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VIII Corps, 3rd Army



On December 15, 1944 we were in town of Nieder Emmels, four kilometers north of St Vith on the Malmedy road, German artillery fire all day and at night the sky was all lit up by search lights. On 16 December 1944 S/Sergeant Harold Smuckler from Albany, New York, was attached to VIII Corps field artillery told of German counter attack which had taken three towns. German shell landed in back of the hospital.

On 17 December 1944 the breakthrough came and we are right in the middle of it. The 106th Infantry Division in the front of us was overrun. Guns louder than ever, reports of more shells landing near St Vith. 7th Armored Division moving into Nieder Emmels. We were alerted to move out around noon. We packed in a hurry, and the convoy left at 1330hours with the first section, but the second section had to leave by jumping on passing cavalry trucks, leaving much equipment behind. The roads were choked stopped at Goronne outside of Vielsalm.

18 December 1944, we pulled out again at 1100 hours, went through La Roche and on to Marche-en-Famenne, then to Vecmont. Plane activity near La Roche. Lost two ambulances and didn't hear from them for a week. Had very bad weather and not enough food. We set up our station here, but had to retreat further. VIII Corps field artillery units moved into our area during the night.

19 December 1944, we left Vecmont, Belgium, arrived at Bertrix, Belgium. Field artillery all over the place. Ammunition stacked for miles along the St Hubert road. Arrived at Libramont where Battalion was located. Moved to a field near Braux (???) temporarily. We saw trees prepared with dynamite for roads blocks. We moved again and parked on the road for three hours, then into Bertrix after dark. We then set up our station here and worked all night handling casualties from the 101st Airborne Division. We treated more casualties here than at any other time.

The 429th Medical Collecting Company was attached to the 101st Airborne Division to replace the 326th Airborne Medical Company which had been captured. We evacuated and operated an ambulance relay point between the 429th Medical Collecting Company. During the night the 101st Airborne was completely cut off from all the outside reach and above arrangements ceased to function. Meanwhile, two men,

S/Sergeant Morrison House of Ticonderoga, New York and Private Edward Kelleher from Brockton, Massachusetts were attached to a stragglers point, operated by the 818th Military Police's and one officer Captain Fred Jameson and four men, Sergeant Orville Kramer, Sergeant Eddy Wydra, Pfc Matthew Burty and Private John Dance on detached service to VIII Corps, started out for Bastogne late in the day feeling comfortable in the company of many tanks. This protective assurance disappeared when the tanks left the road and moved into the woods. Darkness came and Military Police's guided them under black-out toward Bastogne. A sentry halted them and wanted the password. Our officer's response was black widow did not satisfy him but eventually he let them pass. Officers in Bastogne expressed surprise that they were able to get there. They were surrounded on three and a third sides and had to move.

They ended up in Sibret, roadblocks, German tanks in town – unable to get out of trap set up aid station in chateau. Eating nothing, we burned letter, papers, etc. Tank knocked out but five men all got out. Jeep hit and one man killed, others escaped. All medics stayed in Sibret.

22 December 1944, march order came at midnight. We went about one mile and lead halftrack hit by shell from German tank, no casualties. Ordered to abandon town, burned vehicles, lead by paratroopers, infantry, artillery men and medics bringing up the rear, walked through woods and across fields to Neufchateau. We stayed at stragglers Collecting Point, established by Collecting Company "B", 103rd Medical Battalion, 28th Infantry Division.

23 December 1944 Pfc Burty and Pvt Dance back to the front line as medical aid men.

24 December 1944 Captain Jameson, Kramer and Widra returned to company in Muno, Belgium. We shaved and washed for first time in three days.

25 December 1944, Sergeant Clayton Thompson took five of our ambulances in a convoy of twenty into Bastogne under flag of truce to evacuate our wounded. We spent Christmas here and ate hash for dinner. We handled no casualties.

26 December 1944, we left Muno, Belgium and went to Mouzon, France as we had a few trucks we took this precaution in case we had to retreat across the Meuse.

27 December 1944, we left Monzon, France and returned to Marche, Belgium. Bob Thompson's platoon sent to the 87th Infantry Division for six days. Our easiest, as we worked at the Clearing Company and not at the front lines.

Spent New Year here and had turkey trimming for dinner. Bob Thompson's platoon recalled from 87th Infantry Division and sent 101st Airborne Division as their medical company had been captured. Here we had the roughest work of me whole war. We had eight casualties, Francis Maguire, Edward Caldwell, Frank Andrian, Chris Kampman, Abdon Siemenski, Norman Stark, Warren Williamson and Joseph Pagnan From Boston. Pagnan never returned to the unit.

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<http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/stories26/us-army25/675-465th-medical-collecting-company.html>

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