Philip H. Eve, Jr.
Heavy Machine Gun Squad Leader
Company H, 422nd Infantry
106th Infantry Division

8/27/2000

Dearest siblings and cousins,

I cherish this moment that I may impart to you a legacy that makes my heart warm like the sun. This is a story about our father, uncle, who did what was necessary to survive; he fought smartly and hard to defend his country while under enemy fire. He was young, scared, and courageous, he was strong and a survivor. He held his ground under enemy pressure and almost until death. He was captured and was forced to endure very harsh conditions as a POW. His combat experience is believed to be linked to his physical health condition.

Please engulf yourself and your family in this story to continue the legacy. This is truly a real heroic story about a young man from Suffolk, Virginia who found himself in the middle of the fiercest battle of WWII. I believe Dad's perseverance under fire is a reflection of his character and courage. I am proud to have known him and to be his son. I am so proud of him and hope that some day I may live up to his high level of standards.

Respectfully,

PH Eve, III
Cumming, GA

My Personal Account

WWII Battle of the Bulge

By Philip H. Eve, Jr.

9/11/96

CITATION FOR BRONZE STAR MEDAL

Staff Sergeant Philip H. Eve, Jr., a heavy machine gun squad leader in Company H, 422nd Infantry, 106th Infantry Division, on 19 December, 1944, distinguished himself by heroic achievement near Schonberg, Belgium. Under direct enemy artillery, small arms and automatic fire, he set up his crew in action and delivered effective fire to a front. From the bare forward slope of a hill, he continued to direct the fire until out of ammunition, then directing his crew to comparative safety, he destroyed the weapon in the face of imminent capture, and under the continuing enemy fire, aided in the evacuation of two seriously wounded soldiers. Sergeant Eve's courageous leadership and soldierly conduct reflect great credit upon himself and the military service.

The following text was transcribed from a hand written account by my dad and hero, Philip H. Eve, Jr. to express his personal experiences encountered in the WWII Battle of the Bulge. As you read his story, remember the fact that he was a young man of 21 from small town Suffolk, VA. Just imagine the lifetime effect of his combat experience on his life and his sons and daughters.

Phil Eve III

Forward

"My experiences of 1944-45 WWII which I related to Luke Martin, Veterans Service Officer on 9/11/96, for re-establishing and increasing my disability status with the Veterans Administration in Augusta."

Philip H. Eve, Jr.
Thomson, GA

Things I Remember from the Battle of the Bulge

I was a sergeant in charge of one water-cooled machine gun squad. There was lots of snow and ice everywhere and many tall trees. We lived in a one-room log cabin about 200-300 feet from machine gun emplacement. A line was strung between our cabin and the machine gun emplacement. Not far in front of the main area, our gun was set up to shoot into a barbed wire fence. We were instructed to not go near this fence and to shoot anyone we saw at the fence.

On one of the first nights there, I left the cabin to go to the gun about midnight for time on duty. I found that the line strung to guide us was down and useless. I walked carefully in the direction I was certain would take me to our gun emplacement. Almost immediately I found myself at the barbed wire fence. As I froze in my position and hurriedly pondered what to do, remembering that each of us had orders to shoot anyone at the fence, I heard a hammer click into a cocked position on a 45-caliber pistol and I knew it was aimed at me. It was a dark quiet night and sounds traveled clearly.

I thought of calling out to Para, our regular machine gun gunner, whose personal weapon was a 45-caliber pistol, but then remembered that we had been warned that Germans spoke very good English and that they knew many details including names of our personnel. I decided that my chances of not getting shot would be best if I left my M-1 rifle in its sling position over one shoulder and walked slowly to our gun emplacement without saying anything.

That's what I did and made it safely to our gun emplacement. Later I learned that a 45-caliber automatic pistol and other weapons had been aimed at me.

If I spoke to the men at our gun, they might not have recognized my voice and shot me to play it safe. The 106th Division trained many men to become overseas replacements until near the end of WWII. Many soldiers had not known other 106th troops for long.

In the daytime it was not unusual to hear and see buzz bombs in the sky close above the trees coming from the area in front of us occupied by the Germans. We were told that their targets were our headquarters and artillery located behind us. They were aimed at a target when launched or fired and the distance they went was regulated by the amount of fuel they carried. Seemed like a very unsure way to aim to me. Many passed overhead, but none exploded close to us that I can recall.

Late one night we were suddenly ordered to load our machine gun and other essential equipment on jeeps and trucks and leave the area. Many of us walked so that more heavy essentials could be moved. Again many of us had wet shoes and socks with no time place to dry out after having to wade shallow streams. The weather stayed freezing or near freezing and overcast. The next day another soldier and I were walking together up a very long hill when he was hit in the leg. I believe it was a single bullet. After doing what I could for him and believing that a medic and other troops were not far behind us, I went on to find a site for our machine gun.

The heavy weapon platoon of Company H that I was in was assigned to support a rifle company. That rifle company advanced down a very long hill. Near the bottom of that hill, they were ambushed or encountered superior forces and withdrew up a very long hill, which I remember as barren and with little or no cover for concealment or protection. We continued to fire our water-cooled 30 caliber guns at German 88-millimeter guns and an armored car that were visible until out of ammunition. I believe one or maybe two of four machine guns received direct or very near hits from German guns killing and wounding many. We fired our squad's gun as long as we had ammunition, and then threw away an essential piece of our gun to destroy it. I believe that the fourth machine gun in our platoon, with Sergeant Martin as squad leader also fired as long as operable and they had ammunition.

Our casualties were very heavy when the Germans opened up with the 88- millimeter guns. Staff Sergeant Jerry Meadows was hit in three or four places by shell fragments. I knelt beside him to help him as he lay on the ground. Technical Sergeant Sam Baxter, know as "Searchlight Sam", who had come to the 106th Division from an Army searchlight unit, knelt on the other side of Jerry. Many 88-millimeter shells were whistling in our direction from several different directions for what seemed like a very long time.

As we heard each shell coming, Sergeant Baxter and I flattened ourselves on either side of Sergeant Meadows. Finally Sergeant Baxter did not get up after a close-by burst. It appeared that he had been hit by a piece of shrapnel in the back of his head or neck and that he was dead. As I looked around after the shelling had stopped, I saw Lieutenant Harmon and PFC Carl Ayleswroth, both apparently dead. At some point I crawled to a higher point of the hilltop that we were on. There sat another 88-millimeter so close to us that it could not bear enough to shoot us. The 88-millimeter gun crew was very busy firing in another direction.

Sergeant Martin may have had some injury himself, but got around well. I believe that there were three men of our company, Company H with him and three with me. Most of the people we saw were dead. Sergeant Martin and the men with him decided to cross a wide-open area in an effort to get away. I did not see him again until I got to Miami Beach. I believe he told me that soon after crossing the wide-open area, he was soon captured. We saw several truck- loads of Germans ride by not far from us.

After what seemed like many many hours for darkness to come, so that chances of escape should be better, a squad of German soldiers appeared nearby. With them were three American Army officers, two chaplains and a medical officer or the number of each could be reversed. One or two of Americans who were not far from us, called out in a loud voice that German forces had control of the area and had gone on a long way towards the English Channel, that they were in full control of all the nearby countryside and while we might shoot a couple of Germans with our rifles or other weapons, we would certainly be killed, all of us.

We stood up with our hands up.

We were ordered by the German soldiers to dig a large grave to five of our nearby dead in it and to cover them with soil. I believe that Tech Sergeant Baxter and PFC Carl Ayleswroth were two of the dead that we buried. Then we carried Staff Sergeant Meadows what must have been a couple of miles on a stretcher to a farm. I believe he was hospitalized, treated and returned to the U.S.

We were billeted in an old farm building for a couple of days, locked in a room above German soldiers. When the German soldiers washed up in the mornings, they took us with them, lending us their soap and towels at the horse water pump and trough. Then we were taken to a larger group of U.S. soldiers, officers and non-coms, privates, mostly of the 106th Division.

Then we were loaded into a long train with unmarked boxcars and the doors were locked. Food was very scarce. We stopped at a very large rail yard.

Then we heard fighter planes approaching and strafing the best targets they could find in the railroad yard they could find where we were. Our train of unmarked police cars quickly became their best target. Our German guards ran off leaving us locked in and being strafed. Some of the POWs managed to get out of their cars and opened all the cars allowing all POWs to get out. Those who were shot or otherwise injured were brought outside for safety. We made a large U.S. P. W. in the snow on the ground with men and equipment. The strafing stopped.

Overhead Allied bombers flew over, covering the sky from horizon to horizon and the width of the line seemed almost endless. Ground anti-aircraft guns fired at them. Our 106th Division officers refused to get back on board the train. The Germans went along with their refusal to board the train again.

German soldiers directed four of us to carry Staff Sergeant Meadows onto a stretcher to where he would get medical help. There was much snow and ice around us plus much mud. From the open vehicle that we were being transported, I saw three bodies lying in the mud along the roadside unattended. Our group of several hundred men included officers and enlisted men of various ranks. After walking many miles with little or no food or water, except ditch water, we were crowded into an unmarked railroad boxcar. Almost all of the men I knew got into a boxcar near the middle of the train, while I had to go many cars down to find room on another boxcar.

Out train stopped in a rail yard on a sidetrack with doors locked. We heard a plane low overhead and at that time our plane was strafed by American (Allied) planes. Our German guards ran off. Some of the POWs managed to get outside and soon all the cars were

open. With our bodies and belongings, whatever we may be carrying, we formed a big U.S. POW in a large snowy white place nearby. The strafing stopped.
More about strafing- Men in boxcars who were wounded too badly to walk were carried outside by their comrades. The worst wounded I saw was Staff Sergeant Bowling, a cook in my company who I knew well. Much of his shoulder was missing and appeared to bleeding a lot. After we carried Staff Sergeant Bowling on a stretcher to the German encampment, I never saw him again. I heard that he recovered.

Note this is repeat stuff, also need to clarify with Dad if this was the escape.

We did not have to get back on that train, but we walked easterly for days. We were quartered occasionally in German basements or attics or in partially destroyed buildings. When our group made a rest stop near a clear flowing stream, we refilled our canteens, often having to break through the ice to reach the water. For food we sometimes received ¼ or 1/8 loaf or bread a day.

At some point our group separated with officers, non-commissioned officers and other soldiers going in different directions. As a buck sergeant, I was put with a group of men that I had never seen before. I volunteered to work, hoping to get more to eat, but had only one opportunity. That was to dig a ditch for a gas line near a bridge at Brunswick, Germany. Allied bombing was so intense that the job was left abandoned and there was never any additional food.

On the long marches or walks early on, I walked with James Weatherly, now of Irving, Texas and mortar man of Co. H. We went to **Stalag IV-B** together where we questioned and issued a German POW numbered dog tag. My number was 314317. I still have it.

Most of the time as a German prisoner-of-war was spent walking. I had dysentery or diarrhea at least three of the last months I was a POW, while at Camp Lucky Strike, France, then on the Liberty ship coming home. Then at Fort Dix, NJ. While in formation, I had to break ranks and run behind some shrubbery of the barracks nearby. My condition persisted at my next military assignment at Miami Beach, FL. I was given 30 days sick leave to go home to Suffolk, VA. My parents took me to our family doctor at their expense. I received many vitamins and shots and had to drink a quart of buttermilk a day.

We spent much time at Virginia Beach, VA. I received considerable medical help at the medical facility at Ft. Story, VA. I had to take stool samples to Ft. Story for a long time. My sick leave was extended for an additional 30 days and I was well enough to go to my next assignment to an M.P. company at Ft. Meyer, VA. while awaiting my time to be discharged.

Another physical condition I had was a runny nose which I know does not sound like nothing much. It began about a week after I became a prisoner and persisted until I returned to the USA. My nose was dripping more wetness than my one handkerchief could keep up with. I learned to walk leaning forward when my handkerchief could absorb no more. I believe that my walking in my leaning forward posture caused me to be more tired than I would have been otherwise. Drippings continued at night, but it slowed a good bit. It did interfere with getting needed sleep most nights.

Other notes:

Tech Sergeant Sam Baxter was our heavy weapons platoon sergeant. Under him were two section leaders, each of who were in charge of two squads. Staff Sergeant Jerry Meadows was section leader for my squad and another squad. I was a squad leader with the rank of Sergeant.

There were many casualties in the rifle company as they withdrew through our platoon and around us.

We could hear the sound of each shell as it came in and exploded into small pieces usually a short distance above the ground. At the sound of each incoming sound our best and only course of defensive action was to instantly flatten out onto the ground in any depression if one was close at hand.

After one particularly close shell burst, I rose up and saw Sergeant Meadows was lying face up with his helmet off and not moving. I knelt beside him and almost immediately Sgt Baxter was kneeling on the other side of him. We examined him as best we could. We found that he had been hit in at least four places by pieces of an exploded 88-millimeter shell. I heard another shell coming and I flattened out on the ground again. After that shell exploded I rose to a kneeling position again, but Sgt Baxter never moved again. He had been hit in the back of his head and neck area.

At Stalag IV-B we received our German dog tags. We walked to another POW camp, which had mostly British soldiers. We were quartered with them. They were crowded before we arrived; however, I and some others with me were assigned to share bunks with them. Many of them had been POWs for a year or several years and loudly let it be known that they did not want dirty smelly and some with loose bowels in their bunks. Fortunately we did not stay long with the British.

About the time of leaving the stalag with many British, we were advised we were going to another stalag to stay until Germany had won the war. Each of us was given a tin of Limburger cheese, but no other food and loaded onto a train, more boxcars, standing room only or mostly. Only a few could sit at any one time. I ate all of my Limburger cheese, but refused when others offered me theirs. One was enough. Probably having a runny and somewhat stopped up nose, kept me from getting a very strong smell of the Limburger cheese and that helped me get it down.

Of my four months I was a POW, I must have walked for at least 2 ½ months of that time. We first walked eastward and could hear big guns firing. They were firing at advancing Russian soldiers we were told. After that we no longer walked eastward. One night we were quartered in an old brick factory, no longer operable. It was good and dry and out of the wind and I had a good sleep. When I woke up I reached for my shoes to put on again. They were gone. They had been stolen. I had slept too soundly. That day we would have to walk again. Two nearby POWs helped. One gave me a pair of sox, which I put on over the pair I had slept in and the other gave me a pair of galoshes, which I put on over two pairs of socks. I walked all day with the group but had big blisters. The next day I went to sick call. That was not a treat but got me through the day. There was no transportation. Those on sick call just started walking slowly, earlier in the morning than the main group and walked on later in the day to stay with the main group.

Another time I learned more about sick call. In walking along mainly back roads, which were dirt, we encountered dirt mounds, some 4 or 5 feet high and perhaps 20 feet by 30 feet. Sugar beets and some other vegetables were stored in these mounds to prevent

freezing. We were advised by our guard not to dig in these mounds. Diggers would be shot. Later when we took a break from walking and were very hungry and no guard was visible close by, we dug. A guard saw us and began to holler at us and began to shoot. I and the POW next to me stopped digging and turned to leave. I jumped away from the mound and thought the POW was doing the same, but he must not have move away as quickly. He had been hit and could barely stand. The guards stopped shooting and ordered everyone to form-up and move out. Two buddies of the injured man helped him to walk. They could only walk slowly but they had to walk the same distance as everyone else but much slower. I did not see him the next and believe that he got medical help.

Tech Sergeant Baxter was a close friend of mine and to all others who wanted our unit to be the best. I greatly admired him and miss his presence. Carl Ayleswroth was about the youngest in my squad and came to us from a college military training program, but not ROTC and had less opportunity for field training than many in our company. I would like to have spent more time more time with him.

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