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**December 24, 1944**

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At that time I was a 1st Lieutenant in the 75th Infantry Division, Division Headquarters Company. I was the Division Traffic at the Division Headquarters level. I was told to report to 75th Division Headquarters to General Mickel, Assistant Division Commander. When I reported he told me "A battalion of the 106th Infantry Division has been entrapped by the Germans. They are completely encircled. One of our Division Regiments has been ordered to drive a wedge through the German unit so we can rescue that trapped battalion."

*"I want you to prepare 20 trucks to go in there tonight and bring those men out. You pick an officer to lead those trucks in. There will be no headlights, no cat eyes, and our MP's will have a man or men at every road junction or intersection to direct the convoy. Have that officer report here at Division Headquarters at 6:00 pm for his instructions. You may go now. Have that officer here at 6:00 pm."* I responded, "Yes Sir. By the way can you tell me what regiment that battalion belongs to?" As I remember he said it was the 106 Infantry Division Regiment 426 (I may not be accurate on this).

I went to my unit and I told S/Sergeant Elmer Rouse to prepare 20 trucks and my jeep for the in the dark convoy. I asked him to put one case of "C" Rations and a case of ammo in each vehicle. I told him I would not need a driver for my vehicle. Sergeant Rouse told me he would have them ready. I knew he would and he picked the best drivers and trucks we had. A few minutes before 6:00 pm I reported to Division Headquarters for the briefing. General Mickel asked me "Where is the officer who will lead this convoy?" I told him I was going to take the convoy as that is my brother-in-laws' unit and I have more reason to go. He said, "You cannot go" and he left the room.

The Division Chief of Staff – Colonel Herbert Powell said, "What are you going to do now?" He told me to pick someone. I said "I did, I picked me. My brother-in-law is in

*that unit. The General will come back and approve my decision.*" He came in soon and said "Good luck Lieutenant" and he touched me on the shoulder. After the briefing I left with the convoy about 6:30 pm.

As we proceeded, the Military Police had done a good job of placing the men at junctions and intersections. We arrived in the battalion area about 8/00 pm. It was a very desolate and depressing atmosphere with too much snow and no lights. When I had all the men on the trucks, I walked to the last truck and asked if there was a John Burke (Note webmaster: 422nd Infantry Regiment) on this truck. One man responded and said Johnny had been captured three days ago. I asked if he was injured. The man said: "*no, he was not injured but he was wet, cold, out of ammo and very hungry as well all are.*" I thanked him. I went to the next truck and asked and someone said: "*I never heard of him.*" I went to the next truck and was told Johnny was not injured but had been captured. I thanked them and said: "*We'll be out of here soon.*"

As I was walking to the head of the truck column where my jeep was, a man said: "*Halt - what's the password?*" and he stuck his rifle in my stomach very hard. I responded: "*Soldier you hit me so hard in my stomach I forgot the password.*" He said: "*I don't want any conversation I want the password.*" I said: "*Take me to your supervisor.*" He told me to walk straight and I could feel his rifle between my shoulders. We went to a small tent. There was a captain and a 1st lieutenant there. The guard told them this man doesn't know the password. The captain was a dental captain. He asked, "*Why don't you know the password?*" I explained what happened and also told him I was in charge of this convoy and we are ready to leave.

The captain asked if I had any dental work done in the army. I told him yes, a dental bridge. He asked me to hand it to him. He looked at it and asked my serial number. I gave him the number and he agreed it matched the number in my bridge. He said, "*The password is -----.* *If you are ready to leave we will follow you out of here.*" I told the security guard, "*You did a good job but you sure startled me. You are a good soldier.*"

I moved the convoy out of that area (no headlights) and took the road I was directed to. I came to an intersection and took the road I was directed to. Bout a mile farther and at a fork in the road a guard appeared. He was very nervous and tell me to go that way. Then he told me it sure was lonesome here. As I started on the road, I thought the road was very narrow and as I proceeded it became more so. I decided this road doesn't go anywhere. I stopped and told the driver behind me to pass the word back I was going to turn around. I cut wire on a fence and the field looked flat but heavy with snow. I planned to make a circle and then return on that road. As I progressed all seemed OK. The first two trucks behind me were near me and as I watched the third truck dropped about three feet in the front.

I found we were driving over a pond. We used two trucks to pull that truck out while I was finding the perimeter of the pond and made a new track for them to follow. We returned on the narrow road to the junction. The guard said: "*I'm sorry I directed you on the wrong road. I've been our here alone for so long I'm very nervous.*" We

proceeded on the other road and went to a small village where the 75th Division had established a temporary mess hall and medical facility.

Someone met me and told me to unload the troops and have them stand by the trucks. I did that and men were leaning on the trucks. One of the trucks began to slide sideways on the frozen packed snow and one wheel went over a retaining wall about four feet. I had the men hook two trucks on it and pull it back on the road. I told the men not to lean against any of the trucks. About that time a Major said; *"I'll take charge of the men now. You may leave."* We left and started back to our unit about an hours' drive with the roads as they were and no lights.

We were driving on a ridge and I saw a buzz bomb coming toward us. I could see the flame at the exhaust. It looked like it was coming right at us. I quickly pulled in a ditch and the trucks did the same. The bomb passed over us about 20 feet and then the motor stopped. As it started to drop it cleared the ridge and went in to the valley below where there were some Allied Supply Depots. We could hear it explode and see the flash.

I told the drivers behind me to pass the word back they could turn on the cat eyes on every other vehicle and we were going to our unit. When we arrived there I thanked the men for a good job. It was about 2:00 am. I went to Division Headquarters to make my report. A few days later General Mickel found me and said; *"You tell your men thank you. They did a good job."*

*Source: Bulge Bugle August 2011*

<http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/stories26/us-army25/877-december-24-1944.html>

*Henri ROGISTER, webmaster*