



MY MILITARY CAREER

(SOME REMEMBRANCES OF SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II)

by William J. Newman

As recalled in September 1994



THE BULGE AND THE BIG FREEZE

The 95th was pulled out of Saarlautern in January and sent to Luxembourg to help close down the German breakthrough in the Ardennes.

The weather had cleared but it was bitterly cold with snow on the ground. Our trucks did some slipping and sliding on the move. Our "C" rations (cans of hash, stew or beans and bacon) had frozen in our packs. I had liberated a German bayonet and tried to chop through my C ration but could not chip it.

On one of our stops I noticed some of the truck drivers were opening the truck hoods and taping their canned ration to the engine block. This melted the food just enough to be able to chop it out of the can and melt the rest of it in your mouth before chewing or swallowing. Eventually we were able to enjoy food provided for our picnic in the park.

As we neared the battle zone we began to see a few burned out Tiger tanks and many, many more destroyed U. S. Sherman tanks. Our tanks never were a match for the German tanks. Our only chance was to outnumber them about 4 to 1. Then we might prevail.

There was plenty of snow in the Ardennes. There were also some beautiful estates set back off the roads, many with long, winding driveways leading up to the main house. These estates were abandoned. And they were frigid. We settled into one and started a fire in the fireplace but quickly used up our supply of wood.

A couple of us went out to scout for more wood. On the side of the driveway coming up from the main road, I saw a pile of small to medium branches. We started to pull the branches off the pile, shaking the snow off as went.

As we got near the bottom of the pile we saw what looked like part of a German uniform. We removed the rest of the branches more carefully. Under it all was the body of a young German soldier frozen and perfectly preserved, his cheeks still pink, his uniform and body looking like he had just gone to sleep after a dress parade.

I believe we all thought that this could have been me. I also thought that his buddies tried to give him a send off that would keep his body from being mutilated by trucks and would eventually be given a proper burial.

I'll never forget that scene.