our serious situation. We were surrounded, but the 101st had set up strong points around our perimeter and we were expected to hold on until help arrived led by the 4th Armored Division. Although CCB tanks and infantry were practically destroyed, the CCB had held off numerous armored thrusts for 30 hours, which gave the 101st time to get set up. He wants each man to know what a critical part he played in defending Bastogne during this time and the part the artillery contributed toward slowing down and stopping the enemy. If we hadn't hit them with our heaviest fire they would have broken in. But as a result we are out of HE ammunition. If they were to break through now, we have vehicle mounted 50 caliber for infantry fire and M7 direct 105 fire along with our bazookas for anti-tank work. Now for the good news. We will have a re-supply air drop this afternoon!

“Now Sergeant Packer, get two of your half-tracks and the men you need. Be ready to grab all you can. The drop zone is marked for the aircraft and is about 100 yards south of us in a vacant field. Good Luck!”

“What is it that you want to say Sergeant Harford?”

“Captain, the pancakes are ready. Each section should send one man up at a time. We are going to have plenty”.

The men were fed what was a delicious treat after all the menus of C rations. Jim and Tony followed the men and brought me a mess kit full of pancakes all covered with delicious orange marmalade, which Harford had found somewhere.

Distant machine gun and rifle fire continued, with occasional explosive sounds, along the north side of the Bastogne perimeter. The P-47s roared and circled overhead. They would sight a target and fire, cutting loose one or two rockets whose fiery trail was usually at about 45 degrees and often followed by an explosion when the rocket found the target. The clear weather made this possible and the P-47s were making the enemy blitz a costly one. They were suffering.

About mid-afternoon we heard the faint sound of aircraft approaching from the south. The sound increased and then the Kraut anti-aircraft began exploding in black puffs, which increased as the DC-3 armada approached. Oh my God one is hit, starts down and two white parachutes open. The approach descends from about 2,000 feet, 1,000 feet and then 500 feet, leveled off over the drop zone and airmen began pushing packages out the door. We were close enough to see this action and red, yellow and green chutes began to cover the sky.



Sergeant Packer and his crew tear through on the way to the drop zone. They loaded up and returned with the half-track flowing full to the center of the battery position where strong backs unwrapped the manna. The red chute brought ammunition, the yellow gasoline, and the green, C and K rations and first aid supplies. The red crates did not have 105 ammo and this is what we needed most. We reported this omission to the Battalion. They did not seem to surprised and told us to convey what we didn't need or use to the Bastogne HQ. No 105 ammo was a devastating disappointment! Here we were, armed with an empty gun yet again.

Night fell on the snow-covered position. It was terribly cold, especially for the hands and feet. Fortunately each vehicle has a gas fired Bunsen burner which managed to keep the dugouts fairly warm.

December 23, 1944 Near Bastogne, Belgium

Another cold day but the sky is clear blue. The *hornets* began work early. The action remained north of us but was more to the east than yesterday. The krauts were pulling back. Enemy artillery began out going over us, landing south of Bastogne.

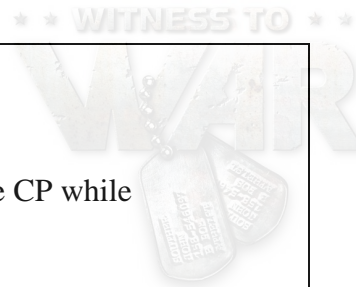
“Tony, that means that the relief drive is in enemy artillery range, their firing coming from the north to the south.”

“Yeah man, the 4th Armored relief point is getting closer to Bastogne! That must be why we haven't had any tank attacks from the south. They have sent all the armored on the south side in an attempt to stop the 4th's drive. The only attack we have had there were by artillery and infantry and they weren't determined or sustained. They did force Baker Battery to abandon two sites and made our perimeter defenses pull back. That turned out to be to our advantage”.

“Well, I suppose I will always feel bad about the Colonel getting killed in our battery position, it was so unnecessary. But what could I have done. If only I could have found a way to make him get in our CP hole, he would be here today”.

“Book, try not to think about that. You couldn't order him in the CP. He should have known better than to stand there after you were zeroed in. He was a professional soldier and I guess they have to always be fearless or at least show it. Just thank God you are alive. Remember he ordered you to get in the CP dugout. He saved your life”.

“You're right, I know, and the war will go on without him. Fortunately Crittenberger is our new battalion CO. He is trained for it and has experience in combat now. He is strong and available and we all respect his leadership qualities.”



“By the way, Jim went to HQ to find out the latest poop. Hold down the CP while Sergeant Garrison and I do the rounds and chat with the troops”.

All the men expressed their concern that we were out of ammo and out of the fight. We could hear the noises of combat and yet couldn't do anything about it. The morale was good. I was proud of them.

Tony walked out of the CP when we got back.

“The Battalion Commander called from HQ to tell us that four Nazis came to the 101st under a white flag. They were blindfolded and led to General McAuliffe at HQ. They gave us two hours to reply before they blasted Bastogne to hell. They were arrogant. General McAuliffe listened and said ‘Nuts’. The enemy didn't understand and asked again for surrender. McAuliffe repeated ‘Nuts’. They left shaking their heads”.

“The bad news is that there will be no airdrop today. I'll walk around the battery and pass the news on to everyone. OK?”

Damn, no airdrop. Actually all we really need is artillery ammo. Anyway the battery has great pancakes to ease their disappointment and the men are writing lots of letters. Wow, we will be doing a lot of censoring tonight!

The XO crew sat around on our half-track and watched the air show. We wondered why heavy caliber ack ack didn't respond to the P-47 attacks, but they didn't. One P-47 did get hit by small arms fire and crashed in flames. A terrible thing to see. Those guys really had guts. It made me glad that I couldn't pass the eye exam and become a pilot.

The day began to wind down. But it was getting colder. Cold as hell!

December 23, 1944 Bastogne, Belgium

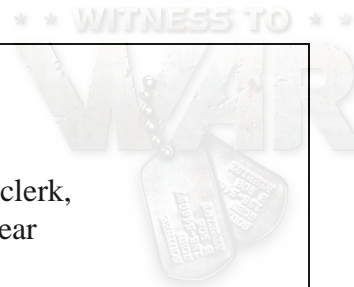
I woke up with Elwood gently shaking me. The sun was bright.

“Lieutenant it is 0800”.

“Oh, my aching back. I guess I missed reveille”.

“Sergeant Garrison already took care of that”.

Before combat we normally had an 0530 reveille formation held by the Battery Officer of the Day. In combat, it now consisted of the First going by each section and verifying that all were present and that no one was injured or sick. If the “sick” didn't have a fever they got two aspirin. If they had fever they would be sent to the battalion aid station. So far no one had fever. All of this was noted on a daily log and sent back to the battery clerk



whenever the mail clerk paid the battery a visit. Both the battery clerk and mail clerk, along with the supply Sergeant, remained with the unit records at the Division rear support echelon.

The sky was without clouds, a beautiful blue, but it was cold! The P-47s were up and buzzing like hornets. Their noise mixed with the petrifying sound of small arms fire, it was a scene and sound we had become accustomed to.

This combat without participating was difficult to adjust to. Normally we moved to a new position each day or so as we followed the progress of the tanks and infantry, always keeping them in range of artillery support. Usually Ace Fowler flying the Battalion Piper4 selected our targets. Ace would spot the targets, report their location to us. We'd fire a first round of adjustment using white phosphorous, when he saw the white blossom he would give the directions to hit the enemy. We were spoiled, always in a fight. The present situation didn't allow the safe use of the Piper 4. The enemy had too much Ack Ack concentrated around Bastogne. I'll bet Ace is soothing his disappointment with Scotch.

“Lieutenant”, Sergeant Packard pulled his half-track beside the CP, and cut off its motor. “Do you hear what I hear?”

“I hear the faint sound of aircraft. Are you ready?”

Soon the sound increased and black Ack Ack began exploding to the south and the DC-3s began to appear and through the barrage, heading again to the drop zone.

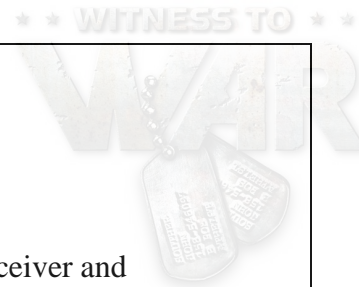
“Oh my God, one is on fire and falling out of formation”.

On the aircraft came. The planes descended to 500 feet and began unloading. Multicolored chutes bloomed over the drop zone. Sergeant Packard had already left for the pick up. We can see the airmen pushing the crates out of the cargo door. Somehow they managed not to fall out.

A west wind had come up and few of the chutes drifted to the side of the drop zone into kraut hands. The last cargo plane flew over and was gone. Those guys are certainly gutsy.

Sergeant Packard returned and began unloading and uncrating. Again we received no 105 ammo. It is just too disappointing. Have they forgotten us? This has become scary. Do something Booker!

“Sergeant Garrison, will you and Worley jeep to Combat Command B and see if what if anything you can do at the hospital. See about Sergeant Cohen and Captain Kite”.



Off they went.

Our communications Sergeant Jenkins has been using this lull to get our FM receiver and transmitter tuned to his satisfaction. He has a Corporal and driver with jeep and cable reels to look after. His biggest problem was the cable between the Battalion HQ and our XO CP. The corporal started laying the cable immediately as we entered a battery position. This telephone cable was laid on the ground and subject to breaks from vehicles or incoming artillery and required constant repairs. Radio or telephone communications, preferably both, were most critical to our function. Give Sergeant Jenkins and his crew great credit. He rides in the XO half-track where he can look after the radio.

“Sergeant Jenkins, how are you managing all this free time?”

“It is great especially after what we went through at the last site. Remember how far it was from our CP to HQ? Well it was about 1.5 miles and passed through an open field and the German’s artillery was constantly breaking our wire. One time we were splicing wire and a huge barrage fell on us. No foxholes! I hope and pray that I have no more of that excitement”.

“There shouldn’t be any trouble like that here. Just keep us communicating. We might get some ammo”.

Sergeant Garrison and Worley returned.

“They didn’t need anymore aid men and they had one nurse who lived in Bastogne helping 24 hours a day. What they need are doctors, especially surgeons, medical supplies and equipment. HQ said they were sending in people and equipment by towed glider. Captain Kite is O.K. but does need surgery. Sergeant Cohen and a few other wounded left Bastogne by ambulance. They didn’t know if they were captured or not”.

Another cold night was on us. Tony and I will do some mail censoring and call it a day.

December 24, 1944 Bastogne, Belgium

The day began well with the distribution of a Christmas Greeting from General McAuliffe, which he had mimeographed in sufficient quantities so that each man was to get one. He thanked each man and unit for the determination and courage displayed and briefed everyone regarding the Germans’ surrender terms. They gave him two hours to decide, if he refused the Germans would destroy Bastogne. The Germans had four Panzer divisions, two infantry divisions and one parachute division surrounding Bastogne. McAuliffe’s reply was ‘Nuts!’

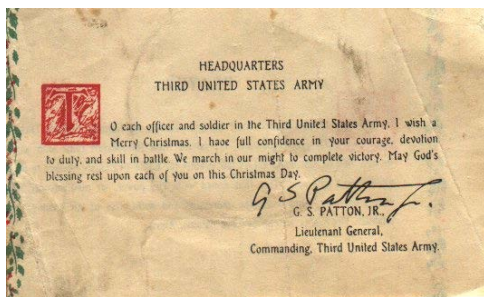
“Hey Tony, I’ll bet the ‘Nuts’ dumbfounded the Germans”.

“Yep, notice they haven’t followed up on our destruction as they promised”.

“That is probably because our relief is making advances and they have their hands full with the 4th Armored. Anyway, I thank the General for wishing us a Merry Christmas. It is a present just to be in one piece”.

“Hey Lieutenant, I brought you one of these knowing you would want to save it”.

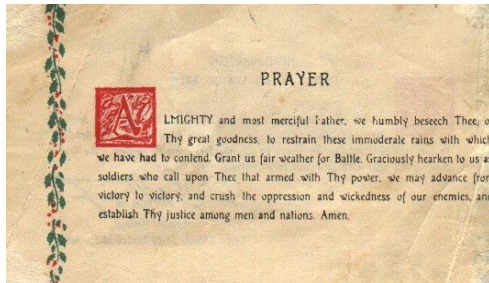
It was Holmes and he handed me a small piece of paper that turned out to be a Christmas Greeting from General Patton. On one side it read,



“To each officer and soldier in the Third United States Army, I wish a Merry Christmas. I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We march in our might to complete victory. May God’s blessing rest upon each of you on the Christmas Day.”

*“G. S. Patton Jr. Lieutenant General,
Commanding, Third United States Army.”*

On the other side was a prayer.



Almighty and most merciful father we humbly beseech Thee of Thy great goodness to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen”.

“Many thanks Holmes, I sure will keep it”.

Other than being miserably cold, it was a beautiful clear blue-sky day. The sound of small arms and machine guns continued coming from around the perimeter of Bastogne. The P-47s continued hunting and rocketing the German armor. It was a weird Christmas Eve. The men did what little there was to do and they mostly tried to stay comfortable and warm. The morale was good, but everyone felt vulnerable because of the lack of HE ammo. I wished for the odor of cordite and the sound those 105s banging at the enemy.

A big morale factor for us all is the daily meal of pancakes. Jim Lane brought our new battalion commander down to sample the treat. Crittenberger expressed his enjoyment and appreciation to Sergeant Harford and his crew.



There will be no sky drop today. Not that it makes any difference to us, since it was clear that 105 ammo would not be included even, if there was a drop.

Everyone is rather gloomy knowing that we would not even get mail and thinking largely about our love ones, knowing they would be without us on Christmas. As a result the battery is writing “tons” of mail which we will have to censor. At least Generals Patton and McAullife remembered us.

Before dark, Tony and I made a visit to each section and wished them Merry Christmas. We returned to the CP dugout and it was nice and warm. It is remarkable how effective those little gasoline stoves are.

Elwood shooke me awake.

“Lieutenant, do you hear aircraft?”

I crawled out of the CP and aircraft sounds were becoming louder.

“Hey Tony, wake up and get out here! Are those our aircraft?”

“No way, ours haven’t any business here at night. Those are Nazi”.

“They are coming right over us and heading for the town! You can see their exhausts as they pass over”.

Then a series of explosions began to erupt, lighting up the night.

“Those Krauts are bombing Bastogne city. There were at least six planes that passed over us”.

“I counted five”.

“Damn it to Hell, those bastards”.

We could see the results above the tops of the trees. Flames were breaking out from the wreckage. The Kraut motors faded out.

“They got away without a shot being fired at them!”

“Sergeant Garrison take Hurley and jeep down town and see if you can help”.

They left us confused and frustrated and scared.

“Book, it looks like they are carrying out their threats by bombs instead of ground attacks. Without warning too.”

“Yeah, the bastards must have figured out what Nuts meant. I believe its over but call the sections and tell them to stay in their foxholes until we give an all clear”.

“No doubt there will be lots of civilian casualties too, the SOB’s!”

By the time Sergeant Garrison got back we had calmed down a little.

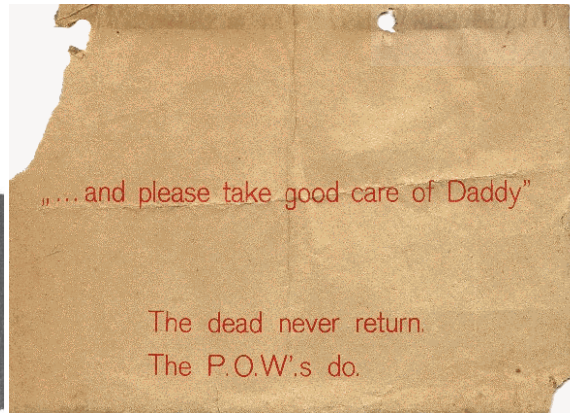
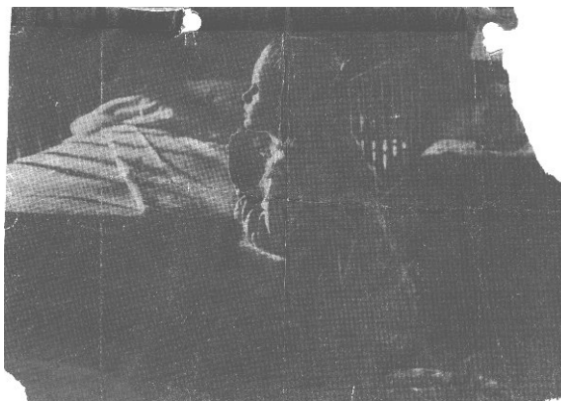
“Lieutenant they hit the center of town and it is a wreck. The temporary hospital was blasted. I counted twelve of our wounded pulled out dead along with the nurse. Captain Kite was killed, Waldermeyer is O.K. Don’t know about the civilian damage. They have plenty of help and don’t need anymore”.

“Sergeant, I’ll call the gun sections and will you give the others the story”.

“Well Tony, we should try to get some sleep. What a Christmas Eve this has turned out to be. Oh my aching back”.



Myself and German Propaganda Cannister

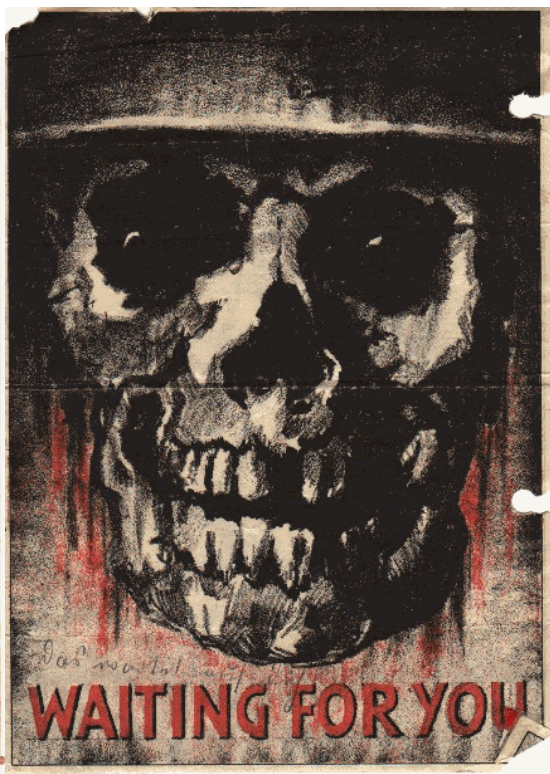


„... and please take good care of Daddy”

The dead never return.
The P.O.W.'s do.



LONGING FOR YOU



Das warst du
WAITING FOR YOU



I'm sitting on top of the world

SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD ARE YOU?

CERTAINLY NOT! BUT PRISONERS OF WAR ARE. Why?

BECAUSE, THEY LIVE IN PERFECT SAFETY.

BECAUSE, THEY HAVE THREE SQUARE MEALS A DAY.

BECAUSE, THEY RECEIVE MEDICAL CARE FROM AMERICAN DOCTORS AND DENTISTS.

BECAUSE, THEY ARE BEING ATTENDED TO BY AMERICAN CLERGYMEN OF ANY DENOMINATION.

BECAUSE, THEY HAVE THEIR OWN THEATRES, THEIR OWN MOVIES, THEIR OWN JAZZ-BANDS.

BECAUSE, THEY HAVE SPORTING-GROUNDS AND GYMNASIUMS.

BECAUSE, THEY CAN CHOOSE TO WORK OR STUDY. EXTENSIVE LIBRARIES ARE AT THEIR DISPOSAL.

BECAUSE, ALL IN ALL, THEY MANAGE THEMSELVES. AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

BECAUSE, GERMANY STRICTLY ADHERES TO THE GENEVA CONVENTION.

NO WONDER, THEY ARE SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD, LOOKING AT THE WAR FROM AFAR. MINDFUL OF THE OLD AMERICAN SLOGAN:

SAFETY FIRST!

MADE IN GERMANY. IF YOU SEND THIS LETTER HOME AS SOUVENIR, READ IT CAREFULLY WE KNOW THAT IT IS IN HEAVY DEMAND IN USA. UP TO 20-8 BEING PAID PER IT.

Hi Yank

Let's talk turkey. We are lying opposite each other in dirty ice-cold foxholes and we like it as little as you do. But it is "one of them things".

We don't give a damn what you've come over here to fight for, whether it's Poland, Roosevelt and Morgenthau or even better hot dog stands and ice cream sodas.

You know damn well from your own letters that everything back home is going to the dogs. The only guys getting a rake off are the Johnny 4 F's.

Your own position over here is getting worse every day.

Your politicians asked for a war and now YOU are going to get it. Fresh divisions of men, hordes of new tanks and endless columns of guns are moving up to the front. But it isn't that which counts, it's the indomitable spirit of men fighting on their own soil, defending their home and family which will deliver the knock out blow.

We don't want anything from you. We know that you and your buddies are fed up to the gills. Why don't you pack your bag and beat it? Don't be afraid — we won't follow you but, do something to finish this bloody show.

If you want us to, we'll help you.

Yours
Jerry

December 25, 1944 Bastogne, Belgium

I had just laced up my boots when I heard a machine gun firing and Sergeant Harford burst into the CP.

“Lieutenant, they are shooting up my kitchen, what should I do?”

Sergeant Harford was so excited the words just tumbled out. I looked out and Oh My God tracer bullets were streaking though the canvas top of the kitchen truck.

“Move the kitchen truck to the battery entrance!”

“Elwood, get the bazooka and rocket ammo, I’ll be with you!”

“Battery adjust, Kraut tank approaching kitchen. All sections crank up, Number Two section, target tank. Direct Fire. Shell AP. Fire at Will!”

Running toward the kitchen location, we see that Harford has moved the truck.

“Elwood do you remember how to load the bazooka?”

“Yes sir, I think so”.

“Follow me, you are the loader”.

The tank comes in sight and I flop flat out on the snow. Elwood lands behind me.

“Pat my butt when you’ve made the rocket connection”.

I try to sight on the tank.



Blam! Crash!

I look to the left and there’s one of our tanks firing point blank at the Kraut tank.

Blam! Crash!

Direct hits and the Kraut tank has stopped with it’s turret askew. Out file two soldiers. “Kammerad,



kammerad” their arms held above their heads. Our tank command yelled “*Komen zie hier*” and they did.

“Number Two, Cease Firing”

There is only one tank, no infantry accompanying it, thank God. Elwood unloaded the bazooka. We got up and brushed off the snow. My heart was thumping.

“How do you feel?”

“Scared”.

“You aren’t alone!”

“I’m going over to Section Two. You can put this tin pipe up”.

Section Two was turned around but had not laid a sight on the tank.

“Lieutenant we got cheated ‘cause we were going to kill the bastard!”

“Well it is probably best that the experts did the job. You can unload now, move back in position and I will get you laid in battery”.

“Cut your motors, mission ended”.

“What are all those papers scattered all over the place Sergeant?”

“These are German propaganda leaflets dropped by the bombers last night. I picked up a few and they are interesting”.

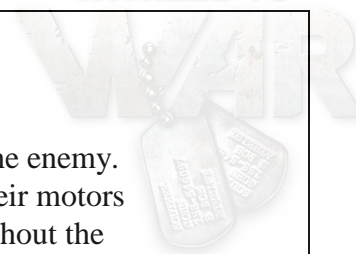
“Hey Book, Captain Lane is on the phone!”

“Book here”.

Captain Lane said “I just heard that you tried to kill a tank!” and he laughed.

“Well, I was going to try but our own tank beat me to it, which is just as well. I probably would have missed it. I only fired a bazooka one time in training and missed the target”.

“We have the word from Division headquarters now. They attacked the paratroopers lines early this morning. About six tigers and a company of infantry. Our guys shot up all the infantry and managed to kill four tanks. The other two kept going without support and got to Charlie Battery below you where they lost another. The last tank kept going and wound up in our battery. CCB heard about



the action and sent our tank to investigate. It got there in time to blast the enemy. CCB had kept the last of our tanks on hold at HQ. Two of them kept their motors idling so that they could answer fire calls anywhere on the perimeter without the delay of cranking up in freezing temperatures”.

“Well thanks Jim. Merry Christmas. I’ll pass this on to the battery”.

“Tony wipe that grin off your face”.

“Booker the tank killer!”

“Well anyway you can’t say I missed it. Merry Christmas to you and the XO crew. I going to each section and repeat Jim’s call”.

At each section the men listened to my report of Jim’s account with rapt interest. They were full of questions.

“When will the mail get here, when will we get rations, when will we get HE ammo and will there be another air drop?”

I could only answer,

“No more air drops. The rest of you questions will have to wait until the 4th breaks through and that is expected within two days”.

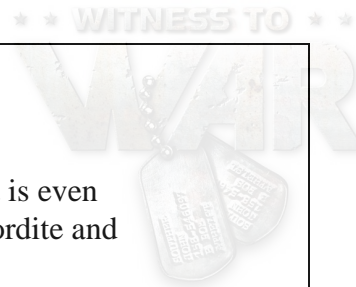
All expressed their regrets regarding Captain Kite’s death. He was well liked.

The gun sections were spending some of this time “training up”. All of the gunners key the chief’s job. The Number one men were training as gunners and the number twos were training as number ones. The guns and equipment were all cleaned up. The men were writing letters, playing cards and sleeping. One man in each section was on guard day and night. Almost every section had made an effort for Christmas spirits with cans and parts of parachutes decorating small trees or limbs. Their thoughts and hearts were far away with their loved ones at home. It is a Christmas Day that we will always remember. A Christmas that is very white and very, very cold.

The P-47s continued their attacks until dusk. We could hear the distant small arms fire which meant the killing continued around the perimeter.

Tony and I crawled into the XO CP, censored mail, shot the bull and finally slid into our warm bedrolls.

December 26, 1944 Bastogne, Belgium



It is another very cold morning, making it hard to get out of the sleeping bag. It is even harder getting up knowing we will not be firing our 105s. I miss the smell of cordite and the bang of the guns.

Sergeant Garrison came crunching through eight inches of snow.

“Lieutenant, Worley wants to jeep down to the Division aid station and see if he can help out. OK?”

“OK, you can drive him down”.

By this time the sun was well up and the small arms fire has begun again, but this time it is moving to the east which means the Germans are falling back. Their artillery fire has stopped passing over us.

It wasn't long before the First Sergeant and Worley drove up.

“We have great news. The advance elements of the 4th Armored have broken through and relieved the 101st. Main elements along with fresh 3rd Army divisions are attacking the German advances. We've been relieved! Also good news, five doctors and three medics were flown in this morning and crash landed with their gliders intact along with equipment and medical supplies.”

“Oh my aching back, that is great news. I'll telephone it to the guns if you will pass it on to the rest of the battery”.

December 27, 1944 Bastogne, Belgium

I awoke to the sounds of bursting artillery shells to the east of Bastogne. It was 0700, time to leave the warm rack.

Sergeant Garrison completed his morning section check and reported. Tony crawled out of his sleeping bag.

The EE-8 sung.

“Baker 7 here”.

“Book, Crit and I are going to check out possible sites for relocating the battalion. I'll back to you”.

“Roger”.

I gathered the section chiefs and told them the news. All were to prepare for the move later today. All wanted to know about mail, ammo and the food supply. I could only say,



'I don't know'.

Tony and I stood watching the aerial show as it moved to the east. Suddenly there was a rattle of machine gun fire and a British aircraft banked over us, clearly showing the British target like identification. At the same time a P-47, at about 1,500 feet, went into a steep dive. As the plane rolled over, the canopy slid open and it looked as if it had fallen from the plane. It wasn't the canopy, but the pilot who was falling.

"Tony, look!"

"Yeah, why doesn't he pull his chute ring? He's falling and his arms and legs aren't moving."

"My God he's not going to open his chute!"

The pilot hit the ground with a thud about half way between our battery and HQ.

"Sergeant Garrison send Worley up there. No one else".

Worley had nothing to report. The poor pilot just made an impression in the snow. War is just hell.

Jim called.

"Book that was a captured British aircraft flown by a kraut who snuck in and got a shot at our P-47. I'm sorry I witnessed that".

"So am I".

We had calmed down a little by the time Jim called to say that we were to move out to the new position at 1600. That gave the battery plenty of time to be ready. Jim answered most of my questions. After I hung up I had all the chiefs assemble and repeated the instructions from the Battalion Commander.

"We move about two miles and go into a firing position without HE available. CC B is no longer in battle condition. Within two days they expect to get mail and rations to us. We move out in the usual order following the Battery Commander. Sergeant Garrison will be the last vehicle to depart in his jeep".

There were no questions.

The Battle of the Bulge is over for us. Soon the BC passes by.

"Crank them up. Follow Me!"