

Harold D. Allen
Co A, 1st Bn, 424 Regiment
106 Infantry Division



As a rifleman and first scout of Co A, 1st Bn, 424 Regt, 106 Inf Div, I boarded an English ship, the Aquitania, in New York harbor on the evening of Oct. 20, 1944, my 19th birthday. We spent about a month in Banbury, England, then went over into France, landing at Le Havre. There were no docks so we had to go over the side of the ship and down a rope ladder. We spent a couple nights outside Le Havre. We boarded trucks, and about 36

hours later we unloaded on a hillside in snow about knee deep. We were somewhere near St. Vith, Belgium. We made our way up the hill with all of our equipment, and pitched our pup tents there in the dark. We were there three or four days, then moved into a small village in buildings.

On the morning of Dec. 16th we were awakened by artillery shells exploding all around us. We were rushed to the mess hall to get our breakfast. We then got on trucks that took us to the village of Winterspelt, Germany. We unloaded in a hurry, because we were being shelled. We were behind a house when the order came down to move out, As I was running I heard a shell hit the ground, got up and kept running. Eldon Baine of Indianapolis, Ind. said the next shell hit right where I had been lying. He said he thought it had gotten me, but then he saw me on the road still running. We dug in just outside of Winterspelt, with our platoon headquarters in a farm house on the road, and us about a hundred yards behind it near a hedgerow. They shelled us all day and into the night. Right after dark Sgt. Meade sent word for me and Paul Ayers to go out in front of our lines and to dig a listening post. We did but all we ever heard was shells going over. We were relieved later by someone else and boy was it good to get back to our deep foxholes. As the shelling lifted we watched from our foxholes as German tanks came down the road by the dozens. The first tank stopped at the farm house and took all of our platoon leaders as prisoners. We watched as they put them on the tanks.

After the tanks got by, here came the German infantry, I would have to say by the thousands. There were only about 20 of us still together so we stayed quiet and watched. Later came their horse drawn artillery. They parked one next to the farm house and started to dig it in. We decided that it was time to take off. We went to the rear and came to a fence. Someone had wire cutters and cut us a gap to get through. As I went through the gap I followed the fence for a while but could not find anyone. Boy! there I was lost from them, so I turned around and traced the fence until I found the gap, then continued on down the hill until I found them in a small grove of trees. We decided the grove was too small so went up a hill that was covered with larger trees. We waited there until daybreak. When morning came we could see some of our men across a valley. We took

off toward them, not thinking about the valley might be mined, or that the Germans might see us. We just wanted to get over there with them. We made it. They were our Engineers. They told us where our Battalion Hdqrs. were. Col. Welsh was there when we arrived. He took us right back to the Engineers where we dug in with them.

That night we all gathered out on the road to try to walk our way out. There were probably 2 or 3 hundred of us. Every road we started down, they were waiting for us. Finally we backed off the road to wait for daylight and then try to fight our way out. There were five of us from A Co. still together. Jack Brannon, Martin, Bolin, myself and one more, but for the life of me I just can't recall his name. I have spent hours trying to remember his name. They zeroed in on us with their mortars. A piece of shrapnel knocked a hole in my rifle butt. We hit the road again and finally walked out. I remember we went up a railroad track, crossed a plank walk where the trestle had been knocked out. I could hear water running below. I don't know how large the stream was and tried not to think about it. The next morning we came to a crossroad, and there was our Regt. Commander, Col Reid. Boy! Was he a sight for sore eyes. That was the morning of the 18th. The first Battalion was finally getting together again. I had lost my best buddy, Paul Ayers. We had been together since basic training at Camp Blanding, Florida. He and Eldon Baine both were taken prisoners, but made it through it. Co. A had only 32 men left. Bn. Hq. was set up in a farm house and Jack Brannon and I were held there as runners, while the Co. went up the road to dig in.

About midnight they got us up to take a message up to our Co. We told them that we didn't even know where they were. Our Co. jeep driver (Benhur?) of course he had lost his jeep, said he knew where they were and would take us up there. We went walking down the road, talking and laughing, went right on through this little village talking and clomping away. As we got to the other side he said we had come too far, our Co. was before the village. You talk about being scared, but we were. We tried to tip-toe and run at the same time, trying to be quiet. We made it back and found our Co. We delivered our message to Lt. Beseler. He was the only officer that made it through the Bulge, now our Co. Commander.

I don't know where the Germans were when we went through the village, but they were there when daylight came. A Co. had nothing larger than an M-1 rifle. I believe it was C Co. that had a tube of a 60mm mortar. We held 2 or 3 days, when one evening late they came after us with a tank. The machine gun and the 88 was blasting away. We made a very hasty retreat. We regrouped at Bn Hdq. and went part of the way back up the hill except on the side of the road B and C Cos had been. The next morning all thunder broke loose as we advanced over the hill and finally drove them back into the village. They were really putting those 50mm mortar shells in on us. Our artillery was helping us, but one shell landed so close to me a piece of shrapnel burned my left cheek. We had two men killed in this skirmish. Corporal Kelly was between these two men when a German tank grenade lying in front of them exploded, killing one on each side of him. He was knocked out for awhile and his steel helmet was dented so bad he could not wear it. It saved his life. He was later given a battlefield commission to 2nd Lt.

We held this position for a couple more days, then were ordered to pull back because the Germans had broken through on each side of us and were trying to surround us. We walked all day single file as they would throw a shell at us every now and then. We made it out and that night dug in near some tanks. That is still another story. That night we were given a five gallon can of hot coffee. That was the first hot anything we had had

since Dec. 16th. If I told you how many times I had to crawl out of my foxhole that night, you would not believe me.

Sometime in late February or early March we were off the front lines living in six man tents. That morning we had gotten orders that we were to tear down our six man tents the next day and put up our pup tents for that night and the next day we were to return to the front lines. You always dreaded to hear those words.

That evening I was sitting on my cot cleaning my M-1 rifle when my brother walked in. Boy! Was I surprised. I didn't even know he was in Europe. He said that morning when he was assigned to an artillery company, and given his APO number it was the same as mine. He asked his commanding officer where Co. A 424 was located. He was told Co. A was about three miles across the pea-patch. He told the officer that he had a brother that was with Co. A, but had not heard from me since the Battle of the Bulge had begun, so he didn't know whether or not I had made it. He was loaned a jeep and came over and found me. We had a good visit. The next day after we got our big tent down and our pup tents up, I got permission to go see him. I told him since we were returning to the front the next morning it would probably be a while before we could get together again. His artillery outfit was not going up at that time. The next morning as we were walking to the train we took a ten minute break right in front of his tent. I asked about him and was told that he had been on guard that night and was asleep. I didn't care, I woke him up anyway. I didn't see him again until 1947.

We got to the front and were put in a holding position. Our platoon was separated from the rest of the Co. by a wide valley. We crossed the valley and joined with Co. K. We got two hot meals a day and a K ration for lunch. We were in three man bunkers. For our breakfast and supper we had to send a detail back across the valley and meet Bogart, the Co. jeep driver, to get our chow. It was so muddy he had to use a "weasel" to make his delivery. We had to walk about 4 mile to the rear and then about a 4 mile across the valley. I was on the detail one evening. We got there early and while waiting for Bogart, 3 or 4 artillery shells came in at us. No one was injured but scared real good. As we were going back to our platoon with our chow, as we passed our artillery observers we really told them off about shooting at us. They said they would check out every gun that night to see if one was firing short. The next evening the same thing happened. Still no one hurt. The artillery observers told us that it must be the Germans because it sure wasn't from our guns. We could look down the valley and see a pillbox, so I guess they had been watching us for sometime and thought they could cause us to lose our appetite, which they did, but it didn't happen anymore. We were living high on the hog with three meals a day and three men to the bunker which meant two-two hour guard shifts each night. We would catch patrol duty now and then which I sure dreaded. One of our patrols got in a fire fight with the Germans one day so we were called out to help them. It didn't last long but one of our boys was killed. They said he was only 17 year old. The Lt. lost his walkie-talkie. I picked it up and took it back to the bunker with me and returned it to him as he came by.

One day Lt. Garrett said he needed four volunteers, you, you, you, and you, lets go. We went through their mine field into some trenches about waist deep that lead to the pillbox. He told us we were going to take the pillbox. Oh Boy! Sweat, sweat, sweat. He said he would go first and we were to be right behind him. We eased up to the door, he hollered a few words in German, threw in a hand grenade. As soon as it went off in we went. We did this before we entered each room which was 4 or 5. We didn't find anyone at home which was ok with us. When we got in the last room, there were two gun ports

with a big 88 artillery piece at one and a machine at the other. I guess that solved the mystery as to where the artillery shells came from that was fired at us as we waited for our chow.

Lt. Garrett told us four that we were to guard the pillbox that night. One at the pillbox, one about 25 yards back in the trench and two could sleep in the bunker about 25 yards further back. My partner said he would stay at the pillbox the first two hours and I could stay back in the trench and the other could sleep in the bunker. At ten o'clock our two hours were up so I went back to the bunker to get the other two up to relieve us. They told me they were not going to stand guard at the pillbox. We argued for a few minutes and I finally told them that they were going to go up to the pillbox to get my partner. We went and got him and they followed us back to the bunker. They said they were going to stand guard just outside the bunker. At twelve o'clock when they got us up, we were not about to go up to the pillbox because it had not been guarded the last two hours and the Germans could be back just waiting for us. The rest of the night guard was pulled at the bunker. When daylight came we told them we had to go and clear the pillbox, but they refused to go. Their answer was "no way". We were in deep trouble because we had left our guard post and you know what that meant. My partner and I eased up to the pillbox and eased from room to room, scared half to death, expecting to find the enemy just waiting for us. Luckily no one was in there as I guess they had completely withdrawn, but we didn't know this and we were shaking in our boots. We made it out of that tight spot and never told a soul.

We were pulled off the front that day. If ever I could have got hung up on cigarettes it would have been while we were there. Three men to a bunker meant two guard shifts a night. I had to do something to keep awake for the Germans were sending patrols through our lines as well as us sending our patrols. When we were pulled off the line (we were pinched out) I left two cartons of cigarettes in the bunker.

I do remember the names of the two that would not stand guard at the pillbox but can't remember my buddy's name. Of course that happened over 48 years ago so I guess I am allowed to forget a few things.

Since this short story will probably be my last one of my war time experiences I wanted to tell these two things. I really don't know where we were or why. We had entered a woods and no one had to tell me what had happened here. Our timed artillery had caught the Germans here in these woods and it's hard to describe what I saw. The trees were literally chewed up by shrapnel. The timed shells can be set to go off at different heights. It looked like these had been set for about tree top height. The U.S. really had this worked out to perfection. I picked up a German steel helmet there and still have it. I was once under some German timed artillery but it went off so high in the air, it did little damage. I can't describe the damage our shells did. You would have to see for yourself and I hope you never do.

Another time we saw a place where the Germans had caught a bunch of our boys asleep in their sleeping bags. They had bayoneted and killed or injured many before they could get out of their bags. This happened a couple days before we were there, but the evidence was still there. The torn, bloody sleeping bags were still there. It seemed our forces had captured one of their railroad guns and they had probably come back to try to recapture it. This railroad gun was so large it had to be mounted on a flat car. It had already been blown up. I saw pieces of the barrel and I know that I could have crawled

through it. Don't you know it could fire a big shell. After you see something like this it is hard to lay down and go to sleep, knowing what happened to these boys and could happen to you.

There is one other incident that happened that I still laugh each time I think about it. About the 20th of Jan. I got a 3 day pass to Paris. We were in a nice hotel and the food was good – man, I was starved. The meals were just teasers. I found a mess hall there that was for the troops there in Paris. It was fenced and they were checking passes at the gate. Check awhile and quit awhile. Once when not checking I jumped in line. You talk about eating, when I left there I could truly say that I had eaten. The very idea of having to sneak in one of our chow lines. I wonder what they would have done if they had caught me. I might not have been allowed to go back to the front. Wouldn't that have been terrible?

Battle of Jan.13,1945

On about Jan. 8th we were told to fall out right after breakfast-heading back to the front lines. 1st Lt. McKay our new Company commander said we were going to take back the ground we had lost in the Bulge. There was a big snow on and it was cold. We waited until after dark for the trucks to pick us up. Finally they made it. We rode for probably an hour, then started walking. Each hour we would get a ten minute break. I would just lay down in the snow and go to sleep, I was that tired. The officers would come by waking us up when it was time to move on. We walked until probably 3 or 4 AM. We were showed where we were to dig in, and told we had better get them dug and camouflaged before daylight because the Germans were right out in front of us and the fresh dirt would give our positions away.

There were two to the foxhole. We were on guard 24 hours a day. We had one thin GI blanket. One would stand guard while the other one slept or tried to. My hour on guard I would jump up and down, run in place or do anything to try to get warm. My hour to sleep, I would wrap up in the blanket, but before my

hour was up I would already be awake and shaking from the cold. I got to go back in the village one time where there was a place to get warm, but it was so crowded and loud I was soon ready to return to my foxhole.

On the evening of the 12th of Jan. we were issued white sheets to use as camouflage because we were jumping off (attacking) the next morning. We left our foxholes the next morning before daybreak, all decked out in white. We arrived outside the first village we were to take, stretched out in a semi-circle. At a given time our artillery, mortars, machine guns, and our MI's opened up. We went through the town - cleared it and one prisoner was all I remember taking. The rest took off. They left so fast their breakfast was still on the stove. We didn't have time to eat it either.

We started off toward the next objective. I was sent out as first scout. We were going through heavy woods. As us two scouts left the big trees into small evergreens we were ambushed. We were cut off from the Company. The bullets were really flying. We tried to crawl under the snow. I looked up and here came Col. Welch from the rear. He asked where the radio man was. I told him he was with the Co. back in the woods. He told me to go and bring him to him as he needed to make a call. I went back and found him and by that time our men were firing back. Our machine guns (water cooled) were froze up. The machine gunners had to urinate on them to get them going. Once they got going, our

60mm mortars firing and all the M1 rifles plus the carbines, it didn't take long. The radio man and I made it back to Col. Welch, he made his radio call and told us to get back to our Co. The Germans were behind snow covered tree tops and small evergreens. They could see us but we couldn't see them. The machine gunners would spray every clump of snow and the Germans started hollering "Comrade". I don't know how many were killed, wounded, or captured but we cleaned them out. We left the wounded lay after relieving them of their rifles, to wait for the medics and sent the prisoners to the rear.

We took off again. As we went around a bend in the lane we were following someone sounded off "TANK", and brother there he sat. Some went to the left of the lane in the evergreens, others to the right. I was with Lt. McKay and others to the right into small trees. We were looking right up the barrel of that big 88. I really figured that was the end. Two men got up in front of us and Lt. McKay called to them. They immediately hit the ground. They were German but had on GI overcoats, one could very well have been mine. Lt. McKay threw a hand grenade at them. After a couple minutes Lt. McKay told us to stay put, that he was going on the other side of the road to try to get a bazooka team up there to knock out the tank. I never heard any details except that he had been killed. There was so much firing going on I never heard the tank when it withdrew.

Here came Col. Welch again. He said we were going to take the objective even if it took us till midnight. We took off, went into a woods with large trees. We could see the village down in the valley. Tanks were pulling out on the other side of town. Each time one would stop and belch smoke we knew

the mail was coming in. The shells would hit up in the trees, explode and the shrapnel would utterly rain down on us. Men were dropping all around me. Col. Welch was still hollering to keep going. Then he got hit, he was hit in the butt and one ankle. He then started hollering to withdraw. We had to leave the wounded but gave them our ponchos to lay on to keep them off the snow. It was dark in just a few minutes so the medics got them out.

We withdrew into a patch of evergreens and spent the night. We were so tired we couldn't even dig a foxhole. We just scrapped the snow back and laid down. I was with Freddie Beeman from Clinton, Iowa. We both had given our ponchos to the wounded so we didn't have anything to lay on or to cover with. We laid couched together one way and then turn over to try to get the other side warm. Of course as cold as it was we never got warm but I really believe that is all that kept us from freezing to death, as some of them did. Co. F relieved us before daybreak and when the officers started getting us together they found some had frozen to death. We walked back to a small village where we could get in out of the cold and try to get warm once again. I pulled off my shoes and socks and ice was frozen between my toes. I don't know how true it is but I heard it got down to 35 degrees below zero that night, but I do know it was COLD.

Sunday-June 5, 1994

Dear John:

We received "The Cub" yesterday and see where you are going to run my story in the next issue. If it's not too late I need you to make a correction for me. At the top of the second page where I was telling about them sending Jack Brannon and me up to the Company about mid-night when we didn't know where they were. I said the jeep driver

(Benhur?) took us up there. His name should have been Bogart. Herman Van De Bogart. If it is too late to correct it that will be OK.

Could I also add to the story?

Two things that are hard to come by while on the front lines is sleep and food. You sleep any time you can and eat anything you can get. Even that old black bread tasted good. You are always sleepy and hungry. On Dec.18th when the 1st Bn. was getting back together and we were holding the line just outside the village of Maspelt, that is where the tank came out and run us off the hill. I was in the foxhole with Lt. Beseler as I was company runner. With two to the foxhole, one could sleep while the other stood guard. This is where I saw my first "buzz-bomb" going over. Had no idea just what it was but it looked like a flying boxcar. As the tank came at us with the machine guns blazing away and the 88 blasting away, we left in a hurry. One boy left so fast he forgot to wake up his foxhole buddy. The next day after we took our positions back he was found dead, still in his foxhole. We also lost Sgt Parker, didn't know how bad he had been wounded.

After the war was over some of us from the 106 was sent back into France. As we arrived, there stood Sgt. Parker. He said he had heard that some of the 106 was coming there and he was going to meet every truck until he found some of us. He said the 88 shell hit so close it blew him up in the air. He got shrapnel in one knee and a burst eardrum. It was good to see him and to learn he was OK. He was from Savannah, Ga.

John, it's sure good to receive "The Cub". I know it takes a lot of hard work and dedication on your part and all the others, too. I see my dues are due so I guess I had better mail them while it's on my mind. I wouldn't want to miss the next edition. If I'm too late for you to make the correction, don't worry about as I know Bogart will understand.

So long until next time:

Harold D. Allen

July 15,1992

Dear John:

First of all let me apologize for being so long in acknowledging your very nice letter and for the two "Cub" magazines you sent, as well as the list of names of Co.A-424. I enjoyed reading the magazines very much. I have already contacted Lt. Beseler of St. Germain, Wisconsin. and have written to Harold Allison. Need to write Lloyd Brunner and Van De Bogart as I remember them. It sure is good to contact some of the men I served with in "The Bulge". I have had more interest in the last year of my war experiences than all the other years combined. Could it be age? Another thing, not as busy trying to make a living.

I worked for the Post Office Dept. from Oct. '50 until Nov.'80.I retired at age 55. I now work part time as a security guard at a glass factory. Since this is vacation time it has been more like full time.

I was married when drafted. I was 17 and Edith was 15. We celebrated our 49th wedding anniversary on June, 16th. We are now working on THE BIG ONE. We have 3 daughters and one Grand-daughter.

I am enclosing two short stories of some of my experiences in the "Battle of the Bulge". I hope I never have to relive them.

From an 'ol Infantryman:

Harold D. Allen

Source: The CUB of the Golden Lion Vol 50 N° 4 July-August-September 1994

<http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/stories26/us-army25/855-my-experience-in-the-battle-of-the-bulge.html>

Henri ROGISTER, webmaster