

•

The month of December, 1944, was a hard, cold month in our small Iowa town. Too many gold stars had been placed by the names of our older brothers and friends on the somber display in the city park. Too many had died. On the first day of the war, the son of our shoemaker had gone down with the Arizona. Then the Kasserine Pass, Sicily, Cassino, each provided new losses, new tears, and more gold stars.

Then, on Dec. 16, 1944, a massive Nazi force of panzers and infantry emerged from the Ardennes Forest near Bitburg, Germany. They fell upon a thin line of GIs who were manning that front. The American 28th and 106th divisions were overwhelmed and within a week thousands of our soldiers had died. Included in the Nazi force were units that had for five terrible years served Hitler in Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia, in an orgiastic crusade of murder and devastation. These included the notorious SS divisions of Otto Skorzeny, Joachim Peiper and Sepp Dietrich. These divisions had been much decorated by Hitler himself in recognition of their zeal in helping to accomplish the "Final Solution" and other horrible enterprises. They were now to conduct another *rabatz*, this time against American soldiers. *Rabatz* meant terror, the decimation of civilian populations, the execution of prisoners, measures with which these troops were well familiar and in which they excelled.

It is remembered by some, though apparently not by all, that many of our young soldiers were captured in battle. Then at Malmedy and in countless other places they were tied, beaten, told to kneel in the snow, and killed.

Thus, in January, 1945, in our small town, three more gold stars were emplaced. One was for a boy of 19 years, who was captured near St. Vith and who was then murdered by Peiper's SS. There are those who still remember his poetry, how he ran with a football, and who still love him.

I have seen the cemetery at Bitburg. I can tell the President that he will find there some, but too few, of these soldiers of Peiper and Dietrich. And I say, "If you would honor these infamous dead, speak for yourself, Mr. President. Do not presume to speak for those of us who will never forget."

RICHARD G. BERRY
Redondo Beach

•

1985-04-18 Letter to Editor

Clipped By:



criswest

Sat, Mar 24, 2018