

*Account of December 16–18, 1944 at Schonberg–Bleialf*  
*Transcribed from original hand written account by*  
**Captain William J. Hynes**  
*by William J. Hynes Jr. and Frances Hynes*



On 16 December 1944, "B" Company, 81st Engineer Combat Battalion was billeted in Schonberg, Belgium. At 0800 the individual platoons left Schonberg to engage in their customary work of road maintenance in the 423rd Infantry Regiment area. At about 0820 I received a message from 81st Engineer Battalion which stated that the Germans were attacking and that "B" Company was to assemble in Schonberg and await the arrival of the rest of the Battalion.

I immediately sent out messengers to contact the platoons. At about 0840, I received a message from Division stating that "B" Company was attached to the 423rd Infantry Regiment and was to move out to the vicinity of Bleialf and to prepare to counter attack at Bleialf. At once we left Schonberg in trucks for Bleialf. Schonberg was being shelled heavily as the Company left. We left the trucks about one mile from Bleialf and proceeded forward on foot. Lieutenant Bell of 423rd Infantry Regiment intercepted the Company with orders from Colonel Cavender Commanding officer 423rd Regiment. He informed me that Germans had occupied a portion of Bleialf. That "Service" Company 423 Infantry Regiment was attacking and that "B" Company 81st Engineer was to support "Service" Company in the attack.

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After Bleialf had been cleaned out, I was ordered to take up a defensive position to the East of that town. I arrived in that area at about 1600. I had a front of somewhat less than a mile to occupy with my Company. The terrain consisted of a series of ridges and hills, thickly wooded in places. I occupied the highest ground in the area and proceeded to organize a defensive position.

From this position I could command the surrounding country. I was part of a provisional Battalion commanded by Executive Officer 423rd Infantry, "Service" Co was on my left and a Reconnaissance troop of the 18th Cavalry was on my right. 1st Squad, 1st Platoon was in Bleialf guarding the Battalion C.P.

At about 2300 I received orders to relieve "Service" Co with one of my platoons. I sent the 1st Platoon. The Germans kept up heavy artillery fire throughout the night. Contact with the units on the right and left was maintained by patrol. In the early morning hours of the 17 December the patrol sent to contact the 18 Cavalry failed to return. A patrol returning from Battalion C.P. in Bleialf ran into Germans infiltrating our loosely held lines. Sergeant Edward Timmers was killed in this encounter, the first man killed in "B" Company. Clashes with patrols kept up until daylight. At daylight, the Germans were revealed to be attacking in force. The first plan was overrun with the exception of the 1st squad which escaped and joined the 423rd Infantry Regiment.

Due to our position on the high ground and after a H.M.G. had been shifted to cover our exposed left flank, the German assault was repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy. I learned from two captured Germans that their regiment had been brought up in half-trucks the night before — their objective was Schonberg. At this time we had no communications as our radio was out of order. The Germans kept up a steady fire with small arms and mortars but our casualties were very light due to our entrenched positions. The men settled down and soon had their previously unfired rifles zeroed in. Germans began to drop at 700 yard range.

At about 1200 an armored car of the 18th Cavalry contacted me on orders of the 423rd Regiment. I told him that I could hold my position if I got ammunition which was running short. He returned to his Company leaving me a walkie-talkie for communications. The next message I received informed me that he was withdrawing. I held my position until 1500. At this time we exhausted our machine gun ammo. Two squads of the 2nd Platoon were over-run and surrendered. I withdrew — a squad at a time. After we reached a safe area, a count showed 64 men and 3 Officers. The original strength was 162 Enlisted Men & 5 Officers. I tried to swing around and rejoin the 423rd Regiment but found Germans in between so headed for Schonberg. That night we ran into Germans twice. The next morning found 4 men missing, 2 killed in action and 10 wounded. The next day I continued toward Schonberg.

Source: *The CUB of the Golden Lion, August – November 2016*



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