



MY MILITARY CAREER

(SOME REMEMBRANCES OF SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II)

by William J. Newman

As recalled in September 1994



THE NIGHT MISSION

We were closing the Ruhr pocket faster each day. There was a feeling that the Germans were close to quitting.

Not often were we sent forward to attack at night. (Daylight attacks are usually pretty confused. Night attacks are a total comedy of errors.) The high command must have had its reasons this night because in a drizzly black darkness, our infantry battalion went against the enemy. We were working with C Company and were in reserve. A and B Companies attacked.

Some time that night we were told to move ahead of A Company and achieve an objective. As we moved forward there was a brief fire fight up the road we were traveling. The firing stopped and we first sensed and then could dimly make out GI's laying in the ditches beside the road. I heard a voice whisper, "What outfit are you?" I knew the voice. It was Johnny Bonds the captain's runner from A Company. (Our forward team alternated assignments between A and C Companies and I got to know Sgt. Bonds real well.) I told him who we were and asked what had happened. He said they had run into a German patrol. They had fired at each other but couldn't see how many were in the patrol or whether they hit any of them. He said the Germans quickly stopped firing. Johnny said the captain was keeping his men down until they could determine what to do next.

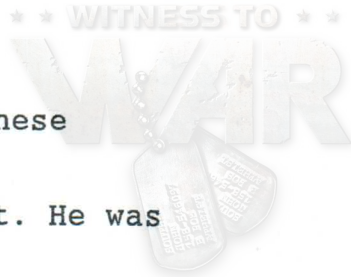
Our captain had an objective to reach so we moved reluctantly past A Company down the road which A Company preferred not to go. Not too far down the road off to our right we could hear, "Sepsene jahre, vervounded." "Seventeen years old, I'm wounded." It was repeated over and over as we marched as silently as possible past what could have been an enemy position. There was no way we would go off that road to see if it was a trick or that this soldier really needed help.

With no interruption we reached our objective a small village about a mile further down the road. We secured our position for the night and tried to get a little sleep.

Our infantry captain was stirring about asking his men, "Where the h___ is A Company? We were supposed to meet them here." Without realizing the consequences I said, "Sir, they are about a mile back down the road." He said, "Are you sure?" I told him I was positive as I had spoken to their captain's runner as we walked past them. He asked me, "Do you think you could find them and bring them up here?" I said, "No problem."

The captain gave me 6 infantrymen and told them that I was going back and bring up A Company. They were to be my protection. As we headed back a couple of my escort told me in no uncertain terms that I was crazy for volunteering and now putting them in danger.

Talk about whistling through a graveyard. We just about tiptoed silently back along that pitch black road. What a weird feeling, like being in the middle of nowhere, with the possibility of



drawing fire from the Germans or from A Company. All these thoughts came to me too late to turn back.

We passed the spot where the 17 year old had called out. He was still moaning and calling more weakly, "Sepsene jahre, vervounded."

When I knew we were getting close to the place where I had talked to Johnny Bonds, I called out softly, "Johnny Bonds, it's me, Bill Newman from the FO team. The password is" If they had moved out, I was between a rock and a hard place with our captain. Fortunately, I got the countersign. I told the captain of A Company where C Company was and what his orders were. He got his 150 men out of the ditches and I led them back to the village without a hint of trouble.

The next morning a squad and a medic went back to tend the 17 year old. He was dead.