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Ardennes Forest Winter Scene Explodes

BY DENNIS MURRAY
The Ardennes forest in December of 1944 was a Christmas card panorama. The evergreens marched snugly to the horizon thru miles of newly fallen snow. It was a scene to delight a mother; a scene so peaceful for her soldier boy.



Murray

That was before the morning of Dec. 16. That was before the Germans hurled as many as 225,000 troops and tanks thru the peaceful forest.

Penetrate Inside Germany
My regiment, the 422d infantry of the 106th division, was perched atop high ground on the farthest American salient inside Germany. We were inside the Siegfried line and utilized parts of the captured German defense network for our own bulwarks.

The rest of the division was deployed in line with us. We were defending, we were told, 25 miles of highly strategic ground. We were spread so thin, the rumors said, because the front was quiet and the ground easy to defend.

Front Is Quiet
The rumors appeared to be true. The front was quiet. We patrolled in front of our lines every day. No action. Once in a while the Germans threw over a shell. Once in a while our artillery returned a salvo. And then it was the morning of Dec. 16.

The Germans, who once had occupied our positions, and knew the range of our defenses to an inch, opened up with all their artillery. For hours that morning they shelled the entire line.

And the Christmas card scene vanished forever. The brilliant snow suddenly was dotted with muddy holes. The evergreens became enemies, each one a potential cover for a hostile uniform.

Huddle in Holes
We huddled in our holes expecting the attack. It never came. We were relieved. We

Memories of War

[War means different things to different men, depending on how it affects them. Here are two versions of the Battle of the Bulge, which began 20 years ago today as the German army's last serious effort to oust the Allies from Europe in World War II. One was written by Robert Cromie, then a TRIBUNE war correspondent and now book editor of THE TRIBUNE. The other is the work of Dennis Murray, then an enlisted man with the 422d infantry of the 106th division and now a TRIBUNE copy editor.]

believed the other rumors were true. The Germans hadn't attacked us because they knew it would be suicidal to hit our high positions.

Then the rumors became menacing. Our division command post in St. Vith, Belgium, 10 miles to the rear, was under attack, the rumors said. They were true. St. Vith had fallen. We were a lost regiment, behind the German lines. No supply line. Little food. Ammunition short.

Retreat? Never. We would hold until spring, we were told.

Mount An Attack
But within a day we were moved out of our holes and mounted an attack to the rear to a tiny German village named Schoenberg.

We never made it. By Dec. 21, we had been split into several segments by constant German harassment.

For me, that scene in the Ardennes was the only illusion of Christmas, 1944.

The only card that I sent bore the return address: Stalag IX-B (war prisoner), Bad Orb, Germany.

Isaac Gershman to Get Lifetime Press Pass

Isaac Gershman, retiring managing editor of the City News bureau and a newsmen for 48 years, will be presented at 10 a. m. today with a lifetime press pass and a plaque by Police Supt. O. W. Wilson. The ceremony will take place in Wilson's office in central headquarters, 1121 S. State st. Wilson said yesterday the presentation is a gesture of appreciation for Gershman's many public services during his long career.

Bastogne Siege Yields a Jeer of 'Nuts'

BY ROBERT CROMIE
I was a correspondent with Gen. Patton's Third army when the German breakthrough precipitated what since has become known as the Battle of the Bulge.



Cromie

Frankly, 20 years have dimmed many recollections, but I recall an immediate order prohibiting side curtains or tops on jeeps (presumably to prevent Germans from hiding in them as they sped thru the countryside). There also was an order to change the color of the aircraft identification panels, carried on all vehicles in the combat zone (for fear the Germans were using the same colors). The funny questions asked by armed guards at all intersections also were changed. They concerned subjects which, presumably, a German dressed in an American uniform wouldn't know, such as "What is the nickname of the Brooklyn baseball club?" or "What's the capital of Illinois?" if the person challenged said he was from Illinois.

Bars German Coats
There also was an order not to wear any items of captured German equipment. This meant that the long, lovely, sheep-wool lined coats (gray with the collar a nasty Nazi-green) had to be left at press camp, their excellent insulating powers wasted.

On several bitter days, the first order of business upon returning to camp was to climb, shivering, into the coats, a carload of which had been found on a railroad siding.

At the Battle of the Bulge, our jeeps would wander as close to the fighting as possible, where we would hunt out division or sometimes company headquarters, seeking information more up-to-date than that given out in the daily briefing at Third army headquarters.

Hear Sector Threatened
We followed Third army tanks and Third army infantry-

men moving into the threatened sector, and soon there was constant repetition of the name Bastogne:

Bastogne was surrounded. Bastogne was still holding out. The Germans were pounding Bastogne. Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe had refused to surrender, giving up nothing but an arrogant and heart-warming syllable in response to the demand to yield: "Nuts!"

Finally the situation began to settle down. We saw little groups of German prisoners plodding along the roads toward the rear, sometimes under escort, but more often simply walking along thru the snowblanketed countryside, waiting for someone to say they had reached the end of their road in this particular war.

Slows Nazi Thrust

Bastogne, as we know now, was an important factor in slowing the German advance long enough for the Americans to recover from the shock of a sudden, screaming onslaught by a supposedly dying opponent. I even heard recently from the usual unimpeachable source—that Bastogne was given a vital 24-hour delay before the German siege began because one of the attacking Nazi generals chose that moment to dally with a beautiful young woman whom he had just met. But this is hearsay—fascinating, possible, tho perhaps untrue.

At any rate, Bastogne was relieved at last. This is all I can remember now about the Battle of the Bulge. It was cold. The Germans came. Our guys beat them.

What else is there to remember?

Holiday Store Hours I

Marshall

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