Samuel Feinberg T/5

589th Field Artillery, HQ Battalion
106th Infantry Division

This memoir is dedicated to the memory of Staff Sergeant Francis H. Aspinwall, a great artilleryman, fine soldier and loyal friend whose memory I shall always cherish.

In this memoir I have relied heavily on Frank Aspinwall's, History of the 589th Field Artillery Battalion, not only for chronological accuracy but for certain details I had long forgotten. In some cases I have quoted him directly, since his was the most succinct and direct description of the event. The fact that he read some of this history to me in the late spring and summer of1945, as he was writing, made it for me, in these subsequent years, an indelible experience.

I have also referred to Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy's, St Vith. Lion In The Way, The 106th Infantry Division in World War II, published by The Battery Press, Nashville, TN.

I also used Hugh M. Cole's, The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge, part of the series, The U.S. Army in World War II, published by the Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington DC.

I'll begin this narrative from the time we sailed from England. This is appropriate since that sailing was in essence the beginning of the phase of the war that ended in the Battle of the Bulge.

We had been housed in the Gloucester area of England since we arrived in England on November 13, 1944. Gloucester is in the western part of England not too far from the Wales border. We left Gloucester on Decemberl at 5:30 am arriving at Weymouth (about 100 miles) on the southern coast at about 4:00 pm. We had C rations for dinner and spent the night in a barracks. The next morning December 2, we left at dawn to move down to the harbor. We were issued seasickness pills and life preservers along with our doughnuts and coffee.

We loaded on two LST's (Landing Ship Tanks) and spent the rest of the day anchored in the harbor. It was overcast and cold, but not unpleasantly so. We had to lash our trucks to the dock of the ship with heavy chains in case of bad weather in the channel. The accomadations on the ship were really pretty good. We had more room in our berths on the LST than we had had on the "Wakefied" crossing the Atlantic. The food was good and the bunks were clean and warm. There were not enough bunks to go around so we slept in shifts, but this didn't seem to cause me, or any of the others any special problems. Some of us used the trucks on deck as beds. We had plenty of hot water for showers. Someone made a crack that we had better take advantage of the showers, because we couldn't be sure when we would be able to take the next one. He really had that right!

We left Weymouth harbor the next morning, December 3. As soon as we hit open water the weather turned nasty and the water became rough. I wasn't seasick and I don't remember anyone being sick. The ship was pitching and tossing, but I remember being on deck and actually somewhat enjoying it. A couple of our 3/4 ton trucks had broken some

of their chains and were swinging side to side with every toss of the ship. We had to do some repair work since the swinging trucks were creating more problems by bashing the next truck, and if continued could cause the truck on the outside lane to crash through the railing of the ship. We waited for a couple of seconds (literally) of quieting so we could get additional chains through the spokes of the truck wheels and re-lash them to the deck.
We finally anchored about five miles from Le Havre, near the mouth of the Seine, but we couldn't really see anything. The storm got worse throughout the night and we really were tossed around. I don't remember taking any seasick pills and was not seasick.

The next day, December 4, was calmer. We cruised around a good part of the day. There was a long flotilla of LST's and regular shipping in front of us. Finally, late in the afternoon we started up the Seine and spent that night anchored in the river. When we looked around at the shore line it seemed very peaceful. There were no signs of war.

We pulled anchor the next morning, sailing up the river to the port of Rouen.(1) We arrived around noon and began unloading immediately with rain coming down. We were the first LST to complete unloading and by about 3:00 pm we had moved to a bivouac area a couple of miles outside the city of Rouen. I remember the field being very wet from the steady drizzle. We had to wait until the rest of our Infantry (the 422nd) unloaded from the second LST. Most of us decided to pitch our pup tents as soon as possible, figuring that the longer we waited the wetter the ground would be.

A pup tent is supposed to keep you dry in the rain. Every GI carries one. The problem with a pup tent is making sure you don't touch the tent anywhere! As soon as you do it will begin dripping. If you're sort of big and clumsy like me you almost can't help touching it once you're inside. I remember spending a damp night in that field, and thinking, what a way to spend my first night in France. I was thankful I didn't pull guard duty that night.

We left early the next morning, December 7, and moved to a camp area near Roselle, Belgium. I've tried to look up this town on a map but have been unable to find it. We passed through the towns of Amiens, Cambrai and Maubeuge, all in France before we got to Roselle. For the first time we saw wrecked German trucks and half-tracks from the retreat the previous summer. We had been in Camp Atterbury at the time this had been happening here. It seemed like a strange time warp. It was late when we arrived at Roselle. We were happy to get some chow and a couple of hours sleep. The war felt a little closer.

We left early the next morning en route to an around a town named St Vith. None of us knew where the town was located. I'm sure the officers knew but at our level we just followed the column and the truck in front of us. We arrived in the area in early afternoon, parked on a bleak looking road and had lunch. At each stop it was getting progressively colder, and the snow was getting deeper. Late in the afternoon we moved into a bivouac area near Wellerode to camp for the night. It was a heavily wooded area with very tall pine trees and when it got dark it was pitch black.
I caught guard duty that night and I clearly remember walking my post along a deep forest trail that was a combination of slush, snow and half frozen water. We had not been issued the rubber pac winter overshoes that we were supposed to have. We were wearing combat boots that we treated with all kinds of waterproofing compound. I found out that night that the stuff didn't work. In retrospect I think this is when I first began to have my troubles with frost bite. It was a long, bitter cold night made more ominous by hearing

for the first time an occasional artillery shell somewhere off in the distance. The war was getting closer.

The next morning, December 9, we made the final leg to our permanent position. A number of names kept floating around as to where that would be, but none of them were even vaguely familiar. That morning I decided to shave, not having done so since we disembarked in France. We were told to stay as clean shaven as possible, since in the event of a facial wound it would be much easier to treat. All of our equipment was packed up so we couldn't heat any water on our Coleman burners. I don't have to tell any of you who have tried it that shaving with cold water is not fun. But I finally scrapped the whiskers off and felt I was ready to go.

On this entire drive from Rouen we thought a lot and talked a little about being scared. More accurately we felt it in the pit of our guts, and gave only quick verbal agreement that we were affected. We hoped we would overcome our fears if the time ever came when we had to face the Germans. We had all heard and read stories about guys that couldn't control their bowels and we all secretly hoped it would never happen to us.

The 106th Infantry Division moved into positions that were held by the 2nd Infantry Division about one and half miles south of the German town of Auw. Other names came up like Bleialf and Laudesfeld, none of which rang a bell with any of us. We were relieving the 2nd Infantry who had been there about a month, after seeing very heavy fighting and taking equally heavy casualties in the Hurtgen forest. We literally moved into the exact positions they had held. The 589th took over from the 1 5th FA Battalion putting our guns into the precise holes they had dug, and using the same huts they had built. It sure beat having to dig out gun sites in the frozen ground on our own.

The CP (Command Post) was set up in the kitchen of a substantial German house. The Fire Control people of whom I was one were set up in a farmhouse some 150 yards in front of the CP. The mess hall was in a large barn type building about 75 yards behind the CP. "A" Battery was to the right of the CP, with "B" and "C" Batteries to the left of the CP on the other side of the road. This was the Auw-Bleialf road. All the Batteries had some decent camouflage since they were in the tree line of the heavily wooded areas that covered so much of the region. Service Battery, with responsibility for keeping the Battalion supplied with food, ammunition etc. was set up a couple of miles to the rear, about 4 miles south of Schoenberg, a town we would have good reason to remember.
The men of the 2nd Infantry we were replacing were very reassuring. They told us we were in a "quiet" sector where nothing ever happened. They hated to leave but I remember at least one or two of them telling us it "was too dammed quiet" and they were glad to be getting out. As we moved into our new quarters we considered ourselves very lucky. Our building, which was named the Communications Barracks (2), since it housed radio and wire people as well as fire control, was quite comfortable. My room was about 12' by 15' with eight double bunked beds with wire lacing as the support. Using our sleeping bags on top made for relatively comfortable bedding. When you consider that we had been expecting to sleep in tents you can understand why we thought we were pretty lucky.
By 4:30 pm that afternoon our guns were in position and "A" Battery fired registration shells. That night, our first on the line, all three Batteries fired harassing fire onto German soil. That made us feel good. Most of us were tired and hit the sack pretty early.
The next morning, December 10, our first group of fire control people went up as artillery observers with the 422nd Infantry regiment. We and the 422nd made up the 422nd

Regimental Combat team, and the job of the 589th was to support the 422nd Infantry. The first group would stay up for one week at which time the second group would replace them and we would alternate from there on out.
The 422nd was occupying the first belt of pill boxes on the Siegfried line that had been breached at this point the previous fall. The Germans were well dug in across from them in pill boxes and other defensive positions in the area called the Schnee-Eiffel, a heavily wooded ridge about three miles to the front. The German communications center for this area was Prum which was at maximum range (12,000 yards or about 7 miles) for "A" Batteries 105 mm Howitzers.

For the next couple of days we settled in. Our gun batteries put down some harassing fire and very occasionally we heard a shell coming in somewhere in the distance. The normal occupations of army life took effect: drawing provisions, equipment, pulling guard duty etc. We still hadn't gotten our winter snowpacs (think of LL Beam galoshes) and there was plenty of grousing about the "rear echelon" cowboys who had the "pacs". Being on the front line does give you some bragging privileges.

Let me introduce you to the guys immediately around me. We were all members of the Instrument and Survey group of the 589th. Frank Aspinwall, (Luke or The Asp) was my best and closest friend. He came from Rome, NY. We had been to Basic Training at Fort Bragg together in the same platoon and couldn't believe that we wound up together in the Instrument and Survey section of the 589th Headquarters Battery. Frank was 12 years older than I and he had sort of taken me under his wing, a fact for which I have been forever grateful. He was a graduate of Cornell and a Civil Engineer. He should have been commissioned an officer when he finished his ROTC training at Cornell, but do to some sort of mix-up he didn't receive his commission.
Ed Brown (Brownie), was also in the same unit at Fort Bragg with Aspinwall and me. Ed was by far the oldest guy in the platoon. He was thirty-six years old and and an architect who lived in Washington, DC. Ed had a bad leg and it was really very difficult for him all during Basic Training, not only in keeping up with the younger guys, but in completing the various marches that we were required to execute. He never complained once and never asked for any special consideration. We often tried to help him in some of those trials, but he always insisted on going it alone. So here were three of us coming from Basic Training and landing in the same battery in the 589th. The odds on that happening are large.
Guy D Smith (Smithy), was from Texas. He was pulled out of ASTP training and assigned to the 589th around May or June 1944. Smithy was about twenty two or so, a bright guy.
George Hayslip (The Seed), was from California and was about my age (19) or twenty. He may have started college. George was on the portly side and took a good deal of ribbing about his weight. He was very good-natured with a sharp sense of humor.
Roger Bell (Roger the Lodger) was from Wisconsin. Somewhat taciturn but with a wry sense of humor. he was in his second or third year at college when he went into the Army. John Kaufman was from Minnesota. For some reason we never stuck him with a nick-name, very quiet and soft spoken. He had also been in second or third year of college.

Jim Slack, also no nick-name, but very open, personable and good humored. I believe he was from Nebraska or one of the Dakota's, pulled out of the ASTP program.

Our Sergeant (T/3) was named Raounas. I can't for the life of me remember his first name. He was from the Scranton-Wilkes Barre area and was a dour faced, humorless guy, who thought had something of a mean streak in him. I always had

the impression he thought he was "below" us because he had not been to college. He was essentially a fair guy and after a time we all got along with him.

Mike Palfey was a Master Sergeant and joined us in May or June of 1944. He was from the Pittsburgh area and was a very open person with a good sense of humor. Once he joined our outfit he took some of the wind out of Raounas' sails. All of us were glad he was with us since working under him was distinctly more pleasant than with Raounas in charge.

The officer in charge of our team was Lt. Clausson. I thought he was a terrific officer and I know all the rest of our people felt the same way.

The first four listed above were my closest friends and we more or less stuck together. still have a picture of the four of us taken in the Boston area just before we left the States. As you can see most of us had nick-names. Mine was "Fish". I picked that moniker up on the very first day of Basic Training at Fort Bragg, when our platoon sergeant was calling out the roll. He called me Fishberg instead of Feinberg (by accident or design) and from then on "Fish" became my name. Several of our names went through evolutionary changes: Aspinwall started out with "Luke", which seemed to match the way Frank wore his cap. It was sort of stuck on the right side of his head with a tilt toward the back. Eventually we felt that "The Asp" was a more apt description. Hayslip started as "Hayseed" and metamorphosed to the shorter "Seed" and/or" The Seed".
Most of the week preceding the Bulge was quiet, with only the occasional shell coming in, but not too close to us. The guys in our Barracks pulled guard duty, did KP, cleaned weapons, and did the hundred and one details that have to be done in any army unit.

There were Germen civilians in the area, some of whom used the Auw-Bleialf road for travel, herding an occasional team of oxen pulling a wagon. They looked at us and we looked at them, but their was no communication. They may have wanted to talk to us, but we did not want to talk to them, and in fact were not permitted to do so. They went about their business and we ignored them. I got the impression they would walk by to check on their property that we were now occupying.
I mentioned earlier that we drew supplies. This was no piece of cake. It meant taking a drive along what we called "Skyline Drive" and a very dangerous spot that quickly became known as "88" corners, named for the fact that about a half to three quarter mile stretch of road was in open view of German 88's, one of the most accurate and devastating field pieces that either side had. At a certain point in the road there were signs that told you to drive fast as hell till you were under cover of trees. We lost a couple of trucks on this road, so that making the

trip back to Service Battery for supplies was no easy chore. Remember, we were on German soil and that literally every road and strong point had its coordinates marked on German maps.
In the face of this obstacle, our Engineers (81st Combat Engineers), using good old American ingenuity cut a road that started just before "88" Corners began and sliced through the woods, in fact enabling our guys to avoid the dangerous site on the main road. It didn't take the 81st more than two days because I made the trip once or twice in the week before the Bulge began. This corduroy road was instantly named "Engineers Cut-Off" and still exists today.

(On our recent trip to the Ardennes (May 1997) my wife and I actually were driven over part of this road by Vincent Gerard of CRIBA).

The following description taken from "St Vith: Lion In The Way' by Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy gives an idea of what things were like in the week before the Bulge;
"Throughout the Division, one senses from the evidence, existed an odd mixture of complacency, false sense of security and jittery nerves. The last, quite naturally, was to be expected from men just prior to and during their first contact with the enemy. The natural inclination, the nearer one gets to the front, is to magnify in importance the slightest rumor, incidence or evidence of hostile activity.
So when we did hear the occasional shell or small arms fire, we all thought this might be it: by the end of the week though, I think our nerves had been calmed and we came to expect these random outbursts.
There were two events that occurred during the week that have always stuck in my mind. One day, while I was on guard duty (which was in a wooden unheated shack, some 15 or 20 yards at the rear of our CP) George Hayslip, (Seed) had come to relieve me. To my utter surprise he was carrying a 35 mm camera in his hand. It was against regulations to have a camera and questioned him. He said all he wanted was to take some shots and nobody would even know about it. He took some pictures and I never saw the results until many years later when Frank Aspinwall told me that my picture was in Colonel Dupuy's book. I, of course, ran out to buy the book and sure enough in the collection of photographs at the back of the book, their I was. Somehow Dupuy got a hold of the picture. It credits Hayslip for the shot.
The other incident occurred later in the week, and also involved Hayslip. It was sometime in the morning and he and I were in our room in the Communication Barrack cleaning our carbines. I was sitting on the lower bunk and Hayslip was standing up. I wasn't paying any attention to what he was doing and vice versa. I was just about finished and had my head down working on putting the trigger mechanism together, but I had seen the end of his weapon pointed in my general direction, when I heard the expected click of his weapon before he pulled the trigger. Except that I never heard the trigger. Suddenly a round (bullet) whizzed over the top of my head. I could actually feel the breeze as the round went by and cracked into the wall. jumped up and started screaming obscenities at Hyslip. He turned a sickly white color and started trying to apologize. I was so scared that I actually ran out of epitaphs. I finally picked up the stock of my rifle to hit him but rationality finally took over and I just sat down and closed my eyes. Hayslip continued to say how sorry he was etc, etc.

By this time a couple of other guys had run into the room. Hayslip and I both explained what had happened. I showed them where I had been sitting and where the bullet had lodged in the wall. There were all kinds of oh's and ah's as Hayslip continued to apologize. One of the guys got me to sit where I was when the rifle went off and took a measurement that showed the bullet had lodged within an inch of my head.
Finally we all started laughing about the thing and the incident was soon forgotten. remember thinking what a dumb way to get killed in the war-- by a good friend's leaving a round in his rifle chamber. One of the first things you are taught is that in cleaning and disassembling any rifle you have to make sure there isn't a round in the chamber. How he missed seeing the round he just couldn't explain.

On the night of December 1 5th I was pulling guard duty. It was another one of those bitterly cold nights. I was relieved about three-thirty in the morning and couldn't wait to hit the sack. I slept with most of my clothes on since that was the morning we were to go forward to replace the other fire direction team. I was awakened at about five thirty or six o'clock in the morning by artillery fire coming into our area. All of us got dressed quickly and tried to find out what was going on. No one seemed to know what was happening. The shelling was coming in intermittently and was bridged by pauses of eerie silence.

We all hung around the barracks. There was talk of a Kraut attack, and that telephone lines had been cut between us and the 422nd Infantry. Nobody thought this was a "big" attack. In retrospect I don't think anyone, at least in our immediate group, foresaw the possibility of the massive attack that the Bulge turned out to be.

Somewhere around the middle of the morning, we were introduced to the reality of what was happening. Captain Beans, Headquarters Battery Commanding officer was brought into the Barracks with some wounds, and a couple of us were asked to help carry the stretcher with him on it out to a waiting jeep. As Communications Officer, Captain Beans had been out on a mission to the 422nd regiment and on his way back had been hit by German small arms fire. I was one of the four GI's that helped carry him out to the waiting jeep. As we carried him out he said something to the effect," you boys do a good job here". We thought it was somewhat ironic that he was leaving with a wound in the butt (we called it a million dollar wound), and we were going to have to face whatever it was that was happening all around us.

There wasn't much going on around the Communications Barracks so I made my way back along the Auw-Bleialf road to the mess hall. The mess hall was in back of the Battalion CP (Command Post), but I don't remember any unusual activity taking place there. The mess hall area was also strangely quiet, but Sgt Webb, our Mess Sgt had coffee and food prepared. I wasn't very hungry. I don't think any of us were. We could hear artillery fire coming into our Battery positions and we hoped that our guys had some dug in positions to protect them.

At about ten o'clock more intensive fire began coming in toward our gun batteries which were not far away. Around the mess hall nothing much was happening. An officer came in (I do not remember his name), and directed me and Cpl. Hossley (sic) to go out and dig a latrine. Basic army "functions" must continue no matter what the tactical situation may be. Hossley, who I believe was from Service Battery, and I made our way back into the woods and preceded to
start digging. In a way this acted to calm both of us down. If things were really bad, we reasoned, they wouldn't have us out digging a latrine. So much for GI logic! After digging for some time, and to a depth that we thought adequate, we decided to go back to the mess hall to see if there was any news. We heard that the telephone lines between us out and the 422nd Infantry were out and attempts were being made to send out wire crews to reestablish them. While no one officially told me, it looked like we would not be going up to replace the fire direction crew working with the 422nd.

Sometime around noon time Sgt. Webb asked me and another guy from the Communications Barracks, (I don't remember who), to take up some food to the

guys in and around the Communications Barracks. If there was a better Mess Sergeant in the Division
would have liked to meet him. Sgt Webb was tops as far as our guys were concerned. We lifted up and carried a large, heavy vat with handles on each side. Sgt. Webb wanted to get hot food to the guys there while things were still relatively quiet.
We made our way back up the road to the Communications Barracks. We kept to the side of the road as much as possible, somehow the tree line offered some protection, if mostly a cosmetic one.

Outside of the Barracks, I saw a machine gun position had been set up in front of the building. One of the GI's who manned it was a fellow named "Frenchie". He had an accent and I think he was from Service Battery. We also had a Bazooka team in place. I heard a story later about a Staff Sergeant, I believe from Service Battery, who had been put in charge of either the machine gun position or the Bazooka team, and who took off. He was stopped by Major Goldstein, who, so the story went, pulled his 45 automatic and threatened to shoot him if he tried to run away again. Keep this guy in mind: he shows up again.

I then headed back to the Command Post. I'm not sure why. I guess to see if there was any real information about what was going on. I made my way back the same way on the Auw-Bleialf road. As I was going past a building near where we had our vehicles, I was knocked to the ground by what I took to be the concussive effect of an incoming shell. I was knocked flat, face down.
wasn't hurt and nothing was broken. But I was scared! I was reminded of a shooting gallery where when you hit the duck it plops straight down. I jumped up and high tailed it to the CP. There were some guys around, but none of my buddies. There was talk of Germans infiltrating through out the area and we all resolved to keep our eyes peeled. I decided to head back up to the Communications Barracks. Again, I'm not sure why. I guess I might have been looking for some friendly faces. I got back there with no problem.
Now I heard that the Germans had taken the town of Auw which was no more than five or six miles from where we were. We had sent out a patrol toward Auw and they had reported small arms fire from German infantry moving out of Auw. Since the attack had to be coming up the road from Auw we set up an OP (Observation Post) in the attic of our building.

About three o'clock in the afternoon Captain Huxel asked me to come into the attic with him and keep an eye peeled for the Germans. Captain Huxel opened a trap door in the roof to get the best possible view of the terrain. I was at a window to the right of Captain Huxel, and about four feet lower. He had a pair of binoculars. I had a single eye spyglass. The view from this height was quite good. We could look straight down the Auw-Bleialf road as it came over the crest of the hill. I kept my glass glued to that crest.

In about no more than fifteen or twenty minutes I saw the top turret of a German tank begin to appear over the crest. I called out to Captain Huxel that a tank was coming over the hill. He asked where it was. I repeated what I had said and by this time the whole tank had appeared. I think that from his additional height he may had had difficulty spotting the tank due to a sharper angle than from my position. He asked again and finally spotted the tank. There were two other tanks behind the first one.

My first reaction was that the tank would surely spot us as we were the highest observation point and would immediately begin firing at us. The tank didn't do that and Captain Huxel began communicating with the Batteries to call down fire.

I'm not claiming that I was the first one to spot the tank. As I found out later, the Bazooka team that we had sent out also spotted the tank and fired at it. The Bazooka's first round hit the tank and immobilized it. At about the same time (as I later learned) John Gatens of "A" battery, using direct sighting, opened fire and also hit the lead tank, causing it to burst into flames. The crew in attempting to escape, were taken care of by small arms fire.

Here is Frank Aspinwall's succinct description of what followed: " The second and third tanks were brought under fire and a hit was scored on the second, however, it and the third tank were able to withdraw to defiladed positions under heavy fire from our guns. One of the tanks firing from a hull down position kept up a harassing fire. Counter fire was directed on it's position and it believed that it, too, was knocked out. The effective work of this patrol and of our firing batteries kept the whole battalion position from being overrun". (Italics mine)

I went down the steps leading to the back of the Communications Barracks. I wanted to stay away from the road, figuring that the tanks would have a clear sighting up the road as
made my way back to the area of our CP. I would be less exposed going through the denser part of the trees away from the road. As I got to the back door I looked out in the general area the Germans were coming from to make sure the coast was clear. There, some two hundred yards away I saw a movement in the snow. By this time it was late afternoon and it was really difficult to distinguish objects clearly in the snow. I'm pretty sure I saw a white clad German soldier take a step forward (3). I had my carbine ready to take a shot at whatever it was, but now all was calm and white. I looked again and didn't see anything. I slung my rifle over my shoulder, then made a dash out of the door and headed toward the CP. The snow was well above my knees. About fifty feet from the Barracks I slipped and fell. The snow broke my fall and I wasn't hurt, but the end of my rifle was jammed full of snow. I was much more concerned about the condition of my rifle than I was about being covered with snow. felt as if the whole damm German army was zeroing in on me as I got up and continued my run. finally reached the area between the CP and the Mess Hall and found several other guys just hanging around. I wanted to see Sgt.Webb and went into the building.

It was very quiet in there and I soon found out the reason. One of our guys had been hit had been brought into a side room of the Mess Hall and placed on a pallet of straw. He was, believe, a fellow from Service Company. He had a severe wound of the mid section and was not in good shape, and knew he was probably not going to make it. He was trying to take the wedding ring off his finger, and asked to have it sent to his wife. The medic was trying to make him as comfortable as possible, and assured him that he would take care of everything. I left the building: I really couldn't handle watching the man die. Outside, for the first time, I sensed that we were in real trouble, and a gnawing fear began creeping into my gut. Why it hit me then and there I'm not sure. Seeing that good man lying there with the blood covering him was probably the trigger.

I found some of our guys standing around. We kept our voices down because of the threat of Krauts infiltrating. We decided to get into the woods just behind the CP. At least we wouldn't be out in the open. Once in the woods we found some old fox holes and we climbed into them. There were four or five of us in each one. The only guy I knew was Cpl. Hossley. I was sitting with my back against one of the walls with my legs stretched out, hitting the other end of the hole. A couple of guys were sitting on my legs which made it mighty uncomfortable. We whispered to each other only occasionally for fear of giving ourselves away. It was pitch black. We all were very uncomfortable. My legs went from being asleep, to numb and to no feeling at all. Being cramped together at least gave us some warmth.
We must have spent six or seven miserable hours in that hole. It felt like being entombed. Finally, several of us had to go to the bathroom, and we carefully climbed out. What a relief!

It was bitterly cold now with a biting wind adding to our discomfort. The woods weren't far from the CP and that's where we headed. Standing on the steps (4) of the CP was Major Goldstein. It felt good just to see him, he was the first one of our officers I had seen since the morning. We crowded around him. The first thing he said, and I will never forget this was "Feinberg, you better get your overcoat. Your teeth are chattering". I found his concern very touching. He told us we were going to pull out of our present positions very shortly and to get our stuff together.

I asked him if it was ok to go up to the Communications Barracks and he assured me it was. In the excitement of the day I had left my overcoat back at the barracks, and had only my field jacket on (no wonder I was cold). I now made my way slowly back up the road. I was the only one going up to the barracks, the other guys going back to the their respective units. I had the feeling I had been up and back on this stretch of road some ten times that day.
It was pitch black and scary, but I finally got there. I saw no one else in the building. I put my overcoat on, threw my stuff in the duffel bag and hurried downstairs. It seemed like days since I had gone into the attic of the building with Captain Huxel. At the entrance to the building, a couple of feet from the door was a welcome sight. "Smithy" had pulled up in a jeep. He was to drive Lt. Clausson to our next position. I asked him if I could garb a ride with him, and he quickly agreed. His was the first of my friends I had seen that day. I threw my stuff in the back of the jeep and climbed in. I told him the story of my overcoat and my teeth chattering and even in the middle of that cold, freezing night we had a brief laugh. I don't remember what he told me concerning his experience that day. I wish I did. He told me we were heading to a position around Schonberg.

We didn't talk much about anything else. After about fifteen or twenty minutes, with the freezing wind adding to the cold, I told Smithy, I was going to ride in the back of one of our trucks (6x6) that was parked on the other side of the entrance to the Barracks. I grabbed my bag, said I'd see him at the next position and climbed into the back of the 6x6. With the tarpaulin up, at least the wind wasn't getting to me. Since I was lying on a bunch of packed duffel bags I was relatively comfortable. I checked in with the driver. He was a guy we called "The Chief" because of his Indian background. He had one peculiarity; he always wore sun glasses. On a pitch black night this didn't engender too much confidence, but I had seen him drive this way before. Besides which, this was the only truck around.

In about ten or fifteen minutes, we started moving. Aspinwall states it was about four in the morning. We bounced around on the road, and since I couldn't see anything I just waited. think I dozed off for a little while. This had been my own "longest day."

Just as dawn was coming we stopped. I was anxious to get off the truck.) couldn't see too much as it was still fairly dark. All I can remember (vividly) was the truck stopping and my deciding to hop down and get to the cab, and try to warm up in there. In the half light of that frosty mist seeing any distance was very tough. Between the time I jumped down and walked to the cab, someone hollered "Tanks". I was just getting ready to step onto the running board when I heard that yell. I looked around and saw some fifty or seventy five yards away, a tree line in which I could make out the shape of a couple of German tanks. This all took place in seconds. I've never been sure of the number of tanks but it was more than one.

I sprinted back to the rear of the truck and practically dove into the back, as the Chief hit the gas and we took off. There were small arms and burp gun fire coming from somewhere. I just buried my head into the pack of duffel bags and prayed. The chief drove like hell and barreled through the town of Schonberg. looked out of the back of the truck and saw another truck following us. After about a half hour we stopped. As the trucks pulled up one behind the other, I jumped out and met several guys from the other trucks. Nobody seemed to know what happened. It was really mass confusion. Some of the trucks behind us had been shot up and no one knew the fate of any of the men. The sight of those tanks stayed with me for a long time. I never understood how those tanks had allowed us to get so close to them.

I learned we were heading toward St Vith. This news was frightening. St Vith, where Division headquarters was located, was to my mind, way behind where we had been and indicated that we were in a very sizable retreat. There was other, even worse news. It seems that Colonel Kelly, our Battalion Commander had not left with us the night before. He had stayed back with "C" Battery as it tried to extricate itself from our first position and was surrounded by the Germans and was taken prisoner.
I, and all of the men that I knew, had tremendous respect and admiration for Colonel Kelly and his capture added another notch of sadness to our hearts.
We drove on further toward St. Vith and assembled west of the city. We met up with some of our other guys. At this time I started asking about Frank Aspinwall. No one had seen him or heard about him. Some one said there were several vehicles that had been shot up in the run through Schonberg. I kept hoping and praying that he was ok.

We spent a good part of the day near the town. In late afternoon we were ordered to set up a road block north of St. Vith, and spent part of the night in our trucks near where we had been bivouacked on our way to the front. Talk about going backwards! At this stop I had caught up with some of my headquarters buddies and was now riding in a 6x6 with them.

our guys. We each told our stories and tried to get some general idea of what was happening. It all added up to a great deal of confusion; the bottom line being that we were getting pushed back. heard, to my great dismay, that Ed Brown had apparently been captured in the Schonberg area. hoped and prayed that Brownie,

with his bad leg was ok. I also got the disheartening news that Smithy, who I was going to ride with the previous night, was also either killed or captured, together with Lt. Clausson, somewhere in the confusion that surrounded Schoenberg. I thanked God that somehow I had been spared from whatever fate had befallen then both.

A word about prayer. I believe all of us prayed in our own way. I prayed to God and even proposed a sort of Faustian deal. If he got me out of this mess alive, I would try to be a better Jew. I have tried to live up to that.

According to Aspinwall's history, we drove till about lam in the morning when we finally stopped. We all slept in our spots on the truck. Sometime after we stopped, we were awakened by word that there were German paratroopers near us. It turned out that this rumor was started by the same Staff Sergeant who had tried to run away at our first position. I don't know what happened to that guy, but I did not wish him well. I never did find out what happened to him. We finally settled down in our trucks for whatever sleep we could get.
At about 7:30 am we started up again. By about 8 am the column was halted. The word was that the Germans had attacked 1 06th Division Artillery, Headquarters Battery on the same road we were on. We pulled off the road and set up a perimeter defense with a couple of our guns looking down the highway. The Germans apparently had dropped parachute troops in the area back of St Vith. This was causing a lot of confusion, far more then warranted by the actual number (as we later learned). Everybody was jumpy. Beside the usual password we used for identification, we were also told to ask other question about baseball, eg: who won the American League pennant in 1942.

My impression was of riding in our trucks on a road for several hours, then being halted by a roadblock of some kind. We couldn't go further because there were Krauts up ahead. We then turned the trucks around and started back down the same road. After a couple of more hours we were halted at another roadblock and told their were Germans ahead and couldn't go any further. The overall perception was that we couldn't get out of this mess no matter in which direction we went. I felt like a rat in a maze.

We received orders to withdraw to the area of Bovigny, which I assumed and hoped we could get to. I very clearly remember the small groups of Belgium people who gathered at the intersections of the various towns we went through. The looks in their eyes told us their feelings; we were retreating and leaving them at the mercy of the Germans. This hurt and only added to the aura of gloom that we ourselves felt. A couple of times our guys shouted out, "retour" and pointed to themselves. Some of it, I'm sure, was intended to raise our own spirits. It wasn't a very convincing performance and the looks of the people underlined the verdict.

At Bovigny, a significant event happened. The Commanding Officer of the 1 74th Field Artillery, who was in this area, requested that our three remaining howitzers, with back-up personnel be sent to Charan. The battalion was split up into two groups. Group A consisted of the three gun sections under the command of Major Parker, and Group B was made up of the rest of

the battalion plus remnants of the 590th Service Battery. I was put in Group B since they were looking for gun crews.
From here on I can give only a thumbnail sketch of what took place with Group A since was not with them. They wound up defending a place called Baraque de Frature, forever after known to us as "Parker's Crossroads".(5) But it was their actions and sacrifices that earned for the 589th a legacy of heroism and valor that is still being studied at various military schools.

At about this time we got word of what had happened at Malmedy. A group of GI's had been cut off and surrounded by the advancing Germans. They had surrendered and were encircled by the Germans who very deliberately and in cold blood machine-gunned them to death. This single event gave every GI the determination to fight these bastards to the death. The word was passed to keep one round for yourself in the event you were captured! I don't believe the German's ever understood what this massacre had done to stiffen the resolve of the average guy on the line.(6) There were rumors that one of our medics was in the massacre, but I have not been able to confirm that.

We traveled west (backwards) toward Salmchateau and bivouacked for the night near Joubieval. Remember, that the names of these towns meant nothing to us. We (or at least I) really didn't know the names of these towns at that time. It's only in reading about what happened, and with a map in front of you, that the names of the towns become meaningful.

December 19th. We were on the road again. Sometime around noon or so, we stopped in a field. There were elements of many different outfits there, including a lot of trucks from the 28th Infantry Division. I had been riding in a truck with some of our guys from Headquarters Battery. I decided to try and find my friend Sgt Webb who I hadn't seen since the first day of the attack. Finally I found the kitchen truck and had a reunion with him. While I was on the kitchen truck and looking across the field at all the vehicles parked helter-skelter, I saw coming toward the truck, the figure of Frank Aspinwall. I couldn't believe my eyes! I jumped off the truck and ran to greet him. It was a wonderful moment for me that I've never forgotten. I know I had tears in my eyes.

There were two things that Frank said to me at the time, that have always remained in my memory. "Fish", he said, "you see this", and he reached into his pocket and pulled out a GI compass, "I'm going to put this on my mantelpiece at home, because this is what got me through the German lines". The next thing he told me was that the only officer with his group was Lt. Wood of A Battery and he (Aspinwall) had become separated from them after the first day of being caught behind German lines (Dec 17). In the light of subsequent events, this was an important recollection (7).

Needless to say this was one of the happiest (relatively) days for me. Aspinwall's story was fascinating. When the firing started in the Early morning at Schonberg (our second position), he had jumped onto the hood of a jeep and had wound up in a group of trees that turned out to be behind German lines. From there he had slowly made his way back with the aid of his compass. His story even helped me forget the pain in my feet. But not for long. Every time I had to get in or out of a truck I saw stars. And in our situation we were getting in and out

of our trucks quite frequently, especially getting out, where I had to jump and put added pressure on my feet. The pain was getting worse. It felt like I was walking on a thousand hot needles. My right foot was the worst; the big toe was an odd looking ashen color. I had to use my rifle as a crutch. Without my buddies I would not have made it through. They literally supported me by letting me put my arms around their shoulders and having me hobble between them. Sgt Webb asked me to stay with his truck and I was happy to do so.

That afternoon we pulled back to the area of Phillipeville via La Roche and Dinant. This is a pretty long retreat. Why we went back so far I don't know. Going through these towns, I saw the same grim faces of the Belgium people, staring at us with a mixture of resignation and disgust. We were running away from the Nazis, but they were going to have to live with them. How I wish we could have said something to them.
One encouraging aspect we saw was the line up of artillery pieces, placed literally wheel to wheel in the tree lines of the woods. This ran on for miles and was truly impressive. We also heard that the 82nd Airborne was being sent up to stop the attack. The 82nd had an awesome reputation and gave us our first assurance that we could turn this thing around.

We stopped that night on a road in front of a French style chateau. As we looked at the building, we could see a number of flashing lights moving eerily from window to window. Our first reaction was that someone in the house was signaling to German paratroopers who were reported in the vicinity. We took positions in a ditch facing the Chateau, carbines loaded and ready to fire and waited. Eventually word came down the line that the lights were caused by our own guys who had gotten into the Chateau and were exploring the place with their flashlights, moving from room to room. We found out later that this was an orphanage and that a Count and his wife, who owned the place, had welcomed our guys into the building. This gave some of our men the chance to get cleaned up. The rest of us spent the night back in the miserably cold trucks. Aspinwall mentions that a double guard was placed on the column,

December 20th. We were ordered to go to Vielsalm and we retraced our route of the previous day, going through Dinant and Marche. We got back very late at night in a complete blackout! We groped our way around in what was something like a town square. A number of us, including Aspinwall and I, found a warm, community shower room in a Belgium army barracks. We not only used the facilities to take long showers, but we also bedded down on the warm, stone, damp floor, and slept like a logs. This was my first shower in seventeen days and it felt great.

December 21 st: We started the day doing routine maintenance to our equipment. We were able to draw some additional equipment, such as ammo and blankets. There was a good deal of firing off in the distance, but we had learned to distinguish between incoming and outgoing artillery and the distance from us; so we just went about our business.

A number of my buddies kept urging me to go to the medics and have them take a look at my feet. I finally did. The medic looked my feet over and asked where it hurt etc. He then told me that I would have to go to a field hospital for treatment, and I would have to stay off my feet He wrote out a note and told me to give it to

my commanding officer. I walked out of that building with the note in my hand. I hobbled around gingerly by myself thinking what to do. There were all kind of stories going round about Army hospitals being overrun by the Germans in the rear of the front. I thought of being in a hospital without my rifle and being captured by the Nazis. That, plus the thought of leaving my outfit and my buddies who had helped me through some miserable times, made me decide not to show the note. Your outfit becomes your home and your buddies become your family. I decided to stay with my home and family.

The rest of the day was spent "trading". This Belgium military base became a center for all kinds of outfits, either coming or going to the front. The base was sent up with a central square surrounded by buildings around the perimeter. This central square became the crossroads for all kinds of activity. A number of tanks of the 7th Armored Division had pulled into the square, and we talked with them about our mutual experiences. Above all, they were interested in getting our Carbines. A Sherman tank is a cramped quarter; having to lug around an M1 rifle, weighing some eight pounds, could really be tough. Our Carbines weighed about three pounds and were considerably shorter then the M1.

Since it looked more and more that we would be used as infantry, we wanted something that could hit the Germans a lot further away than a Carbine.(8) So we made wholesale exchanges, swapping not only our Carbines, but any ammo we had for the Ml's. We even got the tanker's bandoleers, along with stacks of hand grenades. We also traded or picked up a 30 caliber and a 50 caliber machine gun as well as several boxes of ammo to go with them. One of our guys even brought back a BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle). We packed all this firepower onto a half-ton weapons carrier that became the depository for all manner of equipment, including Bazooka's and their projectiles. I believe we were better equipped with armament than when we started!
Sometime during the day a batch of prisoners was brought in from Parker's Crossroads. I don't remember much about them except they didn't look too unhappy. Word came down about Kraut tanks that were approaching the town and a team was sent out to repel them. Due to a mix-up in where the front lines were, a number of our guys were, unfortunately, taken prisoner. A number of shot up vehicles were towed in, telling us that the fighting was close by.

December 22nd: Orders came down for us to abandon Vielsalm. Various units began to leave early. Their was a lot of last minute salvaging of anything that wasn't nailed down. We left about 10 am and were one of the last to pull out. Even as we pulled out an anti-aircraft unit pulled up and set up in the courtyard.

We heard we were heading toward Liege. We didn't get too far, however and that night stayed at a small village between Vielsalm and Trois Ponts. Again it was bitter and numbingly cold. There were a lot of planes flying around and we were told to expect an airborne attack. We spread out from the village and spent a miserably freezing night on guard duty. The next day we heard that German paratroopers were dropped, but unfortunately for them, they landed among positions of the 82nd airborne.

December 23rd: Moved further toward Liege, (I think). In the truck M/Sgt Mike Palfey brought up an interesting point. He asked if we had noticed that the day prior to the German attack, none of the German civilians who lived in the vicinity

of our buildings were around. We hadn't given it much though but we all agreed with him. So much had happened since the 16th, we hadn't really thought about it. But It was true. Somehow the civilians had been tipped off that something was going to happen and they disappeared. I wished we had as good an intelligence setup as they did,

We stopped for dinner that night in a Belgium farmyard, and our guys got hold of some German parachutes that had been dropped the night before. The Belgium people at the farm were very good to us and we hated to think they might fall into the hands of the Nazis. That actually happened a day or two later. We spent the night in a small village where some of us slept in barns and the rest in the trucks. I bedded down in a barn where the hay took some of the cold out of our bones.

We spent the next two days in this area. Some of our guys who had been at Parker's Crossroads began to come back. This was somewhere in the vicinity of Eronheid. They told of heavy, bitter fighting in which a number of our men had fought with great distinction, Sgt Tacker was mentioned as was Sgt Randy Miller (who later received a battlefield commission) Major Parker had been wounded, and refused to be evacuated, but he finally was. A number of our guys had been taken prisoner. These stories made a deep impression on the rest of us. Their heroic action at the Crossroads, delaying the German attack for several days, together with dozens of similar small unit actions was the essential reason the German attack failed.

The weather finally cleared on December 24th. We all ran out of our billets to watch the awesome display of hundreds of our bombers in perfect formation, beautifully silhouetted against a clear blue sky. It was a thrilling sight!

December 25th. We started toward Liege. In the middle of the morning a couple of explosions stopped our column. I didn't see them since I was in a tarp-covered 6x6 truck. In Aspinwall's history he says they were, "about 300 feet from the column and dirt flew 50 feet into the air." We jumped out of the trucks and hit the dirt, but we were in an open field and the only cover was in the ditches along side the road. The word was that some high flying German planes had dropped a couple of bombs. We bivouacked in a small village at about 4pm. Since it was Christmas, some candy and cigarettes were found and were passed out. That night we slept in barns in and around the village of Eronheid.

December 26th. About eight in the morning two German planes flew over the village at low altitude. They didn't do anything. We left that afternoon about three for the town of Delembreaux, about 10 miles south of Liege. We found shelter in private houses and public buildings. I don't really remember much of what happened there. My feet seemed to be getting better, I assume, due to more opportunities to change socks and somewhat of a warmer environment. The village was on the "buzz bomb route", and we could hear and then see the exhaust of these monsters as they headed toward Liege. They would then suddenly stop and after some seconds you could hear the explosion. Some never made it to Liege and exploded in our area.

They shook the buildings and rattled some windows. It was more frightening at night, but most of us slept through it.

December 27. We drew some new equipment, including Howitzers and trucks. Some buzz bombs came over at night and one landed near one of our batteries but didn't cause any damage.
December 28. We left Delembreaux about 4pm in the afternoon with the townspeople lined up to wave goodbye. I think they felt some reassurance about seeing us with new equipment, and that we were not going to abandon them. We ourselves didn't have the same feelings. There was much talk about Krauts in American uniforms, and guard duty became a challenging of everything that moved. There was talk the Germans wouldn't be stopped until they reached the Meuse river. If you look at a map that you will see just how much of a penetration that was.

It was about this time we began to see articles in "Yank", calling the battle we were in, "The Bulge". And that stuck. As we read these articles we became more aware of the scale of the German attack. "Overwhelmed" was an often used noun in these articles. "Hugh losses" was another frequently used phrase. We began to see for the first time that we were in an enormous battle, the scale of which none of us had understood up to now.
We were headed for the area of Hody, to a Chateau Xhos. We had gotten permission to stay there. Arrived about 6 pm. It was a very large gray building with two wings on each side of the main building. and about two-thirds of what was left of the Battalion found quarters in the main building. The owners of the Chateau were very hospitable to us.

December 29 through 31. Spent the time resting up and getting reorganized. We had hot food and that helped. We had a visit from a Red Cross Clubmobile and enjoyed the coffee and doughnuts and throwing snowballs at the Red Cross girls. At night the buzz bombs were a pain in the rear. They kept waking you up and then you had to listen and hope (and pray) they wouldn't cut out over you. A number of them fell in the neighborhood, shaking the building and breaking almost all the windows in the Chateau. We spent a good bit of the time on guard duty. The nights were brutally cold. At least we were out in the open and listening and watching the glow of the buzz bombs wasn't as scary as staying inside the building. All in all though, I'd rather have been in the building and been warm.
On New Years Eve, M/Sgt. Palfey used a pair of GI boots to trade for a bottle of Cognac. Some six or seven of us, including Aspinwall, sat around a large, portable kitchen stove we had gotten from Sgt. Webb and finished off the bottle. We all felt this was the end of a chapter for us. We had been through a bad time and hoped that the New Year would see the end of the war. None of us knew what lay ahead, but we felt it couldn't be as bad as what we had been through.

January 1, 1945. The Battalion Commander (Major Goldstein, I believe), called us together and told us that the battalion would not be reorganized, but that we would be sent as replacements to more fortunate units that hadn't been as badly hit as we were. We had heard rumors this might take place, but kept hoping the 589th would be reorganized. It was not to be, at least for now.

January 2. Some of us, including me went to the 592nd FA Battalion (155mm. The rest went to the 591st FA Battalion, and the remaining few, mostly medics went to the Infantry.

There were only 92 of us left out of 504 men in the Battalion. Those are the numbers remember. They tell you something about what we had been through. The 589th received the Croix de Guerre with Silver-Gilt Star from the French Government. Here is the citation:

A remarkable battalion whose brilliant conduct was greatly valued during the battles of St. Vith and Manhay on16 to 23 December 1944. Attacked by an enemy operating in force but filled with the desire to conquer at any cost, it remained in position and, with with direct and accurate fire, kept the attackers from access to vital communications south of Manhay. Short of food, water and pharmaceutical products, the 589th Field Artillery Battalion endured three attacks without flinching, inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and forced him to retire.
PARIS, 15 July 1946

Signed: BIDAULT
We were the only Battalion so honored.

1. 'My wife and I were in Rouen some three years ago and I went down to the port area. I could make absolutely no connection with our landing site.
2 On our recent trip to the Ardennes (May 1997), with the help of Vincent Gerard of CRIBA, we found the exact location of our first position. The house we used for our Barracks is still there, and the building still commands the same view of the Auw-Bliealf road it did in 1944.
3 In discussing this incident with Frank Aspinwall some weeks later, he said he hadn't known of any German infantry that far south of the road where the tanks were. All I know was that I saw movement there and one or two seconds later there was none.
4. When my wife and I returned to the area in May 97, the steps were still there, although the building had been rebuilt on the very same site.

5 In visiting this site in May 1997, in the company of three CRIBA members, it' s very easy to see the significance of this road junction. Road signs point literally in every direction. To see one of our 105 Howitzer's in place with the dedicatory sign honoring Major Parker was a moving experience. There were fresh flowers at the site.

6 On our trip to the Bulge area in May of 1997 we stopped at the Malmedy Memorial. There is a plaque on a stone wall with the names of all of the men who were massacred there.

7. Sometime in 1985 or 1986 Frank asked me to write a letter to a gentleman who was looking into the Eric Wood story and disputing Frank's description of the events. In my letter I repeated what I stated above. I met that fellow at the 106th convention in Mobile.

8 If memory serves, a carbine had an accurate range of about 200 hundred yards: an MI had an accurate range of about eight or nine hundred yards. That wasn't the maximum, but I'm talking about accuracy. Anything beyond these distances you had to have God, luck and the wind to hit anything.