

Ernie Tallent

*3rd Regiment
106th Infantry Division*

August 26, 2005 - [Mission accomplished: Battle of the Bulge memorial to be dedicated Saturday](#)

A monumental goal set by Blount County Commissioner Ernie Tallent has been reached after almost four years.

At 10 a.m. Saturday, a monument bearing the names of 170 veterans of World War II's Battle of the Bulge will be dedicated on the front lawn of the Blount County Courthouse. Any veteran, whether living or deceased, who fought in the bloody battle was eligible to have his name included on the monument with proof of service.

"I started this when I was 80 years old," said Tallent, who will soon be 85. "It's done now."

When Tallent began his crusade to preserve the memory of veterans of this battle, he had only five names. Tallent and his brothers, Doug Tallent and Gordon Tallent, were all at the battle although at different positions.

"To get 170 names, I had to dig under a lot of bushes and do a lot of legwork," he said.

The monument is of Tennessee marble and is 5 feet tall and 10 feet in length. Tallent said there is room for 30 to 40 more names. Funds for the monument were donated by veterans and local businesses.

Ernie Tallent was a young man working on a construction crew in California when World War II began. He returned to East Tennessee and enlisted in the United States Army, then found himself part of the force which stemmed the tide of German aggression at the Battle of the Bulge.

"There was 19,000 killed at the Battle of the Bulge, 641 in my outfit," Tallent recalled. ``The Germans captured 37,000 as prisoners of war."

Tallent believes this battle was the biggest battle of World War II. It took place in the heavily forested Ardennes region of eastern Belgium and northern Luxembourg.

Tallent was with the [106th Infantry Division, 3rd Regiment](#), stationed in Compiégn, France. When the call came for volunteers to relieve the men on the line, Tallent was one of them.

"The 2nd Division, we replaced man for man, gun for gun, so they could go back," Tallent said in a 2001 interview with The Daily Times. ``The boys, before I got there, they really had it rough, rougher than we did. For me, it was rough enough. There was awful snow, and the dead piled up in rows like cordwood. That's war for you."

Battle of the Bulge

The Battle of the Bulge, the last German offensive in the west during World War II, began in December 1944 and ended in January 1945. Following the Normandy invasion in June 1944, the Allied forces swept rapidly through France but became stalled at the German border in September.

On Dec. 16, the Germans launched a counterattack in an attempt to divide the American and British forces and retake the vital seaport of Antwerp. They managed to create a "bulge" in the Allied lines, but were repelled by the overwhelming Allied air superiority.

The Germans withdrew to their own lines in January, but heavy losses, including some 220,000 casualties, contributed to their final collapse the following spring.

"The first three days of the battle were the most important for the Germans. They knew they was going to lose," Tallent said.

Tallent said the monument is to remind other generations what the soldiers went through in the battle and to acknowledge the sacrifices made.

For Tallent personally, his project has brought back many memories.

"There have been a lot of flashbacks, good and bad," the old veteran said.
by Linda Braden Albert, Maryville Daily Times - Maryville,TN,USA

August 24, 2005 - [Monument honoring WWII vets to be unveiled in Blount - Commissioner who was in Battle of the Bulge put project together](#)

MARYVILLE - A Blount County commissioner's quest to honor those who defeated both a determined enemy and a cold, wet European winter will culminate Saturday when a block of granite bearing 170 names is unveiled on the lawn of the Blount County Courthouse.

The monument, a four-year undertaking by Commissioner Ernie Tallent, salutes area men who participated in the epic and costly World War II bloodbath known as the Battle of the Bulge.

The dedication will be at 10 a.m., and Fred Forster, CEO of the Chamber of Blount County and a former career military man, will speak.

Tallent, 84, and two younger brothers all fought in the battle, though in different places.

Tallent, who last year won election to the commission by a single vote, said he started his Battle of the Bulge project by obtaining the names of five Blount County men from a national organization of battle veterans. From there, he said, additional names kept coming in until they totaled 170 from Blount, Monroe and Knox counties.

The monument has room to engrave an additional 50-60 names if more surface, Tallent said.

Tallent says the importance of the battle can hardly be overstated.

"I firmly believe," he said, "that if Germany had not had two fronts to fight they would have beat all of us."

Tallent saw action in France, Germany and Belgium.

"There was a lot of rain and snow," he said. "There were over 600 casualties in our outfit," which was the [106th Infantry Division](#).

In all, there were 81,000 American casualties, including 19,000 killed. The fight - Dec. 16, 1944-Jan. 25, 1945 - dealt the backbreaking blow to Nazi Germany. Just more than three months after the Battle of the Bulge, the war in Europe was over.

The battle, Tallent said, brings back "a lot of memories, good and bad. Young people have no sense of what that battle was."

"The Germans knew they had to win or they were done. And we couldn't even dig a hole to sleep in because the ground was frozen."

The frozen corpses, Tallent said, "were stacked up like cord wood."

Tallent has a long record of helping veterans, and the monument is a way to get recognition for a group that is dwindling rapidly. He raised the money for the monument from donations and from veterans groups and Alcoa.

The commissioner said he was in California helping construct Shasta Dam when the war broke out, and "I knew what I had to do."

He returned to his native Blount County and enlisted. After the war he went back into the construction industry, where he was employed for 44 years.

By ROBERT WILSON, Knoxville News Sentinel (subscription) - Knoxville,TN,USA



Page last revised
James D. West

www.IndianaMilitary.org
jimdwest@centurylink.net