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Charlottean Who Was There Adds WWII Footnote

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Observer Staff Writer

Arthur C. Brown of Charlotte wants a footnote added to James Jones's recently published account of the Battle of the Bulge, the greatest pitched battle on the Western Front during World War II.

Thirty-one years ago, Brown was a U.S. Army captain commanding 150 men who spent four sleepless and hungry days and nights holding back the Germans in Eastern Belgium.

That effort — which earned Brown a Silver Star for gallantry in action — was not specifically taken into account by Jones in his recently published book, "WWII," which was excerpted in The Observer.

"I THINK it ought to be added because of the good many people involved who should be recognized," says Brown, 58, a certified public accountant who lives at 1235 Lynbrook Drive.

Jones, in a telephone interview from his home on Long Island, N.Y., agreed in part with Brown. He said editors who prepared the excerpts deleted passages that told how small battles, such as the one Brown fought in, were one of the main reasons the Americans beat the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge.

"No one of these little road junction stands could have had a profound effect on the German drive," Jones wrote in one of the passages deleted from the excerpted version but printed in the book. "But hundreds of them had an effect of slowing enormously the German impetus. . . ."

"These little die-hard 'one-man stands' alone in the snow and fog without communications, would prove enormously effective out of all proportion to their size, in slowing down the German advance," Jones also wrote in the book.

ONE DIE-HARD stand was conducted by Capt. Brown's 539th Field Artillery, 106th Infantry Division, which fought at a little nowhere place called Braque de Fruiture, or Parker's Crossroad, from Dec. 20 through Dec. 23, 1944.

The Germans had hoped to pierce the Allied lines, head for the coast and surround and capture the Allied army. But first they had to capture the paved road that ran through the crossroad and went north to Lange and on to the Belgian coast.

"There was no small talk, I guarantee you," Brown said of the battle at Parker's Crossroad. "The situation was too tense. There was small arms fire coming in all the time. We were cold. There was no food."


BROWN PUT his 150 men in a circle and placed 105mm howitzers in three of the four corners of the crossroads.

"I kept checking the men all the time and encouraging them to defend their positions," Brown said. "We heard the Germans coming down one of the roads (during the night of the 22nd). I told the men to hold their fire until we could hit them with a baseball. Then I fired (one of the howitzers)."

The Germans finally captured the road on the night of Dec. 23, and he was taken prisoner. He escaped four months later.

Throughout the battle, he said, it never occurred to him that he should retreat.

"We were ordered to stay there and fight until the last man. We never had an order to withdraw."



Arthur C. Brown
... as a WWII officer and now

1976-01-10 Arthur C. Brown's Parker's Crossroads story

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