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PREFACE

In 1985, I wrote my first edition of my recollections of World War II. Since then I have become more active in the 106th Division Association and have attended four reunions of the 106th Association. Also, I have had the opportunity to get reacquainted with two of the POWs that were on my work detail at Fabrique Eine and Zwei, Bockwiz, Germany.

Sometime in the early Nineties, an inquiry to anyone who had been on the thirty-one man work detail at Fabrique Eine and Zwei, Bockwitz Germany appeared in the 106th Association quarterly publication "The Cub". The individual that made the inquiry was Dr. Loy D. Lawler. I contacted Loy in a letter which led to correspondence and telephone conversations. During one of these telephone conversations Loy mentioned the name of B. J. Carmichael. B. J. and I had worked together stacking coal brickettes at the factory. I remembered B. J. because it turned out that we had a common friend in N.J. and we had discussed this while stacking the coal brickettes. A three way correspondence developed and in 1997 the three of us attended the 106th reunion in Orlando Florida. Since then we have attended three more reunions together. Discussing the events of World War II brought back memories that had been forgotten. Also, I have done considerable more reading on the Battle of the Bulge and have learned things which induced me to rewrite my recollections. The following text is a combination of my original recollections and new information that has developed as a result of conversations with Loy and B. J. The highlight of my first 106th reunion was meeting Col. Puett the Commanding Officer of the Second Battalion, 423rd Infantry during the Battle of the Bulge. I was fortunate enough to have about a half hour conversation with Col. Puett.

Also, I have included several maps and photographs pertinent to my story of the Battle of the Bulge, as I saw it.

I have also included a short dissertation on the combat experience of the Second Battalion, 423rd Infantry. (Appendix No. II)

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CORPORAL WELDON V. LANE'S

RECOLLECTIONS OF WORLD WAR II

In early 1943, while I was a senior in high school, it became obvious that I would be drafted soon after graduation. I had an aversion to being drafted, so on 5 April 1943 I enlisted in the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps. On the morning of 19 April 1943, my eighteenth birthday, I received written notification to report for active duty on 19

May 1943 at the Reception Center at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

Early on the morning of the 19th of May, my mother and father drove me to Fort Dix. At Fort Dix I was issued all my uniforms and gear, given immunization shots, took various placement tests, etc. After a couple of weeks, I was assigned to the Infantry Basic Training Center at Camp Wheeler, Georgia.

Back tracking for a minute, in 1942-43, the Army had established a college training program called the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). To be eligible to participate in this program, one had to pass a written exam that was given at the high school in early 1943. Three other prerequisites were required: (1) receive a minimum score of 115 on the Army Intelligence Test, (2) complete Infantry Basic Training, and (3) be recommended for the program by the Basic Training Company Commander. To put the intelligence score requirement of 115 in perspective, a score of 110 was required for Officer's Candidate School. I passed the initial qualifying test and received a score of 120 on the Army Intelligence Test. So going into basic training, I was eligible for ASTP.

The Infantry Basic Training Program was a thirteen week ordeal. It was to me, the worst thirteen weeks I have ever lived through, including the events I will discuss herein

Camp Wheeler was located near Macon, Georgia. The soil in the region is sandy, almost like beach sand. The temperatures that summer were in the 90's consistently and the humidity was unbearable. In the morning we would put on clothes that were wet from being washed the night before. They would dry by 9:00 a.m.; then be wringing wet before noon.

I finished basic training in September 1943 and was recommended by the CO for ASTP. I was sent to the University of Alabama where I was enrolled in the Basic Engineering Program.

Duty at the University of Alabama was a sheer pleasure. We stood one formation a week, attended classes, and enjoyed a good deal of free time. There was little to remind one that you were in the Army. I successfully completed two terms of Basic Engineering.

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The combat losses in Europe were so great that an urgent need for replacement arose. The ASTP program was radically curtailed. The participants represented a large pool of GI's with Basic Infantry training. The majority of them were assigned to organizations with advanced combat training, releasing the more highly trained personnel for combat duty. I was assigned to the 106th Infantry Division at Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

The 106th had just come off maneuvers. Most of the personnel were shipped out as replacements to Europe. This left only a skeleton of the Division that had been trained as a unit and gone through maneuvers together. The rest of the Division was made up

of ASTP students with only basic training and a few Air Force personnel whose programs had also been abolished.

I was assigned to the Anti-Tank Platoon, Headquarters Company, Second Battalion, 423rd Regiment.

The 422nd Infantry Regiment was commanded by Lt. Colonel Charles C. Cavender. The 2~' Battalion by Lt. Colonel Joseph P. Puett. My Company Commander was Captain Ryan E. Tomlinson. My Platoon Leader was 2nd Lt. Adrian Shaver. The Anti-Tank Platoon Sergeant was Tech. Sergeant George Walters. My Squad Leader was Staff Sergeant Robert Shore. The Commanding General of the 106th Division was General Alan W. Jones.

The summer of 1944 was spent in unit training trying to assimilate the relatively green ex-ASTP students with the skeleton cadre of the original 106th Division

The Division departed Camp Atterbury early in October 1944. My Unit left on 8 October 1944. Our destination was Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts. After a week of briefings, physical exams, shots, etc., we departed Camp Miles Standish and arrived in New York City in the early morning hours of 17 October 1944. We boarded the Queen Elizabeth and set sail for England that day.

The trip over was uneventful and we arrived in Greenock, Scotland on 23 October 1944. We disembarked on 24 October 1944 and proceeded by train to the south of England. We arrived at Toddington Manor on 25 October 1944 where we were billeted for our stay in England.

Toddington Manor is located in the vicinity of Cheltenham and Evesham in southern England. Toddington is located about thirteen miles from Cheltenham and about seven miles from Evesham.

Our times in England were spent in light training, briefings on German uniforms and equipment, etc. We were fortunate in that we were able to leave camp when off duty. Every Monday night there was a town dance in Cheltenham and Wednesday there was a dance in Evesham. The dance in Cheltenham was a very formal straight

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laced affair. In contrast, the dance at Evesham was a down-to-earth local type affair and the people went out of their way to include us. I met and dated a young girl by the name of Mary Brassier who I met at the Evesham dance.

Also, during my stay in England, I went on a three-day pass to Edinburgh, Scotland.

In 1970, while in England on government business, I revisited Toddington Manor, Cheltenham, and Evesham. I stayed in the Queens Hotel one night during this visit. The Queens Hotel had been the Red Cross Club in 1944. I also visited the Town Hall where the dances had been held.

We departed Toddington Manor on 30 November 1944 and arrived in South Hampton

early the next day. We boarded the LST with all our equipment and vehicles and set sail across the Channel for France on 2 December 1944. We developed problems with the rudder. We stayed off the coast for a day or so and then it was decided to return to South Hampton and transfer to another LST. On our second trip across the Channel we landed at LeHarve, France on 9 December 1944. We departed immediately to take our place in the front line. We crossed the French-Belgium border to Cousolre'ville sometime after midnight on the 10th of December 1944. We finally arrived at our position at Born, Belgium on 11 December 1944.

PART I - COMBAT

The Second Battalion of the 423rd Infantry was in Division reserve at Born. (See Figure No. 1)

My squad was billeted in a house just outside of town. I believe we were north of town. I still recall some of the layout of the house. There were at least two floors. I slept in the front upstairs bedroom overlooking the road. Facing the house from the road, the room would have been on the viewer's left. I also recall the bathroom. It was in the back of the house, a step down from the main floor. The water chamber was mounted up near the ceiling. You had to pull a chain to flush it. This was the first time I had ever seen this sort of plumbing arrangement. Right next to the commode was a door which entered into an attached two-stall cowshed.

Several friends and myself went into Born a couple of evenings and managed to find two places that sold wine. The first was a small café. There were a number of other GI's there. Everyone seemed to be relaxed and enjoying the evening even though the proprietor and help were not very friendly. There were framed photographs of individuals in Nazi uniforms hanging on the walls. On the night of 15 December 1944, we went into Born for the last time. We managed to find what I guess you might call a bar. It was a private home and in the front room they had a small bar not unlike one you might find in someone's recreation room today. We bought some wine. The German's, which I'm sure they were, sat in the next room, a

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dining room, and stared at us. These people were definitely hostile and probably knew what was coming the next day.

After drinking a quantity of wine, we went back to the billet. I had KP the next morning.

The morning of 16 December 1944 1 got up about 5:00 a.m. and reported for KP duty at the Headquarters Company Mess. About 7:00 a.m. , someone came for me and ordered me to locate Lt. Shavei and Lt. Gumphre and tell them to report to Battalion Headquarters and then report to my squad. On my way to find them, I came upon them walking in great haste to Battalion Headquarters. I then returned to my squad.

We were told by Sergeant Walters, to get our gear in shape for action. The whole firing mechanism of our 57mm anti-tank gun was still in Cosmoline coating applied before we left the States. This meant several hours of hard work before we would be ready for action. We set to work immediately and in several hours the gun was ready

and hitched to the truck, and set to move out The situation, as we knew it at the time, was believed to be as follows: The Germans had opened a terrific bombardment through the night and destroyed our artillery. They had broken through our lines with their tanks. We were to go up to the front lines in support immediately. The truck and gun had been ready since about 11:00 a.m. but we hadn't moved. The sitting and waiting frazzled our nerves. Colonel Puett, our battalion commander, was in division headquarter in St. Vith waiting for General Jones to make up his mind what he was going to do with our Battalion. Sometime, before leaving our billet, I don't remember exactly when, we were served our last hot meal for a good many months. We mounted up and moved out of our billet. After riding a short distance, the trucks pulled off the road into a wooded area. We sat in the trucks for a while and then got out and walked around to keep warm. The ground was covered with a light snow. My right foot felt damp and I looked at my shoe. There was a small piece of the sole chipped off by my big toe and water was leaking in. Several times that afternoon, buzz bombs flew overhead aimed for London or Antwerp. These were the first buzz bombs any of us had seen. They served to intensify the mounting tension. Everyone was quiet; each with his own thoughts. Finally, the order to move out came through and we were on our way to the front. We were headed for St. Vith, where we stopped briefly. My most vivid memory of St. Vith was the walking wounded. One in particular drew my attention. He had a head wound. His head was swathed in a white bandage through which the blood had seeped. I can still picture the contrast of the clean white bandage and the red blood. Our nerves were completely tense now. (See Figures 1 & 2)

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In order to put my comments in perspective with the actions of the Division, I am including the following excerpts from a news broadcast by News Analyst Cedric Foster:

"Tonight for the first time there may be told the story which, in its dual aspects, is one of the most tragic and yet one of the most glorious episodes in the history of American arms. . .the story of America's 106" Infantry Division.

The American 106th Infantry Division was activated at Camp Jackson, Mississippi in March of 1943. Major General Alan W. Jones who commanded it at that time. . .told the 106th Infantry Division.
"You are brand new. You have no past history to live up to. You have no past sins to live down." Tonight the 106th Infantry Division has a past history to live up to, but it still has no sins to live down. It fought gloriously and it fought heroically in the full flush of German power on the 16th of last December. Two of its regiments were all but eliminated from the war. They were the 422" and the* 423Mg *Three hundred men out of those two regiments were all who survived. Most of the others are presumed to be Prisoners of War.

GERMAN ARTILLERY BARRAGE

On the 11" of December, the 106th Division was in a sector of the front designated as "quiet'. The division had not been in action. As a matter of fact, the 106th Division had engaged in nothing more dangerous than a few night patrol skirmishes. Five days

later on the 16", these men of the Golden Lion Division were struck by an avalanche of German steel and fire. The attack got under way just before 6:00 o 'clock in the morning. In the battle that followed, the division suffered eight thousand, six hundred sixty three casualties. 416 were killed, 1246 were wounded, 7000 were missing.

DIVISION SPREAD THIN

Censorship can now reveal that the 106" Division was spread in a manner described as "pitifully thin ", along a front of twenty-seven miles. It was holding a sector along the Schnee Eifel . .the Eifel forest which is just northeast of the frontier of Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany. This was in the general sector of the Belgium town of St. Vith. . .twelve miles southeast of Malmedy. The German first laid down an earth shaking artillery barrage. They directed this against the 106" positions which curved to the north from the center of the Eifel woods. . . positions which were held by the 14" Cavalry group. .an armored group attached

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to the Infantry. A field artillery battalion which was also attached to the 106th was the next target. In thirty-five minutes more than one hundred rounds of German fire had landed squarely in the midst of this battalion. At six o'clock the Germans opened up on St. Vith itself Civilians of St. Vith were all in tb4r cellars. They were pro-German and the Huns had told them by radio that the barrage was impending. When the barrage was over at two o 'clock in the afternoon, the civilians came out.

TANK AND INFANTRY FOLLOW

The 422nd and 423rd Regiments bore the brunt of the German fire. This fire was followed by German tanks and infantry. When dawn broke the next day, December l7~, the Germans had two divisions in the line. They literally engulfed these two regiments and they forced the 424'h Regiment to retire. Yet these two regiments fought on. At half past three in the afternoon of the 18" of December. . .radio communication with those two regiments was lost.

The last word that they sent through was that they were in need of ammunition and water and food. The fog which blanketed the countryside made it impossible to send them supplies by air. Then they said: "We are now destroying our equipment." After that came silence. Thus, it is believed most of these men are prisoners of war.

SUPPORTING REGIMENTS

Saint Vith and Divisional Headquarters were protected for a time by the heroic fighting men of the 8ft and 168" Engineer battalions — under Lt. Colonel Thomas Riggs of Huntington, West Virginia.. They were outgunned and they were outmanned. Their weapons consisted of three tank destroyer guns and three 57-millimeters. That was all. That was all except the raw courage which was theirs as they faced the foe. The 424th Regiment of the 106" had not been destroyed. This regiment was supported by a combat command team from the Ninth Armored Division and by the 111h Regiment of the 2ghz . the Keystone.
Division. It had other support too. Back into the line of battle came the survivors..

.three hundred of them. . .the survivors of the 422nd and 423rd Regiments. . .and it was not until the 21st of December that the 106" went out of the line to reorganize. But on the 24th, the emergency was so great that the valiant and broken remains were hurled into the line of the northern side of the German salient between Stavelot and Manhay.

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SHINING EXAMPLE

'If only they had a chance to fight. . . to prove themselves ". Those words were spoken to me on the telephone from Rochester, New York tow weeks ago by Mrs. Leon Brown, the mother of a lad in the 106"' Division. They did have the chance to fight and the didn't fail. They fought magnificently in the greatest American Battle of the war — their first battle with the foe. The record they wrote is a shining example for all of the armed forces of the United States."

In order to put recollections in perspective with the overall picture. I will make frequent quotes from: "St Vith Lion in the Way" by Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy; The History of the 106th Division.

The following quote is relevant to my previous comments relating to 16 December 1944:

"Division had taken what steps it could to retrieve the situation in the north. The Second Battalion, 423" Infantry, alerted at the billets in Born at 7:07 a.m. was ordered at 9:30 a.m. to move to the vicinity of St. Vith. Lt. Colonel Joseph P. Puett got his battalion rolling as soon as he could assisted by trucks which Division sent to facilitate the move. At St. Vith at 12:15 p.m., Puett was ordered to Schonberg, with a platoon of the 820"' TD Battalion attached, to secure the roads leading north and south from the town. These orders are recorded in the 5-3 Journal at 5:00p.m. as 'VOCG'.

Puett's force began detrucking at Schonberg at 1:15p.m., and at once started to dig in, completing the defensive set up by.' 5:30. Reconnaissance patrols, foot and motorized. . .two of them had skirmishes with the enemy to the north. . .brought in data which enabled Puett to report a sound resume to Division by 7:10 p.m.: "Enemy shelling Schonberg heavily. Cavalry have withdrawn and are mining the road five hundred yards north of Andler. Enemy have completely taken Auw. The 275" Armored Field Artillery have also withdrawn. Am patrolling in three directions and will have more information 2000 hours (8:00p.m.)."

According to Puett, the cavalry at Andler — this would be Troop B, 18" Squadron. . . began to beat a retreat about 8:00 p.m., despite his warnings to the commander that if he let Schonberg fall two regiments would be cut off He says the cavalryman — unidentified — told him he could hold till late next morning, but instead himself proceeded on the way back to St. Vith.

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By this time Division was convinced that the 589th and 592nd Field Artillery must be withdrawn and that the 422nd Infantry alone could not cover the move. Gen. McMahon, artillery commander, had already sent instructions to both battalions to displace as soon as they could break away.

General Jones at 8:30 p.m. telephoned Puett at Schonberg, ordering him to move up the Schonberg — Andler — Auw Road, attacking southeast to relieve the left flank of the 422nd Infantry and at the same time enable the artillery to displace. He was to send back the trucks when he arrived." (1)

We left Sr. Vith and traveled for about a half hour before entering a town which I subsequently learned was Schonberg. Just prior to our arrival there had been heavy shelling of the town. The shelling continued sporadically the whole time we were there. (See Figure 1)

At Schonberg, my squad, an anti-tank squad set up our gun on a curve in the road. I believe the road was the road to Andler. We then proceeded to dig foxholes. I recall after dark the flashes of light and noise of enemy artillery as I dug my foxhole. The ground was littered with small rocks, one or two inches in diameter and it was impossible to dig with a shovel. You had to dig with your hands using the shovel as a pick to loosen the dirt. I had dug the foxhole about a foot deep when the order came to displace and move out.

We departed Schonberg to go in support of the 589th Artillery position in front of Auw. The purpose of this move was to permit the Artillery to retreat toward St. Vith from their position, which had become untenable.

Shortly before moving out we heard what sounded like a tank. It turned out to be one of the Cavalry's vehicles. We took the gun out of action and hitched it to the truck.

Again, going to the history:

"To Division at 8:45 p.m. came a message from the 422nd Infantry, sent at 7:23 p.m. 'Battalions still in original positions. Company L, plus odds and ends, plus TD platoon around regimental command post. Shall I withdraw left Battalion through Schlausenbach?'

Division didn't reply till 11:11 p.m., by which time General Jones had made his decision with reference to the action he proposed to take with the two promised armored combat teams next day. By radio and by liaison officer came the message to Descheneaux: 'Withdraw

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your left battalion to line Schlausenbach — east to left of your center battalion. 2ns Battalion, 423rd Infantry, moving to line high ground south of Auw to Waschied. Acknowledge receipt.'

Up at Schonberg, Puett withdrew his battalion from its dug-in position, entrucked in the midst of the flow of retreating traffic; and took the Schonberg-Bleialf road south, down to the engineer cut-off, thence up Skyline Drive northeast again. It was a

difficult drive; blacked out, in sleety drizzle, and the doughboys floundered. It was not until guides from the 580 Field Artillery made contact with them that they were able to get in, arriving in the artillery area about midnight. In the meantime, Descheneaux in the 422nd Infantry was hauling his own 2nd Battalion around to face north.

There is room for speculation on this move of Puett, who seems to have no doubt in his mind that he was following orders. The intent of the Division Commander was that Puett would take his battalion instead up the Schonberg-Andler, Auw Road, in order to attack southeast in front of the artillery positions, relieving the left of the 422nd Infantry, and freeing the artillery at the same time.

Whether or not Puett could have accomplished this is a moot question,. The cavalry were mining the road at Andler. If he got by that point up to Waschied there is not much doubt that he would have had run headlong into the German advance. In that case, without artillery support, which he did not have, his goose might have been cooked in short order. The expression as recorded in the division G-3 journal in the informative message to Descheneaux: 'High ground south of Auw to Waschied' would indicate merely a deployment of the* 2nd *Battalion, 423rd Infantry, from northwest to southeast with the northern flank still wide open.

What does matter is that this battalion's displacement from Schonberg left the road wide open to the enemy when the cavalry was knocked back next morning. The author, however, is of the opinion that unless the ~ Armored Division had arrived when General Jones expected it to, whether or not Puett's battalion should have stayed at Schonberg is merely an academic argument. If it were there it could not later have formed the rear of the 423rd's perimeter next day, as will be related." (2)

I remember little of the drive from Schonberg to the 589th Field Artillery position, except for getting out of the truck occasionally and helping to push it out of the mud. I do recall, however, that when we finally arrived in the area where the gun was to be emplaced, we got out of the truck while the driver backed it off the road into the woods. Shortly after the gun was set up and we got somewhat organized, I saw that the tire of the

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gun had just missed a land mine. The road we backed off had been named Skyline Drive by the Americans. (See Figure No. 1)

When we arrived at the new location, Lt. Shaver told us to pile out of the truck and set up the gun. We were in a wooded area near the road. All night long we could hear our mortars pouring round after round into the German position. It was a cold night and we hastened to set up the gun and get back in the truck. It was impossible to dig fox holes so we huddled in the truck until dawn trying to keep warm. Just before dawn, Lt. Shaver came to Sergeant Shore and told him he would have to move the gun. It was now daylight and our truck pulled out on the road in full view of the enemy and backed into the new position. I kept waiting for a shell to come in; however, we set up the gun without incident. The infantry was dug in in front of us. I had to move my bowels. I had put toilet paper in my mess kit which was in my backpack behind the seats of the truck. I got the toilet paper and jumped from the

truck. I dropped my pants. Almost as if this was a signal, all hell broke loose. Mortar shells and artillery shells came pouring in. I pulled up my pants and jumped into an old shell hole near the gun. I peered out and saw a German tank aiming his gun in our general direction. Paulson was looking through binoculars at the tank. A mortar shell landed near him and he got a piece of shrapnel in his hand. Our gun was hit with the 88 shells and was out of commission. Cpl. Barnes had been laying on the trails when the gun was hit but escaped with no more than two bruised legs. Lt. Shaver ran up and told us to fall back. We immediately did. No more were we out of our former positions, when a barrage of mortar shells would land in the position we vacated.

I fell back until I was almost even with our truck but about 15 to 20 feet to the side of it. Sergeant Walters and Pvt. Moran were lying next to the truck. A hail of mortar shells and 88 shells came in. I fell to the ground face down holding my helmet on with my hands. When I looked up half the truck was blown away. Where Walters and Moran had been, there was a big hole. However, they had moved on before the shell had landed. The shrapnel had gone all around me and several mortar shells had landed within a few feet from where I was laying. I later found a gash on my left hand that I believe I received during this barrage.

The following is the 106th history account of this same action:

"Puett's 2" Battalion, 423rd Infantry, since its midnight arrival from Schonberg with orders to assist the artillery withdrawal, had been probing in the woods to the north, east, and south of the 589th positions. The place was thick with Krauts, and so far as C Battery was concerned, he also had armor dug in along the Laudesfeld Road.

By 2:00 a.m., telephonic communications was in with Division. Puett says he asked permission to launch a night attack to relieve C Battery. This was denied and he was told not to get so heavily engaged that he could not break contact. There is no record of this exchange of conversation in the Division G-3 journal, but General Jones remembers

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instructing Puett not to become too heavily involved. The Division Commander quite naturally hoped to retain control over the only element of his command not yet wholly committed.

Puett attempted to divert enemy attention from C Battery by a patrol in force, but was unsuccessful The howitzers were pretty well mired in. Puett feels that only by bulldozer and long after daylight could such effort have gotten the guns out. Kelly, who went out with Puett's patrol, was finally convinced that the pieces just couldn't be moved. By this time the Infantry Battalion was digging in practically through the artillery positions, but on a north-south line through the battalion CP and hundred yards behind Battery C. (3)

"Returning to the original 580 Field Artillery position, before dawn Puett's 2nd Battalion, 423rd Infantry, had made tenuous contact, soon broken with Cannon Company, 422nd Infantry, about 2500 yards southeast, near Schlausenbach. The patrol accomplishing this discovered three German tanks on the Auw Road. By 5:30 a.m., indications pointed to an armored attack forming.

By daybreak, about 7:00 a.m., the three tanks on the Auw Road lumbered up. Puett's anti-tank guns and the M8s of his attached platoon from the 820th TD Battalion, took them under fire at three hundred yards range, got all three, two of them burning up. Four more tanks, with infantrymen riding them, moved up. Some or all of them were knocked out but still more were coming, weaving through their crippled brethren.

At the same time, Kraut Infantry attacked on the vulnerable left flank, tanks coming from the north were moving in there, too. Wire communication with Division had gone out at 6:45 and new the battalion radio was hit and smashed. Contact with the 422nd on the right was lost. Puitt decided to fall back on Schonberg. To him, never received, went a message from Division at this time to defend Schonberg (now being overrun from north and south). Patrols brought word of the capture of Schonberg and of the fracas with the retreating 580 Field Artillery. Kraut armor, they said, was bumper-to-bumper on the Schonberg Road all the way from the Radscheid junction. (Engineer Cutoff) north to the Auw Valley.

To Puett came an officer from Lt. Colonel Lackey's 590th Field Artillery Battalion. In direct support of the 423rd Infantry in position near Hill 575 north of Radscheid, suggesting that the two battalions fall back together on the 423"s Schnee Eifel positions. They did; it was the only thing to do.

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The 2nd Battalion, 423rd Infantry was a smart unit. It had come through its baptism of fire in good shape and now that daylight had come to the eerie woods in which it had been fumbling, now that the men had clashed with the Kraut armor and held it, they had really found themselves.

Puett accomplished a daylight withdrawal, one of the most difficult of battlefield maneuvers, in good order, supported by the 590'h, down Skyline Drive, past the positions from which the artillerymen had pulled out, and over the Oberlasheid-Halenfeld trail through the top of the Alf ravine into his regiments sector, contacting Col Cavender between 10.30 and 11:00 in the morning." (4)

Cavender, on Puett's arrival, at once directed him to make part of a perimeter defense, facing west and northwest, and by mid-afternoon the battalion was along the Schnee Eifel slopes extending from a point eight hundred yards east of Buchet northeast into the Halenfelder Wald some 2000 yards east of Oberlasheid. (See Figure No. 3) The 590" dropped trails in close rear of this position, and slightly west of the 3rd Battalion command post. The artillery put part of its personnel into the perimeter close-in defense.

Puett's shift south was unknown to Division until 3:00 p.m., when Cavender's message reporting this arrival, time 10:51 a.m. finally dribbled through the communications bottleneck, now terrific. Until then General Jones had presumed the 2" Battalion, 423rd, to be with the 422nd Infantry in accordance with his message to Col Descheneaux of the latter regiment, sent at 8:18 a.m." (5)

After the action broke off, American soldiers started coming from the plain in front of

our position in a confused manner. One 01 stopped me, identified his unit, and asked if I know where they were — they were in a state of shock. The exception was the 2nd Battalion, 423rd Infantry as noted in the 106th Infantry.

While waiting for the ammunition truck, which was blocking the road, to be removed, I went back to our demolished truck to get a cigarette. My backpack had been hit by an armor piercing shell which passed through the back pack and went out through the front of the truck.

I have no detail recollections of the withdrawal to Cavender's position. The next thing I remember, was later in the afternoon. I had been assigned to a machine gun position that was on the second floor of a farmhouse near Buchet. The position overlooked a large valley. These valleys were referred to as sugar bowls in the 106th History, an apt description. After my gun was knocked out, I was unassigned and given tasks as the situations arose. On the farm where the machine gun position was I recall

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there were several cows. To the best of my recollection, I hadn't eaten since breakfast on the 16th of December. (See Figure No. 3)

I remember standing next to one of the cows and contemplating shooting it. In fact I even drew my "45", before acquiescing to the futility of it all. However, I can't imagine even thinking of such an action except for my extreme hunger at that time.

The farmhouse had been damaged by shelling and the staircase had been shot out. To get to the machine gun on the second floor I had to climb up the rubble. I recall seeing a religious picture on the stairwell wall and thinking how out of place it was.

There were a number of us assigned to the post. I had the early shift, during the daylight hours. After my shift, I looked for a place to sleep. There was a small shed next to or attached to the house with bales of straw stored in it. I lay on several bales and went to sleep. Prior to going to sleep, I took out my *"45"*, locked it, and held it in my right hand, the gun laying on my chest. I woke up several hours later, felt around for the gun — couldn't find it — panicked and finally found it between the bales of straw on the ground.

I mentioned previously that a piece of sole on the toe of my boot had chipped off and water had leaked in. I had gotten the bright idea of putting a condom over my toes to keep them dry. I did this while we were waiting in the woods to go to St. Vith. When things started to happen, I completely forgot putting the rubber on my foot. My foot hurt and I had been limping for quite a while. Sitting on the straw, I had my first opportunity to check my foot. Obviously, the condom had cut off circulation. I removed it and had no detrimental effects.

The next two recollections, I'm reasonably certain were on the second or third day - more likely the second (17 December 1944). We were on foot, marching into a town; we stopped in front of a house that more or less faced the road. Someone thought there were Germans in it. Myself and several others were sent in to clear the building. We went in, going from room to room, swinging around corners like John Wayne.

Fortunately there were no Germans in it. I believe the town we were in was Halenfeld. The Service Company, it appeared, was billeted there and had left in a hurry. One of the buildings we went in had apparently been used as a kitchen. I found a large sheet cake on the table. I grabbed some of the cake and shoved it into my pocket. It turned out this was the only food I would have until after I was captured. I also found a Springfield 1903 sniper rifle. I picked it up and took it with me. I'll have more to say about the rifle later.

Again quoting from the 106th History:

"We turn to the brother regiment, the* 423M *from whose area all that day had come the grumble of heavy fighting.

The 423rd moved from its perimeter defense with its western element, the 2nd Battalion, leading. Behind it came the 3"; the ~ brought up the rear. All regimental transport accompanied. The

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proposed route was via Halenfeld=Oberlascheid-Radscheid Engineer Cutoff—Schonberg.

Puett's 2nd Battalion moved out at 10:00 am. in order: E, F, H, and G Companies. Meeting enemy fire about noon at Radscheid as they debouched into Skyline Drive, E Company deployed to the left in an attempt to push the enemy south and clear the road. Machine gun, mortar and rocket fire at first pinned the company down — the country was very open — so the energetic Puett promptly deployed F Company on the right, supporting the action with a machine gun platoon and the 81mm mortars of H Company (heavy weapons).

Here it was that an H Company weapons carrier, leading one of the platoon convoys, ran smack into a German roadblock covered by an 88. The first round smashed the front of the vehicle, partly overturning it. Pfc's. Robert G. Fischer and Paul B. Spencer wrenched at its machine gun, got it into action, and while a third man raced up the trail to warn the following trucks, the two men actually drove the Kraut crew away, silenced two supporting machine guns.

Companies E and F, taking heavy punishment, attacked down astride Skyline Drive and took the high ground of the western edge of Radscheid, while G Company, committed at 1:45p.m., smashed into the Cutoff ravine, advancing to the Bleialf—Schonberg Road.

As soon as the fire fight developed, Puett called on regiment for a counterattack The enemy was being rapidly reinforced from Bleialf, so he recommended a drive against the Kraut right (east flank), in that direction.

But as the march started, Cavender had received word from Division countermanding the orders to take up positions south of Schonberg and directing an advance directly against the town. Accordingly, Cavender ordered Lt. Col Earl F. Klink's 3rd Battalion, now in Oberlascheid where it could have been utilized at the time Puett called for the counterattack to push on Schonberg, keeping to the right of the rd Battalion.

So the 3rd Battalion moved past the embattled 2nd, took the right fork at Oberlascheid to Skyline Drive, jogged left and right, and headed northwest over the secondary road leading to Hill 504 directly southeast of and overlooking Schonberg. We will see in a minute what happened to it.

Puelt's Battalion was putting up a magn0'icent aggressive fight against greatly superior numbers. On the way down the previous day he

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had run across an abandoned truckload of 81mm mortar shells; mostly white phosphorous, and he put it to good use now. Several groups of Krauts were crisped as the battalion fought on; seventy-five were counted in one draw alone, all badly burned.

During the desperate fighting at the end of the cutoff, T/4 William K. Dientsbach and T/5 Clyde E. Waters, pocketed by a German rush, were captured, dragged to the road, and forced to ride the hood of a captured American jeep. The Kraut driver rushed them up a side trail past an American roadblock, but the two men, yelling "Germans" threw themselves off the jeep into the ditch. A volley from the roadblock killed the enemy driver; his three companions surrendered.

Lackey's 590th Field Artillery Battalion, from its positions still in the original perimeter, supported the attack with several concentrations, but Lackey had to insist on use of his howitzers for high-priority missions only; ammunition was limited (he was down to three hundred rounds by afternoon) and the prospect of heaving fighting ahead loomed large. Battery A supported Puett. The other batteries were in march order. Radio communications failed, however, and the confused situation rendered the artillery support almost useless.

It was about dusk when Cavender committed the* 1st *Battalion on Puett's left, southwest down the draw of Duren Creek toward Bleialf, but the attack made little progress against a now thoroughly aroused and capable enemy.

Incidentally, some time during the late afternoon hopes were raised in the 423rd command post when a rumor reached them that the 9h Armored had retaken Belialf.

Cavender radioed Division for confirmation, asking that any 423rd personnel remaining there be picked up and that he be notified. This message is noted by Division two days later.

By nightfall the 2nd Battalion had doggedly consolidated its position and dug in after a day of desperate fighting. It had suffered some three hundred casualties including sixteen officers; the 81mm mortar ammunition was expended, only two rounds per piece of 60mm stuff remained. Five heavy and four light machine guns had been knocked out. The machine gun ammunition totted up to but 375 rounds per gun remaining." (6)

During the third day I was in the rear area of the attacking Second Battalion. I believe

very near to the Battalion command post. We were located in a farm yard. I wound up in the barn, in the area where the cows were kept. Artillery fire came in — I fell

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prone, my face landing in a large cow turd. However, I didn't move until the shelling stopped.

I previously mentioned that I had picked up a Springfield "03" rifle in the Service Company area. At one point in the action, word came that the Germans were breaking through. Most of the people in the barn were anti-tank personnel and had only sidearms. The order was given that personnel with rifles were to form a perimeter defense a hundred feet or so in front of the barn. Since I had the "03" rifle, I took my place on the line. However, the Germans were stopped somewhere short of our defense line and we were told to go back to the barn. While I was laying there waiting for the Germans, it occurred to me that the "03" I had picked up was in the service area and probably there for servicing. Here I was on the defense perimeter with my *"45"* probably my only functioning weapon. The inclination was to get up and run. However, I waited until we were ordered back to the barn. When I arrived back at the barn, I put the rifle down and never picked it up again.

People are quick to label others as a hero or coward. The following anecdote, I think, illustrates how difficult it is to justify a label. Cpl. Vernon Ransom of our platoon, on the second day, when the tanks and artillery blasted the hell out of our position, sat by his anti-tank gun whimpering, crying, and carrying on. If you were going to give him a label, it would have to be coward. On the third day of the battle, this same Cpl. Ransom was going forward and assisting the medics carrying wounded to the aid station, under heavy fire, with no regard for his own safety. What was he — hero or coward? Pick you day!

All through the third day, rumors persisted that the 7th and 9th Armored were going to come in and join the fight, and get us to hell out of there.

After dark the night of the 18th of December, I recall standing next to a jeep talking to someone and a GI came in from the defense line. He had stepped on some sort of booby trap. He was wounded in the genitals. It was hard to comprehend how calm he was. I have no idea what happened to him.

Finally, the order came down that we were going to move out and assemble that night for an attack on Schonberg in the morning. During the march to the assembly area, I recall walking up a hill and spotting a German burp gun on the ground. I picked it up, intending to keep it, then thought better of it and discarded it. Also, during the night of the 18th while we were moving to the assembly point, I encountered Pfc Francis H. Edgeworth, Jr. who was Captain Tomlinson's driver. He was wearing a steel helmet with Captain's bars on it. I asked him why he was wearing it, he said, "The Captain and I traded helmets." I remember seeing our trucks in line going up the side of a hill — abandoned.

Below is the 1 06th History account of the night of the 18th:

"Cavender's final decision of the night of (18 Dec 1944), given the situation in which he now found himself, was, on the other hand, the one appropriate course which would further the mission: To cast the dice once more in what, as all at the conference now began to realize, was a long shot gamble on the fortune of war.

He had to concentrate somewhere. His 3rd Battalion was nearest to the objective. True, he would have to abandon his transport; no more vehicles could get through the mud in the valley beyond. But, were he to call back the 3" Battalion and concentrate in the Radscheid area, he would not only be leaving the objective but also he would be remaining in a situation in which the enemy had already shown superior force. Furthermore, there was the question of that coming air drop. That would be to the north.

So the orders went out and exhausted men with sleep-seared eyes struggled to their fret and stumbled heavily northward through the night.

The artillery went first; the prime movers could pull the howitzers to the one position available — on the bare northern nose of Hill 575, five hundred yards north of Radsheid crossroads on Skyline Drive. Then Cannon Company went sliding down past them into the Ihren Valley. Puett's gallant decimated 2" Battalion unhooked itself from the cutoff and followed Craig's l~ Battalion, began to untangle itself from the step ravine below Oberlascheid, leaving Company A to cover the move; Craig's job was to protect the regimental rear, closing the perimeter behind Lackey's howitzers.

Cavender, in messages back to Division — they were not received until next morning — reiterated the critical situation in which he found himself

In the ~ and **2nd** *Battalion areas, grim-faced medics — officers and men watched their comrades melt into the night. Then they turned to continue their task of caring for the wounded piled up in the bleak and overcrowded first aid station. For there was no transportation. The regiment was leaving its wounded. The scene was shifting for the finale." (7)*

On the final day of combat, 19 December 1944, the 422nd and 423rd Regiments found themselves in desperate positions, isolated and cutoff, without food, without ammunition, without heavy weapons, with no help in sight from outside the pocket, and finally without hope. They were under futile orders to attack Schonberg. They desperately tried.

The following quote from the 106th History will shed some light on the situation:

"So far as concerns the 206th, two vital questions loomed. Most important, of course, was the situation the 422nd and 423rd Infantry regiments up in the hills, behind the Iron Curtain. During the early morning hours the three messages noted above came in so late that they threw no light on the day's situation.

At 6:10 a.m. Division, reiterating previous instructions, sent a radio message to the 423rd Infantry: "Display 50-foot panel orange at 5 (P962867) (the previously agreed on drop point). Make every attempt to establish contact with 422nd Infantry in regard

to dropped supplies."

There was no answer. There would be none, though the message was repeated every fifteen minutes all through the day and night.

It was 2:30 p.m. when Division queried VIII Corps: "Please advise at once if supplies were dropped to units this Division in vicinity Schonberg." And it was 10:00 o'clock at night that VIII Corps radioed back the shocking information: "Supplies have not been dropped. Will be dropped tomorrow — weather permitting."

That was that. Someone, it seemed, had blundered. It's about time that we look into this air drop business. We won't find much. The only evidence is the statement of Lt. Col Joseph T. Towne, AC, attached to VIII Corps. He handled the initial request of Division, for an air drop of ammunition and food for the surrounded outfits, sent in on 17 December.

Towne states that the message was forwarded through IX Fighter Command to the IX Tactical Air Command, which apparently, he alleges, ruled that the request must be handled through ground channels, and forwarded it to G-4 Office, First Army. Then further alleges Towne, someone in First Army G-4 Office, ostensibly because the request had not come through proper channels — direct from G-4, VIII Corps — held it for twenty-four hours, telling no one of his action. When the red tape was straightened out, weather over the target and base had closed down.

When it is considered that such an air drop would have had to be made by Troop Carrier Command from bases in Britain, and in view of the amount of supplies necessary, it is hardly possible that under the best conditions the drop could have been carried out before some time during the day and night of 18 December.

Weather conditions over the target on 18 December were not too bad. Though the fog over the Schnee Eifel was heavy that morning, P-47's were operating in the Stavelot-Stoumont area, twenty miles away; they thoroughly strafed a Kraut panzer column near Andrimont. American Thunderbolts were over the Schnee Eifel on the 17th, 18th and 19th. Kelly remembers seeing those on the 19th and wondering if the long expected drop was coming.

Weather conditions over the base that day are now known. The author himself in the Lorient area of Brittany during the 17-19 December, knows from personal experience that fine weather existed midway between base and target on 17 December, that it was misty during the morning on 18 December but cleared up by noon, and that on 19 December rain and fog were so bad between Lorient and Paris that it is doubtful if any cross channel lift could have been attempted.

Which is prelude to the author's opinion that a drop might have been made on 18 December, the planes being vectored in by instrument ~f necessary. In justice to those brave men of the 422" and 423rd Infantry whose hopes were raised by the ignis fatuus of an air drop, and in justice to Troop Carrier Command which always tried its best in emergency to bring in supplies to beleaguered troops, it is the author's considered opinion that a congressional investigation into this business is called for.

Towne's comment on 16 January 1945 is: "Somebody in First Army should be court-martialed for the delay which was involved." (8)

My personal recollections of the weather are: I remember seeing American aircraft on the 17th and that is was bright and sunny in the late afternoon. As I recall, it was overcast on the 18th and 19th of December.

Again, according to the 106th History:

"Behind the saddle of Hill 536 athwart the high nose over Schonberg, the 423" Infantry huddled at daybreak 19 December. Over the saddle and barely visible through the mist to the outposts of the 3"" Battalion, lay Schonberg town, half a mile northward, in a fold of the Our Valley. Men gnawed at what K-rations remained, cursed the lack of drinking water, stirred their chilled bones.

Puett's 2nd Battalion had gathered in the night, was on the reverse slopes of the hill to the right. Craig's l'~ Battalion, less Company A which had been left as covering force, was slightly behind the others. Company A should have been in by this time, but runners had not found it. It would never join; ii had missed its way in the night, had turned eastward and bivouacked beyond Obersheid. Its story will come later.

The 423rd was at about half fighting strength. The 1st Battalion could muster two depleted rifle companies, the battered but still cockey 2nd Battalion had lost nearly 50% of its personnel (Puett had 19 officers and 405 men left). The 3rd was in fairly good shape. Ammunition, except for caliber .30 was practically nonexistent. On the slope behind them across the trickling Ihren and its mud bed, Lackey's 590th Field Artillery Battalion had less than three hundred rounds for its howitzers, sufficient for one good hard blow.

After visiting Klink's Battalion long before dawn, Cavender had discussed the situation with his battalion commanders, had decided on his scheme of attack which he formally announced at 8:30 a.m. While he was speaking, the 1st Battalion was moving forward beyond the 2nd for its jump-off position. The 422nd Infantry was somewhere; no one knew exactly where.

The regiment was to attack in columns of battalions echeloned to the right rear — 3rd, 1st, 2nd. To Klink on the left fell the main effort. The main effort would have been better made, perhaps, on the right, but the battalions were not disposed that way, and the 3rd Battalion was the only one strong enough for the task Time of attacks 10:00 a.m.

Precise, formal Cavender, his order given glanced at his watch to coordinate the time: It is now exactly 9:00 o'clock.

The group stiffened to attention to salute. Then — it sounded like every tree in the forest had been simultaneously blasted from its roots", says Kelly — a Kraut battery salvo fell almost in their midst mortally wounding LL Col Craig and scattering all to cover. The salvo opened a concentration of all calibers, coming from Schonberg, which swept the area." (9)

"The barrage pounded in for some thirty minutes, then lifted.

Shouts rose over the valley to the rear. Lackey on the way from the conference to his guns, with Kelly, could see a wave of Germans overrun his positions. The* 590th *was through. Cavender urged on his attack. It was all or nothing now, with the enemy from Bleialf attacking the rear." (10)

When the German barrage started, I was near the bottom of the slope of the hill. The shells were landing on the slope above me. This went on for a while. Finally, during a lull, I moved up the hill and as had happened a couple of days before, the shells landed where I had just left.

Again quoting the 106th History:

"Puett's 2nd Battalion, side slipping to the east some 500 yards, moved out in good order on the right and rear of the 1st Battalion, and pushed on until abreast of it, with a deep draw between the units. Puett could hear heavy firing on his left, and from his position on Hill 504 could see Schonberg.

Puett - remember that he was in reserve — felt that he could attack to good effect and sent word to Regiment. Communications were broken, however, and at 2:00 o'clock, having gotten no answer, the aggressive Puett decided to attack Schonberg by circling east.

The battalion moved down into the ravine of the Linne Creek, which empties into the Our a thousand yards east of Schonberg, as the leading elements deployed into the draw they came under a blaze of heavy small-arms fire from the other side. The crackle ran along the right rear.

Shaken, the battalion attempted to re-form to meet the new enemy, only to discover they were being attacked by the 422nd Infantry.

Inside of five minutes the error had been rectified, but the damage was done; both outfits were badly disorganized." (11)

As I recall the final attack, we moved out and after going a short while we came under sniper fire. Somewhere along the way, one of the 01's had captured a German and brought him to the area where I was. They were within fifty feet of me. This was the first time I had seen a German up close. Someone shouted "shoot him", a chorus of no's rang out. We were walking down the slope of the hill when suddenly a fury of small-arm fire erupted. We hit the ground and sought cover. Someone hollered — "don't fire, it's the 422nd". We proceeded to dig in and wait.

Going again to the 106th History:

"Thus Cavender, as the clock ticked toward 4:00 p.m., found his Regiment with one battalion wiped out, another — Puett's entirely out of his control, while the remnants of Klink's 3rd, with which he was, were being swept by waves of artillery and small-arms fire as they clung to Schonberg Hill" (12)

"Lieutenant Colonel Donald F. Thompson 's depleted 3"" Battalion, the left element of the regiment (422nd), came up to the high ground to the west of the 2nd, plunged

down into the Linne Creek ravine, saw armed men moving on the other side and opened up — on Puett's 2" Battalion, 423rd. At this time both outfits were receiving cross fire from the Germans who had taken Lackey's Field Artillery and held Hill 536 to the left rear.

As the two outfits milled around in reorganization, Puett joined forces with Descheneaux, at the same time sending out patrols down the ravine toward the Our, to try to find a covered route to Schonberg.

The patrols reported back about 2:30 p.m. with word that 1500 yards to the right some thirty-odd Kraut tanks and self propelled guns were massed, that there was strong armor to the front in the valley and that more artillery was coming in across the river enfilading their present position.

Descheneaux was pulling his forces into a perimeter defense; he could go neither forward nor back. Machine gunfire was sweeping the hill A steady stream of wounded were being carried into the dressing station beside the command post — pitiful men with staring eyes, for whom there was no food, dressing, or blankets.

Puett obstinate, went out himself to reconnoiter the situation. While he was gone Descheneaux pondered. There was no more machine gun ammunition, there was no food or water, his remaining battalion fragments were melting before his eyes. Kelly and Lackey, artillerymen without guns had made their way to him from the 423rd, and he knew that Cavender was ringed round, that the artillery was gone." (13)

"Descheneaux decided — with bitter heart. He sent out a white flag, and ordered firing ceased and weapons destroyed.

The flag had gone when Puett came back. He demanded permission to try to cut his way out with his battalion, but Descheneaux said no.

It would only make matters worse now. Puett told his men any could go who wanted to, and between fifty and one hundred drifted away." (14)

I have several recollections of the last half hour or so before the surrender. One was rather humorous. When the ASTP transfers, including me, joined the lO6~ Division, every time we complained about training, food or whatever — the original 106er's orders would chide us with, "You should have been on maneuvers with us; that's when things were really tough". Just before the surrender things were understandably very tense and everyone was edgy. I heard someone shout, "Hey Sergeant, does this beat your flicking maneuvers?

It may be remembered that I was armed with a *"45"* automatic. When Puett gave his order that anyone who wanted could leave, a GI with an M1 rifle approached me and asked if I would trade my *"45"* for his Ml. I did. He was one of the ones who took off— Lord knows what happened to him.

"It was over. And just about that time — 4:00 o'clock — Cavender of the 423~, in the midst of his own parched remnants, a thousand yards to the west, had come to the same conclusion, put up the white flag and ordered all arms destroyed.

Nagle, it was on whom Descheneaux placed the onus of arranging for the 422"s surrender. With a soldier who could speak German, the executive officer moved cautiously out of the perimeter until he ran into a group of Kraut ack-ack men about a 20mm gun, waved, and got to a Nazi major.

"That was the hardest thing I ever had to do" says Nagle. "The worst part was coming back and telling the men how and where they should surrender. Many of them didn't understand it; they wanted to fight on." (15)

I recall Colonel Nagel walking through our position telling us that the surrender had been arranged for 4:00 o'clock and telling us to destroy our weapons. I also recall someone saying that the Germans had anti-aircraft guns zeroed in on our position and that an attack with flame throwers would take place if the surrender was not accomplished.

Finally at 4:00 p.m., I saw a lone German soldier, burp gun slung over his shoulder, emerge from the wooded ravine in front of us. Either he or an American told us to put our hands — clasped — behind our head and proceed down the hill. We formed a single column and entered the woods. More Germans appeared and walked along side of us.

I remembered that I had 45-caliber ammunition in my field jacket pocket and started to throw it on the ground whenever I thought the German wasn't looking. In the process of throwing out the ammunition, I discovered a hand grenade, still in its canister. The German saw it and pointed to it. I threw it away immediately.

When we exited from the woods we passed an American 2 1/2 ton truck, with a dead GI at the wheel. On the ground, frozen in a seated position, was another dead American. Someone had stolen his combat boots.

I remember there was still firing going on as we marched to the rear. I also remember seeing rocket fire in the night sky. The only time I remember seeing it. It was obvious that someone was still holding out. We continued the march and finally got on a road. Once on the road, we started walking past what seemed to be an endless column of German equipment. There was horse drawn equipment as well as motorized equipment. At one point, we passed what appeared to be a command trailer — the door was open and a German stood watching us pass.

I carried a 01 issued New Testament in my upper left field jacket pocket. It was wrapped in the wax paper covering of a k-ration chocolate bar. A German soldier saw it and grabbed it. I stopped and kept saying "Bible — Bible". The soldier took it out of its wrapper and realized what it was. He gave it back and kept saying "gut — gut — gut".

We marched all night. Sometime during the night I became so exhausted I fell out of the column to sit and rest. No one stopped me. I rested a very short time when panic hit me. I didn't see a familiar face. I got up and ran like hell down the column which was now marching two or three abreast, until I finally saw a familiar face.

NOTES

The following notes are from R. Earnest Dupoy, Colonel — "St Vith, Lion in the Way"; The 106th Infantry Division in World War II

(1) Page 42, 2nd line from the bottom of the page thru line 33, page 43
(2) Page 43, line 34 thru line 34, page 44
(3) Page 78, line 33, thru line 13, page 79
(4) Page 83, line 34 thru line 33, page 84
(5)* Page 84, line 40 thru line 11, page *85

***(5a)* This history was prepared as an oral history in *1985* and transcribed and edited in**
1988. Since completing it, I found an English paper I had written on the action discussed in the text that filled in some memory gaps. This paper was written in 1947.
It is attached as Appendix I.

(6) Page 124, line 03 thru the entire page 125
(7) Page 129, line 21 thru line 13, page 130
(8) Page 134, line 09 thru line 26, page *135*
(9) Page 136, line 30 thru line 29, page 137
(10) Page 139, line 06 thru line 11, page 139
(11) Page 140, line 16 thru line 33, page 140
(12) Page 140, line 34 thru line 38, page 140
(13) Page 143, line 22 thru line 06, page 144
(14) Page 144, line 15 thru line 20, page 144
***(15)* Page 144, line 21 thru line 33, page 144**

PART II- PRISONER OF WAR

Now that I have described my participation in the Battle of the Bulge, it might be appropriate to assess the reasons I undertook this history. One was, the unlikely possibility that some descendant, or anyone for that matter, might have an interest. The second was the nostalgic interest on my part. In the early Fifties, I had purchased a copy of the 106t1~ Infantry history, entitled: "Lion in The Way" by Col. Earnest Dupuy. I had scanned it several times over the years, but never seriously read it. Finally, in the Summer of 1985, I sat down and read it thoroughly. After I got into it, I started to record the sections that pertained to the 2nd Battalion of the 423rd Regiment and inserted my recollections of the events. However, I believe, the primary motivation was that I wanted to make an assessment of this period of my life to determine if I was comfortable with my action and reactions to the events as I lived them.

The first obvious conclusion is I certainly was not a hero. But certainly equally obvious, I wasn't a coward. Circumstances were such that I participated in events that very well could have been fatal. I followed orders; I didn't volunteer, and I didn't run.

I was awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge by Headquarters, 106th Division, General Orders No. 51, dated 31 July 1945. The introduction sated: "Award of Combat Infantryman's Badge under the provision of the War Department Circular 40E- 17 dated October 1944, as amended, the Combat Infantryman's Badge is awarded as effective 15 December 1944 to the following officers and enlisted men of the 423rd Infantry, present organization unknown, for satisfactory performance of duty in ground combat against the enemy. Almost forty years later, I was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for "Meritorious achievement in combat against the armed enemy during World War II in the European, African, and Middle Eastern Theater of Operations.

I never fired a shot in World War II, because the fortunes of war were such I never had a reason to. Did I deserve the two awards I described above? My conclusion is that I did. One has to be in battle to understand it. Things could have been much different at certain times if the timing of sequences of events differed by a matter of seconds. I kept complete control of myself throughout the entire experience. I did what I was ordered at all times. I believe these are the two prime criteria that a soldier's performance are judged.

You may recall, I mentioned I had picked up some cake in Oberlascheid and shoved it in my pocket. Sometime during the march into Germany, I discovered it in my pocket and ate it. This was the first food I had eaten since it all started. The following morning we arrived in Pruim, Germany where we rested for a while. I believe it was in Pruim that we were given a handful of pretzel-like rye morsels. This was to be our only food for about five days. We continued on into Germany. This was December 20, 1944. As I recall, we marched all day into the night and arrived at Gerolstein on the morning of December 21, 1944. We were loaded into boxcars for shipment into Germany. I don't know how many men were loaded into each boxcar. I have heard estimates of sixty. However, I do remember that there was barely enough room to sit. We used our steel helmets to sit on. We were to be in these cramped quarters until December 30, 1944 — nine days. There was one brief respite that I will discuss later.

After a long wait, the train finally pulled out for our trip into Germany, traveling very slowly with frequent detours and layovers in sidings along the way to allow other higher priority trains the right-of-way. Finally, on the 22nd or 23rd of December, we were pulled into a siding in Limburg, Germany where we sat for several days. I don't recall that exact number. I know we were there Christmas Day. At one point the door of the boxcar was opened and a German officer, who spoke perfect English, talked to us. He said, "Don't worry! We are not going to interrogate you. We know more about the situation than you do."

Since boarding the train, we had neither food nor water for about five days. The only receptacles we had for water were our steel helmets. At some point-in-time, while we were in the Limburg siding, an opportunity for several people to get water arose. Unfortunately, by this time, helmets had been used as urinals and no one knew for sure which helmets were contaminated. In fact no effort was made to figure out which helmets were clean. A number of people became ill after drinking the water.

Sitting in a siding in a boxcar under the circumstances described above for five days or more seemed like an eternity. On December 23, 1944, there was an explosion and

the train lurched with a jolt as if the engine were backing into hook-up. At first we thought that we were finally going to be on our way. The attitudes changed because it became obvious that the jolt had been caused by a bomb exploding near the train. The British were bombing Limburg and the bombs were falling at the siding. A German guard opened the boxcar door and allowed us to get out. Some of us ran for cover to a flat area next to an embankment several hundred feet away. This area was beyond the tracks. A bomb landed near the embankment killing a number of the POWs. The bombing stopped and we got back into the boxcars. Everyone in my boxcar thought the bombing occurred on Christmas Eve. Recently, I found out that it occurred on December 23, 1944. I also found out recently the British also bombed Stalag 9A, Limburg and that a large number of POWs were killed. Figures 10 and 11 are day-after photos of the bombing of the siding. Sometime during the layover in Limburg, the Germans gave each boxcar several Red Cross packages which were divided up by the POWs in the boxcar. A very limited amount of food was available to each man. A handful at most. The nine days we were in the boxcars we had water once and the only food was the small portion of a Red Cross parcel discussed above.

We finally arrived at Stalag IVB on December 30, 1944. After disembarking from the train, we were assembled in a building near the gate that we had come through when entering into the Stalag. (See Figure 4). Sometime during the night we were taken to another building where we were told to strip for showers and delousing. We then went into a large shower room. I had heard about the gas chambers and I remember the fear I felt that we might be in for more than a shower. After the shower, we were given an inoculation. The shot was given in the chest. Again, a fearful experience. By the time everyone had been processed, dawn was breaking on the last day of 1944, a very eventful year.

At this point, we were assigned and escorted to a barracks (See Figure 4, Building No. 10), where we joined prisoners who had been in the camp for a long time. These prisoners were mostly British; however, I recall there were also a few Yugoslav POWs also. The British had been there since they were captured in North Africa. That night to celebrate New Years Eve, the barracks had a party. The British put on a show and welcomed the newly arrived Americans. The theme of the show was that we hoped we would welcome 1946 in a more joyous manner than we were welcoming 1945.

During the daylight hours, we were allowed to move around the camp without restrictions. This gave us an opportunity to contact our buddies from whom we had been separated, since being captured. When we met our buddies, the main topic of conversation was what the hell happened to us. I recall walking around the camp and hearing a jet go over. I asked someone what it was and they told me it was a jet. Hitler had bragged that he had secrete weapons with which he would win the war. The jet gave some credence to his claim and heightened our anxiety that we were in for a long war.

On another occasion, I was assigned to a work detail outside the camp. A group of us were given a wooded wagon with steel rimmed wheels and a tongue on the front to steer and pull it. We pushed and pulled the wagon to a field filled with mounded rows of potatoes topped with straw. These rows were filled with layers of straw and potatoes covered by dirt. We filled the wagons with potatoes and returned to camp.

I recall a conversation with some of our British allies who, with typical British

arrogance, made derogatory remarks about the fact that we had surrendered. Most of these people had been captured at Tobruk. When we asked them how come they were in prison camp, they replied they had capitulated.

In accordance with the Geneva Convention, enlisted men can be put to work in non-war related jobs. As a result, sometime in January, 1945, I was shipped out to Arbeit Kommando L-71A, in Bokwitz, Germany along with about 90 other American POWs. (See Figures *5*, 6, 7).

The Camp at L-71A consisted of two fenced in compounds with about ten foot high cyclone fencing topped with barbed wire. The administration building was a wooden barrack type frame building setting outside the fencing except for a part in the rear. In the rear of the building, was an entrance to the shower area. There was always a guard on duty at the entrance. This building was also the barracks for the guards. Also in it was the kommandant's office and the sick bay. A compound adjacent to ours housed about 400 Russian POWs. The compound where the Americans were housed contained a wooden frame building that was divided into three rooms, each with its own entrance. The 90 or so Americans were more or less divided equally into three rooms. I would estimate that the room was about twenty feet wide by thirty feet long. The bunks consisted of two sloped racks on each wall along the length of the room, one over the other. The mattresses were burlap burial bags filled with straw. Between the two rows of bed racks were two tables that went the long way of the room. Between the two tables was a pot-bellied stove. The only other building in our compound was a latrine. Also there was a large trench dug for an air raid shelter. (See Figure 8).

The Americans were divided into a number of work details. I was assigned to a work group to work in a factory where they processed brown stage coal into coal brickettes, to be burned like hard coal. One group of GI's, for what reason I don't know, were chosen to go to school to become machinists. They attended school with preteen age German kids. They were given a block of steel and a file. Their task was to file the cube flat and square. This was their task the whole time they were in school.

We worked six days a week, Sunday was our day off. A typical day: we were awakened at about 4:45 a.m., allowed about a half hour to wash up and get ready to move out, and at about *5:15* a.m. we fell out to march to the factory. The group consisted of thirty-one Americans and three Russians. At the same time we fell out, there was a group of Russians that went to work at the same time we did. When we arrived at the factory there was about a half hour before we had to go to work. We started work at 7:00 a.m. There was a small heated building with tables and benches that was used by the factory workers to eat their lunch. We were allowed to rest there until we started work. We worked until about 5:00 p.m., at which time we were marched back to our compound. Our time was our own for the rest of the night.

Our food ration for the day consisted of approximately six ounces of watery soup at noon time at work and about the same amount of soup at night back at the compound. Also, we were given bread which is worth a little discussion. A two kilogram loaf was divided into twelve parts. The loaf was almost elliptical - the length being about three times the width. Short of weighing each portion there was no way to divide it into equal portions. The loaf was cut down the middle and each half

divided into six equal lengths.

Therefore, the curved ends were smaller portions. To distribute the bread rations, each piece was placed on a playing card that was placed on a table face down. Matching cards were placed in a pile on the table. As you came in, you would take a card from the pile. When all the cards were taken, the ones face down on the table were turned over and you got the portion of bread over the card that matched the one you had drawn from the pile. The bread ration was only given at night.

On Sunday, our day off, we had a watery broth with a very little bit of meat floating in it, and no vegetables. Along with the broth, we were given three or four potatoes about the diameter of a quarter. That was the only food we received on Sunday. Sunday was the best and the worst day of the week. Best because you didn't have to go to work. Worst, because you received less than *25%* of the food you received on work days and you had more time to think about your hunger. To give you an idea how much solid food we ate, it took a week to require a bowel movement.

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My first work assignment at the factory was to knock out a plaster ceiling. The ceiling was between three and four inches thick. The ceiling was about forty feet above the floor of the factory. About halfway up to the ceiling there was a catwalk that went around all four sides of the building. Planks were placed under the ceiling the width of the factory, with their ends resting on the catwalk. Large ovens processed the immature coal and formed it into brickettes. These ovens created a great deal of heat. We worked until about 2:30 p.m. each day breaking out the plaster with sledgehammers, the debris falling on the planks below. At 2:30 p.m., we would load the debris into a wheel barrow and pushed it outside — dumping it next to a railroad car that was parked there. The temperature in the factory, at ceiling level, I would estimate to be close to one-hundred degrees Fahrenheit. When you went outside in the afternoon it was below freezing. After approximately a month of this, I developed a severe sinus condition. The group breaking out the ceiling consisted of several other Americans, myself, and a Polish civilian who had been commandeered into the German work force (slave labor). The work was supervised by a German civilian. This German was a little gnome-like man, bald, ugly, and nasty. We nicknamed him the "Weasel". One day one of the Americans fell from the ceiling and landed on his back on the wooden platform below. Miraculously, other than being shaken up, he was not injured. This was probably because the boards were long and only supported at the ends permitted them to act like a shock absorber and lessen the impact. The Polish civilian's name *as "Felix". He was an extremely nice person. He told us that he lived in Warsaw. One morning the Germans came knocking at his door and took him away. The last time he saw his wife and child was in the window as the German carted him off. Felix spoke no English and none of us spoke Polish, however, with the use of a few words of German and a lot of sign language, it was possible to carry on quite a fluid conversation. This was also true when conversing with some of the more friendly Germans.

I mentioned before that in the morning we thirty-one Americans would fall out to go to the factory. At the same time about a hundred Russians would also line up for work. The German Kommandant, as rumor had it, had been an officer. He was at this point a noncommissioned officer. We used to call him "Two-pips" because of the two

metal buttons he wore to designate his rank. For exercise every morning, he would beat one or more of the Russians. He would then go up and down the ranks of both the Russians and Americans raving in German. One particular morning, he was walking up and down the American detail raving as usual. For some reason, he picked me as his victim for verbal abuse. He put his ugly face within inches of mine, spitting, as he raved in my face. So I told him to "go fuck yourself' assuming that he didn't understand English. Unfortunately, he appeared to understand this bit of English, because he hauled off and hit me on the bridge of my nose with the back of his hand. A ring he wore hit me right on the bridge of my nose. This was the first and only time the Kommandant hit an American. Instead of sympathy from my compatriots, I was berated for angering the Kommandant.

As time went on my sinus condition worsened, getting to the point where I was dizzy, constant headaches, and was miserable all the time. Kommando L-71A had a Russian Medic serving in the place of a doctor. He conducted sick call every night. I went to him for help but he really didn't have the knowledge to help. I can't recall whether he gave me any medication but he did not excuse me from work. The sinus condition worsened to the point where one morning when we fell out, I was so miserable I decided I had to do something drastic. So I feigned a faint, falling to the ground. As I was laying there, "Two-Pips" came over and started yelling and kicked me in the ribs. I managed not to react. At this point, he had the Russian and his assistant carry me into the sick bay. Fortunately, I had a temperature or the Russian Medic lied and said I did. That day or possibly several days later, I was sent to the hospital at Lebanwerda, Germany.

Going back chronologically, for a minute, prior to going to the hospital, the last week or so at the factory was spent filling the railroad car with the plaster from the ceiling. It was rather a slow process and the German supervisor was very unhappy with our efforts, and complained constantly. I went to the hospital before the car was completely loaded. When I returned from the hospital, I found out from the fellows I had worked with, the events that took place immediately after my leaving. They finished loading the railroad car and the "Weasel" sent for an engine to move the car away from the loading dock. The "Weasel" was on the car, assisting in hooking it up to the engine. He moved the wrong control and when the engine started, it dumped the entire load along the tracks.

I was taken to Lebanwerda by train. The passenger car I rode in had been strafed a couple of weeks before and there were bullet holes in the ceiling, there was standing room only, and I was standing in the aisle. There was a young German girl standing next to me. An attractive blonde about fourteen years old.. Apparently she was studying English in school and was dying to try it out on me. I spoke to her for a while. It was a strange sensation, there was no animosity, just two young people talking small talk.

The hospital at Lebanwerda was headed by a British doctor, an Army officer. The doctor treated my sinuses by shoving medicated cotton swabs up my nostrils, a very painful experience. However, the relief was almost immediate and very much appreciated. I remained at he hospital for quite a while - a week or two. The hospital was in an old theater. One day they decided that we should take showers. The shower was in a building that contained a stall, with one side open to the elements. The water was unheated, and it was January. I've never been so cold in my life. The patients in

the hospital were a pot-pourri of the Allies Mostly they were British. The following are some of the people I became friendly enough to exchange addresses with: Jan Barth, Eesterhoek0427, Gorssel, Holland; Carl Peter Net, GraaffReinet, South Africa; J, Phyall Mars, Malta. I became quite friendly with these three. One of the three, I can't remember which, couldn't speak any English. Someone had told him that when he met an American, he should walk up smiling and say: ~'Hello, you fucking son-of -a-bitch, how are you?" I'm sure at this point in time he knew what he was saying and said it for effect.

It never ceases to amaze me how people who can not speak a common language can communicate by the use of an assortment of words of different languages, hand signs, body English, pictorial representations. etc.. The three fellows I mentioned and myself

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would converse almost fluently in a normal conversation even though not one of them spoke English. Another example of this type of communication occurred while I was in Lebanwerda railroad station waiting for the ride back to Arbeit KommandoL-7lA. A high ranking German Officer, I believe a General, came up to me. I stood there nonchalantly in a completely non-military stance. He quickly got it across to me that I should be standing at attention. He also established he was not impressed by my military presence in not showing respect to him as an officer.

Back tracking chronologically again. There was an incident that occurred at L-71A before I left for the hospital that I failed to mention. Shortly after we arrived at the Kommando one of our people became fatally ill. His tongue swelled and became black and he had difficulty breathing. He was rushed to the hospital in Lebanwerda where he died several days later. Someone from the group was with him at the hospital and attended the funeral. Some German school girls had taken a dish towel and painted an American flag on it to lay on his coffin during his funeral. The flag was brought back to the Kommando to be returned to his family. I wish I remembered his name and I wonder if his family ever got the flag. He had died from typhus. It turns out that the shot we got in the chest the first night at Stalag IVB was for typhus and he had managed to duck it. Almost fifty years later, I reunited with two POWs who had been in my factory work detail, B. J. Carmichael and L. D. Lawler. B. J. had been in the hospital with Scarlet Fever. Apparently the stage of the old theater was where they put patients near death. B. J. had been very ill and was on the stage as was my friend with typhus. He remembered the POW with typhus because he kept crying for his mother constantly in such a way that B. J. has never been able to forget.

For the most part, one day was pretty much the same as the next at L-71A However there were some memorable times. I can recall. I previously described the playing card method of distributing the bread ration. For about a week straight luck was against me and I wound up with the curved end portion of the bread. One night when I again got the curved end-portion of the bread, I became so frustrated that I threw the bread across the room and bounced it off the wall, almost hitting the window. Also on the subject of bread, the bread was brought into the compound in a two wheel, horse drawn cart with a wooden floor. The bread was thrown into the cart and

landed on the bare wooden floor. A Russian died. The next day when the cart came in with the bread it left with the dead Russian laying on the bare floor of the cart. They did have the decency to attempt to cover him with some paper but his arms and legs were still visible.

Under the Geneva Convention, a prisoner of war who works must be paid some small amount. The Germans at the Kommando did pay us in German Marks. However, we had no place to spend them. The only thing the marks were good for was to wallpaper a room or use it for poker chips. I had the most fabulous luck in poker and I still have my winnings of worthless marks.

We were either thirty miles or thirty kilometers from Dresden. The night of the big air-raid on Dresden the sky was brightly lighted and the building shook so that the glass in the windows rattled. Even that far away it was a terrifying experience.

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The German guards were either old men or soldiers who for some reason or other were not fit for combat duty. With the exception of the Kommandant, they were all decent friendly people. One old man who was the guard in the shower room, had a son that was a prisoner of war in Georgia. I assured him that I had seen the prisoner of war camp at Camp Wheeler and that his son was a hell of lot better off than either he or I were. Another guard was from Alsace Lorreine. His mother was a German and he was forced into the German Army. The third guard I can recall was a dark haired individual in his late twenties. He used to sing American songs in the shower. When he walked his guard rounds he would walk behind our barracks. In the Spring, there was still some daylight when we returned from the factory. We used to go behind the barracks and throw a football around. The dark haired guard would give one of us his rifle to hold and go out for a pass. It should be noted that behind the barracks he was out of the sight of the Kommandant. He told us he had been a member of German's Olympic hockey team in the 1936 Olympics.

The only American that spoke German was an individual by the name of Howard Lowenburg. He lived in Germany a couple of years before the War with his Grandparents, returning to the United States before the War started. He and a Texan buddy were the only ones to gain weight at L-71A. I didn't like or trust him or his friend. These two were buddies with the Russian medic and his assistant. On one occasion they accompanied the Russians into town and slept with some slave labor girls.

One time during the stay at L-71A we received some Red Cross packages. I don't recall how they were divided, but each POW received a substantial amount. I foolishly traded the variety of food I was given for chocolate. Once I started to eat the chocolate I couldn't stop. In a couple of hours I threw-up everything I had eaten. I never realized how addictive smoking was. There were several individuals who traded all their food for cigarettes that had also been included in the Red Cross package. When you stop to think that our thoughts were of food twenty-four hours a day, it is incomprehensible to me that anyone could trade food for cigarettes. Smoking is more

addictive than I ever imagined. When I returned from the hospital, I again went to work at the Fabrique Eine and Zwei. Now I was given odd jobs, e.g. taking the coal brickettes off the conveyer belt and stacking them in huge piles in the factory yard; cleaning up messes, etc. At this point the German civilians who were in charge of us were a different breed than the "weasel", they were pretty decent people.

One of my assignments was to take the brickettes off the conveyer belt out in the yard and stack them. A fellow POW by the name off B. J. Carmichael was working with me. The conveyer belt would often stop for a period of time. On one of these occasions B. J. and I were talking about where we came from. He told me he was from Texas and when I told him I was from Neptune, N.J. he said he spent several summers in Belmar, N.J. which was only about five miles from where I lived. He then told me the family he stayed with in N.J. It turns out that the daughter of the people he stayed with was my sister-in-Law's best friend in high school and I knew her quite well.
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I recall being detailed away from the factory somewhere filling a bomb crater. The German who was in charge of the work spoke a little English. As a matter of fact, he spoke three or four languages. He told us this was not unusual since between the wars, many people would work in other countries to stay employed. We had become somewhat friendly with him to the point where we asked him how the German people ever let Hitler get them in this mess. He replied that when Hitler came on the scene the economy was in horrible shape, and Hitler got the economy moving and put people to work. In the beginning it was on consumer goods, e.g. a toy factory. Soon a small part of the factory was manufacturing war material. Before long, the bulk of industry was committed to the preparation for war. By the time the population realized what was going on it was too late to do anything about it.

There was a railroad track on the left as you entered the Fabrique Eine and Zwei. In late March and early April, large numbers of trains passed. These trains were carrying sometime soldiers and equipment and sometimes refugees. The people were in boxcars, flatcars, coal cars etc., apparently anything that was available. In the open cars you could see the people packed in like sardines. We were told that the civilians were Germans returning from the occupied Eastern European countries. Also, during that period the food situation became even worse than it had been. A couple of times a week we were given a rich sugar beet conglomeration. This mess was inedible, especially considering the condition of our stomachs. I remember on one occasion we got shredded cabbage with whole raw fish about the size of small sardines. There were many days when we did not get our bread ration.

On the 13th of April, 1945,we went to work at the factory as usual. We arrived about 6:30 a.m., on schedule ,waited until about 7:00 a.m. to go to work. One of the German civilians, who occasionally spoke to us, came up to me, real happy, and said: "Roosevelt is dead." So we found out this tragic news from the Germans first. However, later on in the day, the same German came back. First, I should say that someone had a clandestine radio and used it to get the BBC news reports which were then spread by word of mouth. The Germans knew about the existence of the radio but couldn't locate it. The German who had told me of Roosevelt's death in the

morning, had thought about the fact that the report might just be propaganda. He wanted to know if the BBC had confirmed it. His elation over the demise of Roosevelt was gone. I assume he had come to the conclusion that Germany would be better off with a strong American President to counterbalance Stalin.

As I mentioned, the BBC news reports were circulated by word of mouth amongst the POWs. None of us knew the original source. This was both a blessing and a curse. Many times the BBC reports would be overly optimistic and we would get our hopes up that the end was near. Another report would come in to negate the previous report. Psychologically, this was difficult to cope with.

Shortly after Roosevelt's death, we began hearing the distant rumble of Russian artillery in the distance. It was now obvious that the end was near. Rumors started to persist that the Germans were going to march us back to the American lines. Sometime
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after the 20th of April 1945 (I don't recall the exact date), we were organized and started marching back toward the American lines. "Two-Pips" didn't go with us.

After marching all day and into the night, we found ourselves back at Stalag *NB*. We were herded into a building; it turned out to be the same one the Germans had put us in on our arrival at IVB back in December 1944. (See Figure 4) The next morning we continued our march back to the American lines. Sometime during the daylight hours we reached the Elbe river at Reisa. (See Figure 6) The column stopped on a slope whose crest was a short distance from where we stopped. By this time we were enmeshed with a column of refugees, some in concentration camp garb. I recall seeing a corps so-clothed discarded along the side of the road like so much garbage. We waited for a considerable length of time. I began to get anxious and walked to the crest of the knoll. The sight I saw was bewildering. The ground leveled off for maybe two hundred yards between the knoll and the river. The ground dropped off quickly once over the knoll and was level. It was covered with a mass of humanity, horses, and wagons both hand drawn and horse drawn. Directly in front of me and off to the right was a wooden temporary bridge about fifteen or twenty feet wide filled solidly with refugees and their belongings and animals. The entrance to the bridge was controlled by the military who determined who could go across. It was obvious why we had waited so long on the other side of the knoll. I remember standing there looking out at this dramatic panorama and thinking of the scene in "Gone With The Wind" in the Atlanta railroad station with humanity spread out all over awaiting the fall of the city. I went back down the knoll and joined my compatriots.

Somehow our guards got priority to get us on the bridge and across to the other side of the Elbe. We walked up the road to the top of the knoll, descended to the plain area - walked to and went on the bridge, which was literally filled solid. People were pushing and shoving, screaming for family members barely under control. About halfway across the bridge, two large draft horses reared out of control causing a momentary chaotic situation. We reached the other side, without further incident and continued our march.

Sometime after dark we stopped in a farm and the guards arranged for us to sleep in the haymow of the barn. We immediately fell asleep warmer and more comfortable

than we had been since arriving at Stalag NB. About midnight, the guards awakened us and said that the Russians had captured the bridge we had crossed and were burning everything in sight. They made it clear that they feared that Russians would soon catch up with us if we didn't move out immediately. When we left the barn, the sky in the direction of Reisa was a fiery red. The guards told us that the Russians had burned the bridge which didn't make sense. We marched through the night and into the daylight hours of the next day. As I said before, we were now intermixed with the refugees. At one point we were walking through a wooded area. There was a car pulled off to the side of the road. The car doors were opened. A well dressed German and his family were pouring over roadmaps. We stopped to talk to him. He was extremely friendly, naturally, at this point in time. Judging from his car and apparel he was probably a well placed Nazi. Late in the afternoon we stopped for a break. Another POW and myself

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discussed our situation and expressed our concern over how much faith we should place in the German Guards contention that they were taking us to the American lines. We finally decided to strikeout on our own.

There was a shallow ditch along the side of the road where we had stopped. We rolled into the ditch and laid there when the guards got the column going. We waited until we were sure that our group was out of sight. Finally we got up and ran cross country as fast as we could, looking back frequently until we reached an evergreen wooded area which was about a quarter of a mile from the road. In the cover of the trees we rested before proceeding on. As we were walking through the woods we came upon a road with a column of POWs hiking on it. We heard someone on the road speaking English, so we ventured out on the road. It was a group of Canadian POWs whose guards had taken off, leaving them on their own. The two of us decided to join the Canadians, Toward evening we arrived in a little village. Which we later determined was Falkenheim. The column decided to spend the night in Falkenheim. (See Figure *5* & 7)

My friend and I were in a courtyard of what appeared to be a large farm. The courtyard was filled with prisoners, refugees, and even some armed German soldiers who were oblivious to their surroundings. The big thing to my buddy and I was that we had discovered a large bin of potatoes. We built a fire and found some cans, put water in them and proceeded to try to boil the water without success. Our patience was soon exhausted and we ate our fill of half cooked potatoes. This meal was the greatest thing that had happened to us in a very long time. What the meal lacked in quality was more than made up by the fact that we could satisfy our hunger. I also recall we found some dill pickles which we ate sparingly along with our potatoes. That night the German refugees were not particularly friendly. However the next morning, apparently word had reached them that the Russians were close by. The Germans exhibited a whole new attitude. They assured us that none of them were Nazies and that they werç just people who had gotten caught up in the stream of events. They wanted to know from us if the Americans would come before the Russians. Of course, we had no way of knowing. It seemed prudent at the time to say that we thought that the American would arrive first. This turned out to be true but not in the sense that they stayed. The Russians occupied everything east of the Elbe. It does not seem

possible, but I felt compassion for these frightened people who the day before would have spit on me and were a part of the system that had made my life hell for the last four months.

Early that afternoon we were walking around the courtyard amongst the refugees, in no hurry to leave now that our bellies were full. Suddenly, without warning an American jeep, followed by a second jeep with a fifty caliber machine gun mounted on it pulled into the courtyard. We couldn't believe our eyes. My buddy and I went over and identified ourselves to the Lieutenant in the first jeep. The GIs 's outfit was the I&R Platoon from the 69th Division. They were about twenty miles behind German lines. One of the GIs told us that about a half hour before they had encountered a German column of about battalion strength, headed by a armored vehicle with a large machine gun mounted on it and aimed at the American jeeps. They stopped and the German

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commander came over to the lieutenant and demanded he surrender. The GI said that the lieutenant told the German that if they didn't lay down their arms he would wipe out the column. The lieutenant made this threat with one fifty caliber machine gun mounted on a jeep. Fortunately there was no fight left in the Germans. The German officer handed over his hand gun and ordered the column to lay down their arms. My buddy and I were the only Americans in the village so the Lieutenant told us to get in the jeeps and go back to the American lines with them. We gladly complied and piled into one of the jeeps. They reconnoitered a while longer including a good size city that I believe was Wurzen. We then returned to the American lines in Trebsen, Germany. (See Figure 7) The ordeal was over. Part of the I & R platoon was billeted in a large German home in Trebsen, and we shared their accommodations. I relaxed with a peace of mind I hadn't experienced since before December 16, 1944. That night I slept on a cot in the kitchen of a two room upstairs apartment, which consisted of a kitchen-living area and a bedroom. I laid down to go to sleep. I could still hear the rumble of artillery in the distance. The following day our liberators of the 69th Division were to go to Targau on the Elbe to meet the Russians. This would be the first meeting of the wartime allies. My buddy and I both wanted to go to this historic event. They refused saying that since we had made it this far, we should not press our luck.

That night when the troops of the 69th got back to the billets, they described their meeting with the Russians. The Russians were a drunken bunch shooting up the place like the cowboys coming into Dodge. The Russians seemed to be completely undisciplined. Our friends from the 69th told of one instance where they were with some Russians on the second floor of a German house. A German woman holding a baby, was accosted by a Russian who grabbed the baby and threw it out the window. He then placed the bayonet in the woman's belly and pointed to his penis giving her the choice. They related numerous other atrocities that I can no longer recall. The relationship between the Russians and the Americans was described as very friendly. This meeting with the Russians took place on April *25*, 1945,

Since starting this account, I have located some notes that identify the unit of the 69th Division that liberated us.

I & R Platoon
Headquarters Company
273rd Infantry
69th Division

We stayed with the I & R platoon for about a week. Figure 9 is a photograph of some members of the platoon.. I have a number of recollections, however, the sequence of their occurrence has been forgotten.

During duty hours, my buddy and I wandered around Trebsen just enjoying the freedom of going and coming as we pleased.. During our wanderings, we came across an

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abandoned motorcycle with a sidecar. We pushed it back to the house where we were staying and attempted to start it. The German who owned the house we were staying in helped us. It turned out that the carburetor float had a leak in it. The German soldered the leak and collectively we got it started. We took it for a ride. After going about a mile it conked out again. One of the GIs had given me a small Italian automatic pistol he had liberated from a German prisoner. When the motorcycle broke down again, I took the pistol out and told my friend: "that I hadn't fired a shot in the whole damned war, I'm going to right now." I proceeded to fire the pistol into the ground. We abandoned the motorcycle and walked back to the house.

When one is starved as long as we were, the obsession with food is almost fanatic. We were very appreciative, of course , of the kindness given us by the I & R Platoon. We decided that we were going to cook supper for the fellows we stayed with. So we cooked up some conglomeration which I am sure was unfit to eat, but we thought it was the greatest thing in world. They politely ate some of it. They had liberated some champagne somewhere and we had it with the meal. With the condition of our stomachs three or four ounces of champagne had us higher than a kite. The odd thing was that for the next several hours we would get high each time we drank a little water.

I described the little apartment where I stayed during my stay in Trebsen. The bedroom was occupied by a sergeant, whose name I don't remember, and PFC Jon Orwig. The bedroom door was right next to the cot on which I slept. One of the daughters of the house would come up each night and have sex with the Sergeant. One night after finishing with the Sergeant, she came out and sat on the edge of my bed and tried to arouse me. Fortunately, malnutrition had taken its toll. I say fortunately because the sergeant wound up with gonorrhea

From the time we left Arbeit Kommando L-7 1 A I had heard the overture of artillery fire constantly rumbling in the background. I believe it was the sec~ond night I stayed in Trebsen that the artillery fire stopped. I had become so used to it that I had difficulty falling asleep without the rumble.

One day one of the 69th GIs shot a deer. The German family prepared the venison and we all, American and German, sat around the German's dining room table and had a feast.

The I & R Platoon had liberated several accordions from the Homer factory in Targau. They gave me one of the accordions. The youngest daughter of the German family played the accordion and was kind enough to teach me a little bit about playing one. I carried that accordion from Trebsen to Reimes, France. More about this later.

As I said before, I don't remember how long I stayed in Trebsen, but I remember hearing of Hitler's death while I was still there. Finally, I'm unsure what motivated the move, but we decided to turn ourselves over to the Army officially. Probably the 69th was tired of having us around and we were getting anxious to get started for home.

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As you have probably noticed I have never referred to my companion in the "escape" by name. I recall so much of what happened vividly but I can't recall his name and we were together constantly for several weeks. All I remember is that his father was a minister and he was from the south.

Before we left the I & R Platoon, I took the names and addresses of a number of the fellows in the outfit. Upon returning home, I called their families and told them I had seen them and gave the families their messages. PFC Jon Orwig had a Luger that he had taken from a German prisoner and he asked me to take it to his brother-in-law, a radio personality by the name of Jack Berch. I'll discuss this a little bit more later.

I've forgotten the details of how we turned ourselves over to the Army. I believe that someone from the 69th took us to the reception center which was an old Luftwaffe base near Halle, Germany. I recall walking around the air base. One thing that comes to mind was a room which had a large lectern in it. Draped behind the lectern was a hugs swastika and other Nazi trappings, much like you see in the war movies. If I recall correctly, there was an SS dagger on the lectern which someone else liberated before I had the chance.

I recall seeing crates of aircraft parts. The only other memory I have is going into a class room and on one of the tables was a copy of "Mein Kampf'. Why I didn't take it for a souvenir, I don't know.

I don't know how long I was at the luftwaffa base but I do know I was there on VE Day, which I believe was May 8th. My most prominent thought about the base was that it was boring and I couldn't wait to get on my way home.

Finally, we boarded a C-47 in Halle, Germany and flew to Reimes, France. At last I was out of Germany. We were taken from the airport in Reimes to what I would call a transit camp, where we spent one night. I have two recollections of that camp. You may recall that I had acquired an accordion and had lugged it ever since I left Trebsen. One of the kitchen personnel at this transit camp saw the accordion and wanted to look at it. I told him how tired I was of lugging it around and he offered to

take it to the American Express Office and ship it home for me. So I accepted his offer and gave him the accordion. I went back to the tent where I was staying. About a half hour later a GI came up to me and told me the fellow I had given the accordion to had no intention of shipping it home for me, and if you want it you had better go get it and ship it yourself. I followed his advice. This was sometime in the middle of May. It didn't arrive home until sometime in August. I had given it up for lost when it finally arrived. I still have that accordion.

The other memory I have of that camp is of disillusionment. For some reason in my mind's eye, I thought that all French women were beautiful. While at the camp, I went to a French cafe. The ladies were no different than anywhere else.

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The following day we left Reimes by train, arriving sometime later in the afternoon at Le Havre. I had made a full circle from Le Havre to Le Havre.

I was stationed at Camp Lucky Strike for the rest of my time in Europe. I believe this had been a processing camp for replacement. It was at this point a processing center for returning POW's, and other soldiers returning to the States.

I was at Camp Lucky Strike until about the first of June. It was a long boring stay. All I did during the day was read, and shoot craps at night, until the money ran out, which wasn't very long. The only things they fed us were cheese sandwiches and canned boned turkey. After two weeks of that diet, I almost wished I were back in prison camp.

I have a couple of recollections of my stay in Camp Lucky Strike. One day I bumped into one of the prisoners of war from L-71A. He was shocked to see me. The German guards had told him and the others that the GI that took off with me and myself had been caught by SS and shot. The other recollection is that Eisenhower visited the camp on one occasion. I didn't see him.

On or about the first of June, we boarded the Army transport "Admiral Bensen", and set sail for New York City, again full circle. The trip was uneventful except at one point when we stopped and the crew shot and exploded a floating mine. We arrived in New York City 06 June 1945. By the time we got in the harbor, it was late in the evening. We anchored off the Statue of Liberty and spent the night. It was a strange feeling to be that close to home (about forty miles), and yet so impossible to go there.

The next day we disembarked. There were no bands or cheering crowds. We were then taken to Camp Kilmer, NJ. After a couple of days we were taken to Fort Dix, NJ., again full circle. We stayed at Fort Dix for three or four more days before being allowed to go home.

I hadn't called my parents since my arrival in the States. I walked in and out of the phone booths several times but couldn't muster up the nerve to make the phone call. I had had no word from anyone at home since I was in England. I was well aware of the stress that my parents had undergone because of the capture. However, I found

out later that the stress had been even worse than I imagined. At one point they had been informed that I was in allied hands and all right. Then a telegram was sent with additional information. Unfortunately the code they used on the outside of the telegram for the delivery person indicated I was dead. The girl that delivered the telegram warned my mother of the contents and it wasn't until she later opened it she found, to paraphrase Mark Twain, my demise was greatly exaggerated. Finally, I called and everything was OK. I was fully relaxed the first time.

I received a ninety-day furlough and spent the summer at home. Late in August, I went to the rehabilitation center at the Hotel Dennis in Atlantic City, NJ for a week. I then reported to the Replacement Center at Fort Meade, Maryland and worked as a clerk. My Company Commander at Fort Meade was Captain Ryan E. Tomlinson, my former

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CO. Again full circle. I was transferred to Camp Pickett, Virginia along with Captain Tomlinson. I returned to Fort Meade in November and was discharged from active duty on 29ovember 1945, as a corporal. Prior to being discharged, I re-enlisted in the Army Reserve Corps as Corporal for three more years. I was finally discharged from the Army Reserve Corps in November 1948.

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APPENDIX I
THE BREAK THROUGH (See Note No.1)

The morning of December 16, 1944 the squad arose to go for breakfast at about 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock. I had been out the previous night and decided to pass up breakfast and wait until 8:00 o'clock which was the hour we were to report for the days assignments. The next thing I remember was being awakened and told to go to Lt. Shaver's and Lt. Gumphey's quarters and get them immediately. I was given orders to tell them to report immediately to Battalion Headquarters. On my way to find the Lieutenants, I found them walking in great haste to Battalion Headquarters, so I reported back to the squad.

We were told by Sgt. Walters to get our gear in shape for action. The whole firing mechanism had been kept in Cosmoline since we left the States. This meant several hours of hard work before the gun would be ready. We set to work immediately and in several hours the gun was hitched to the truck and we were loaded aboard. By this time the story was beginning to take shape. The situation, as we knew it at the time, was believed to be as follows: The Germans had opened a terrific bombardment through the night and destroyed or captured the most part of our artillery. They had broken through our lines with their tanks .We were to go in support immediately. The waiting before the action is the part that is hardest. The truck and gun had been ready since about 11:00 o'clock a.m. but we hadn't moved. The reason for this, I don't know. Sometime in the afternoon, just exactly when I don't know, we were served

our last hot meal for a good many months. Several times during the afternoon "Buzz" bombs flew over. These were the first we had seen or heard. They served to intensify the mounting tension. Everyone was very quiet, each with his own thoughts.

Finally the order to move came through. and we were on our way to the Front We were headed for St. Vith, which we passed through. The only thing I recall as we passed through St. Vith was the wounded. It comes back to me even now more vividly; the red blood on the clean white bandage. Our nerves were completely tense by now. Our column pulled into a small town, which a very short while before had been given a rough going over by the enemy. artillery. There was still some firing going on all around the town. (I believe this was Schonberg.) My squad was put on a curve on the approach to the town and we started to dig in. It was dark and the only light was the light of exploding shells. We tried to dig shelters but found it almost impossible as the ground was full of small rocks. After making very shallow trenches, we broke up into shifts. I drew the first shift with someone else, who, I have forgotten. A messenger appeared almost immediately and told us to get ready to move out. We were going to change positions for an attack in the morning. We took the gun out of action and boarded the truck. I only remember moving, where to I don't know, except that it was somewhere in the Slmee Eiffel area,. Lt. Shaver finally told us to pile out and dig the gun in. We were in a wooded area very near a road.. All night long we could hear our mortars pouring round after round into the enemy lines. It was a bitter cold night and we soon had the gun dug in but found it impossible to dig shelters. So we huddled in the truck and tried to keep warm.

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Just before dawn, Lt. Shaver came to Sgt. Shore and told him to get ready to move the gun. When the fmal order came it was completely daylight and our truck pulled out on the road in full view of the enemy and started for our new location. I stat there waiting for a shell to tear us to pieces. We arrived at our new location without incident, however, and immediately put the gun into action. The Infantry was dug in in front of us. The enemy was less than a thousand yards away. I had to move my bowels and was in the process of this when I heard the scream of a mortar shell. I collected myself quickly and jumped into a shallow hole near the gun. I peered out and saw a German tank pointing an 88 at our general position. Paulson and Spink were in a truck near the gun and Paulson was looking with binoculars at the tank when a mortar shell landed near him and wounded him in the hand. Our first casualty. Our gun had been hit by two 88 shells and was out of commission. Cpl Barnes had been laying on the trails when the hits were made on the gun but escaped with only two bruised legs. Lt Shaver ran up and told us to fall back. We immediately did. No more were we out of our former position, when a barrage of mortar shells landed in almost every hole we had just vacated.

I fell back until I was almost even with the truck but about 15 or 20 feet to the side of it. Sgt. Walters and Pvt. Moran were between me and the truck when a hail of mortar shells landed in the vicinity. I fell to the ground, holding my helmet to my head and face to the ground. When I looked up, half the truck was shot away and where Sgt. Walters and Moran had been, there was a large hole. They however had moved on before the hits had been made. The shrapnel had gone all around me and several shells had landed seven or eight feet from where I had been lying. I later found a

gash on my left hand which I believed I received then.

I continued to fall back and finally reached the Second Squads position. Their gun had been hit and put out of action also. There were no casualties. However, one of the tank destroyers that was supporting the position we were in, moved up the road and over the small crest which hid it from the tanks. They took several shots a t the tanks and started to retreat for cover. The top of the tank destroyer was hit by an "88" and one man killed instantly. The whole top was ripped away and the man killed had been standing up in the turret directing the T.D.'s movement.

The enemy mortar had quieted down completely. In fact, there was no firing from the German lines at all. The Infantry which had been in front of us was retreating in a disorderly fashion. One Lt. came up and asked me where his company was. There was snow on the ground and we had to make our way across open fields. We could see all our vehicles along the road. They were completely halted. The Battalion ammunition truck had been hit and was burning. The Third Squad turned their gun on it in an attempt to blow it up, but were unsuccessful. All the vehicles were jammed up behind it. I had reached the Third Squad's truck by this time and had climbed aboard. There were a number of Infantry troops from different outfits in the truck - all anxious to get the hell

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out of the area. While the removal of the ammunition truck took place, a number of planes flew over. We all scattered from the truck but they proved to be American planes.

NOTES:

(1) This paper was written as a college English composition in 1946. It fills in some of the events that took place that I had forgotten over the years before writing my recollections.

APPENDIX II

THE 2ND BATTALION, 423rd INFANTRY REGIMENT

A Discussion of Their Battle Experiences
By
Weldon V. Lane

INTRODUCTION:

On December 19, 1991, I became a prisoner of war of the Third Reich, a fact that has affected me both physically and emotionally.

I grew up like everyone old enough to participate in World War II, sure that the American Army was invincible and therefore as a member of the U. S. Army I too would be a conquering hero.

All of a sudden, after merely four days of combat, I was walking down a hill with my hands clasped behind my head toward a lone German soldier with a burp gun held at the ready across his chest.

The humiliation of surrendering, although not of my own actions, burned in me like a hot poker. I had never fired a shot in this war.

After capture, we were marched into Germany. There was little conversation. I believe because everyone, like me, was shocked by our situation.

Over the years, I put the events of battle and prisoner of war life behind me, went to college, pursued my engineering career, got married, and raised a family. Several years ago, I had a heart attack and for the first time in my life found myself with time on my hands. Over the years, I had accumulated a number of books on the Battle of the Bulge. I had scanned them but never really read them from a historical viewpoint. Also, I audio taped, and transcribed my recollections of those momentous days. As I was recording my memories, my feelings of humiliation, experienced so long ago was ever present. After I had finished recording my memories, like a good engineer, I pondered what conclusions can I derive from this experience? I asked myself: Did you or any of your comrades disobey an order or run under fire? - No Did you ever in any way endanger a comrade? — No Are you in any way ashamed of your actions in combat? - No Did you act heroically?
- No Did you act cowardly? - No Are you satisfied that under the circumstances you performed all your duties as assigned? - Yes

The purpose of this introduction is to establish that the story of the 2'~ Battalion; of the 423rd Infantry I am about to tell is a story of my comrades who

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could answer with pride all my positive self-asked questions plus the big one — Did you act heroically? Believe me, the overwhelming majority of the officers and men of the 2nd' Battalion, 423rd Infantry could certainly answer this question affirmatively.

I served in the Antitank Platoon, of the 2nd' Battalion, Headquarters Company of the 423rd Infantry.

I have read the accounts of the Battle of the Bulge by Hugh M. Cole, John Toland, Charles B. MacDonald, Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy, Robert E. Merrimen, and Charles Whiting. None of these authors have recognized the deeds of the 2nd Battalion, 423rd Infantry, except Colonel Dupuy. Colonel Dupuy's account covers the Battalion's actions in the overall history of the 106th Division and only after a careful reading of the Battalion's actions can one discern the full heroic historical account of the 2nd Battalion, 423rd Infantry.

One historian, Mr. Charles Whiting, bluntly states that the only unit in the lost Regiments and their supports units of the 106th Division. (423rd and 422nd Infantries) that acted with courage was the 589th Field Artillery. The following quote sums up his disdain of these armed forces: ". . . This division (106th) situated in the heights around the key Belgian frontier town of St. Vith suffered the most tragic fate of any American formation in Europe in World War II. It struck its colors and gave in to the enemy. Naturally, the ignominious events of this week have since been whitewashed or conveniently forgotten. .

Recently an anonymous writer in a letter to the 106th Infantry Division Association again attacked the courage of the members of the 106th Division who were surrendered in the Schnee Eifel.

After reading this anonymous self appointed judge, I felt compelled to relate the story of one segment of the 106th I was an eyewitness to.

BACKGROUND:

The 106th Infantry Division arrived in England in late October 1944. It went into the frontlines on or about the ~ of December 1944.

The 106th Division had been depleted of its original strength of men who had trained with the Division through Tennessee maneuvers as replacements for the combat units in Europe during the summer of 1944. They had been replaced primarily by members of the Army Specialized Training Program (i.e., Army college students) and former Air Force cadets. These men trained with the Division through the spring and summer of 1944.

The 106th was deployed over a twenty-five mile front in the Ardennes, which was considered by Supreme Command to be a quiet sector suitable for

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initiating the inexperienced troops. The Regiments were deployed from North to South — 422nd 423rd and 424th The front defended by the 106t11 was about three times as large as that normally assigned an Infantry Division. The situation was a calculated risk based on the assumption that the terrain was not conducive to a winter offensive. The 422nd and 423rd were in a part of the German Westwall defenses in an area known as the Schnee Eifel. The 423'~' was short one Infantry Battalion, the 2nd Battalion, which significantly weakened the defense of their sector.

The 2nd Battalion of the 423rd Regiment was designated as Division reserve and was quartered in Born, Belgium; ten or more miles behind the front lines.

The 2nd Battalion was commanded by Lt. Colonel Joseph P. Puett.

December 16, 1955

On December 16, *1955*, at 5:30 a.m., the Germans opened up with an unprecedented

artillery barrage along the entire Division front. When it subsided, German Infantry attacked the 423rd sector in strength. At about 7:30 a.m., the 2nd Battalion in its billets in Born was alerted by Division. After getting things organized, we were on the road heading for St. Vith Division Headquarters. After going a short ways, we pulled over in the woods and waited. At this time, Colonel Puett was in Division Headquarters awaiting orders. Col. Charles Cavender, commanding the 423r11 Regiment had put in an urgent request to General Alan Jones, Commander of the 106th Division, for the return of his 2nd Battalion and had been refused.

About 12:00 p.m., General Jones ordered Col. Puett to take his troops to Schonberg, Belgium to protect one of the main roads leading to St. Vith. St. Vith was a vital cross road that the Germans had to take if their offensive was to succeed. Arriving at Schonberg, which was under heavy artillery fire, the 2nd Battalion dug in. My antitank squad dug in on a curve in the Andler Schonberg Road.

About 8:00 p.m., Division decided the 589th and 592nd Field Artillery Batteries had to retreat from their forward positions and sent orders to Col. Puett to proceed to the Auw-Radshied Road to provide cover for the retreat of the artillery. We left our dug in positions and entrucked into the retreating traffic — down the Schonberg-Bleialf Road south to "Engineer Cutoff' and thence to the Auw Radshied Road. We arrived in the artillery area about midnight. The ride had been miserable in a drizzle that made it necessary to get out and push vehicles to keep them moving.

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The first day of the battle, the 2m1 Battalion had advanced to the defense of Schonberg but in their role as Division reserve had to go to the aid of the attached field artilleries. They had successfully performed their assigned tasks in accordance with the orders issued.

DECEMBER 17, 1944:

After arriving in the artillery area, my squad set up our 57mm antitank gun in a wooded peninsula facing northwest. Col. Puett sent out probing patrols that found the area crawling with Germans and tanks. He requested permission to launch a night attack to divert enemy attention from the artillery. His request was denied and he was told by General Jones not to get too heavily involved. Puett did, however, send out a patrol in force in an unsuccessful attempt to divert attention from "C" Battery, 589th Artillery which was hopelessly mired in.

As dawn broke, my squad was ordered to displace and set up our gun on the apex of the peninsula. Once in a training exercise my squad had been ordered to make the same maneuver by General Jones and the referees had flagged us as a casualty. This incident went through my mind as we pulled out on the road and moved to our new location. We arrived at our new position and set up our gun. Suddenly, a barrage of mortar shells, armor piercing 75mm or 88mm shells struck our area. I was next to the prime mover when this deluge started. I laid prone next to our truck — during a lull I looked up and the truck had been hit by an armor piercing shell. I fell back, as the German shells kept advancing to our rear. Our gun had been knocked out by the action. I was now a rifleman armed with a 45 automatic pistol. The shelling stopped

and an assigned tank destroyer from the 820th TD Battalion came up the road, next to our position and took on enemy tanks coming down from Auw. After firing for a while a German shell hit the turret of the TD killing the observer. The crew abandoned the tank and joined us in the woods.

The relief of the 589th and 592nd Artillery Battalions accomplished, Puett decided to fall back on Radscheid, the 423" Infantry regimental area along with the 590th Field Artillery. This was one of the few occasions when artillery support was received by the 2nd Battalion, (the 590th Artillery) and a successful withdrawal in the face of the enemy was accomplished.

Arriving in the 423rd Regiment's area, Col. Cavender put Puett's Battalion in the perimeter defense. That night I was assigned to a machine gun nest on the second floor of an old farmhouse. Since I only had a side arm, I was destined to be on special detils for the rest of the battle.

The 2nd Battalion had come through its baptism of fire in good shape with no negative incidents. If it hadn't been for actions of the 2"~' Battalion, the 5891/1 Field Artillery may not have survived to put up their heroic stand later at Parkers Crossroads.

DECEMBER 18, 1944:

On the morning of December 18, 1944, the 423rd moved from its defensive position, the 2nd Battalion leading, followed up by the 3rd with the *1St* in the rear. We advanced through Halenfeld, and Oberlascheid reaching Radshied about noon and encountered enemy fire. The mission was to cut the Auw-Bleialf Road. G Company reached the road in a bloody fight. Col. Puett asked Division to counterattack the German reinforcements coming up from Bleialf. Col. Cavender denied his request because he had orders to shift his attack to Schonberg. By nightfall, the 2nd Battalion consolidated their position and dug in. The Battalion had suffered 300 casualties. The 81mm mortar ammunition was gone, the 50mm supply was down to two rounds per piece. Machine gun ammunition was down to 375 rounds per gun.

As noted above, Col. Cavender had been ordered to attack Schonberg. During the night of the 18th, the 2nd Battalion moved from their dug in positions and along with the rest of the 423rd Regiment marched through the night to the assembly area on Hill 536 just outside of Schonberg.

The third day of the battle the 2nd Battalion had attacked, achieved its objective, and in the process had suffered some 300 casualties and virtually expended its ammunition.

DECEMBER 19, 1944:

As dawn broke on the 19th, Hill 536 became an inferno from enemy shelling and the 590th Artillery was wiped out.

Sometime about 10:00 a.m., the 2nd Battalion — now down to *50%* of its strength — pulled out as the reserve battalion in a futile attack on Schonberg. The 21111 Battalion encountered no serious resistance. At about 2:00 p.m., Col. Puett, who had lost contact with Regiment, decided to attack on his own initiative. The battalion moved down into the ravine of the Linne Creek and encountered small arms fire which proved to be friendly fire from the 422nd The attack was badly disorganized and stalled. At this point, the 2nd Battalion joined forces with the 422n Regiment. Patrols were sent out and about 2:30 reported back that the Germans were facing us with overwhelming strength. Col. Puett, an aggressive Commander, was not satisfied, and went out himself to evaluate the situation. While Puett was gone, Col. Descheneaux, Commander of the 422nd Regiment, decided the situation was hopeless and refused to sacrifice anymore lives in the

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hopeless situation. Col. Descheneaux sent out emissaries to arrange a surrender. When Col. Puett returned, he demanded permission to try to cut his way back out with his battalion, but Descheneaux said no. Col. Puett then told his men that anyone who wanted to try to get out was free to leave. Between fifty and one-hundred men left. At this point in time, a rifleman, who had decided to leave, asked me if I would trade my 45 for his M- 1, without ammunition. I did, and he disappeared in the woods. We were given orders to destroy our weapons. About 4:00 p.m. we marched down the slope of the ravine — POWs

The final day, although a futile effort, the 2nd Battalion attacked and when the order to surrender was given a substantial number of the 2nd Battalion men chose to try to escape rather than surrender.

At 4:00 p.m. on December 19, 1944, most of the men of the 422nd and 423rd Regiments had had nothing to eat for four days, had slept less than eight hours, and walked untold miles in bitter cold weather. There was no artillery support left, machine gun and mortar capability was essentially nil. There were no medical supplies; there was no communications with Division — in a word the situation was hopeless and the means to continue were nonexistent. The Regimental Commanders had two choices: (1) To fight with a slingshot and sacrifice the lives of the remaining members of their command in a cause that would have been of short duration and would not have contributed to the outcome of the battle — or (2) Surrender. If their decision was "striking their colors", I can only say, so be it.

CONCLUSIONS:

The 2nd Battalion was in an aggressive defense or on the attack throughout the entire four days they were in the Battle of the Bulge. They suffered approximately *50%* casualties. As many as a hundred of these men chose risk going through the enemy lines over surrender. To my knowledge, their valiant efforts have never been formally recognized.

There were many instances of heroic actions by individuals, units and makeshift units

of the Schnee Eifel contingent both recorded and unrecorded that belie the stigma that the mass surrender has engendered. However, I was an eyewitness to that of the 2nd Battalion, 423rd Infantry of the 106th Infantry Division and look back with pride on its actions during those dark December days in 1944.

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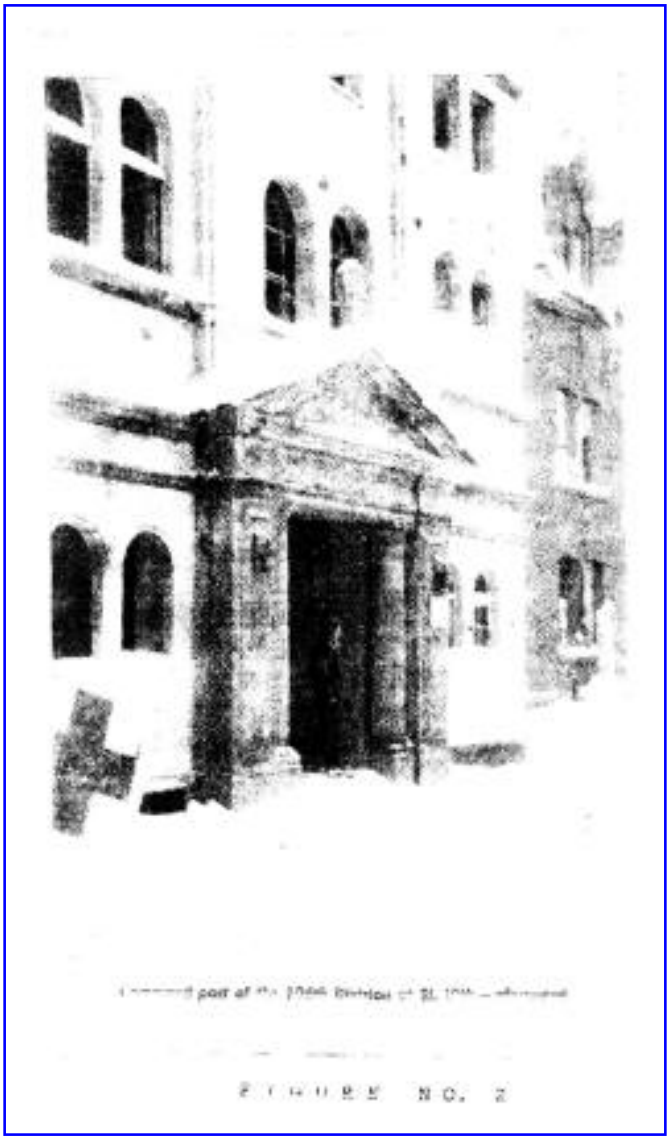

FIGURE NO. 2

The 423d Infantry Regiment in the Ardennes, 16-19 Dec. 1944

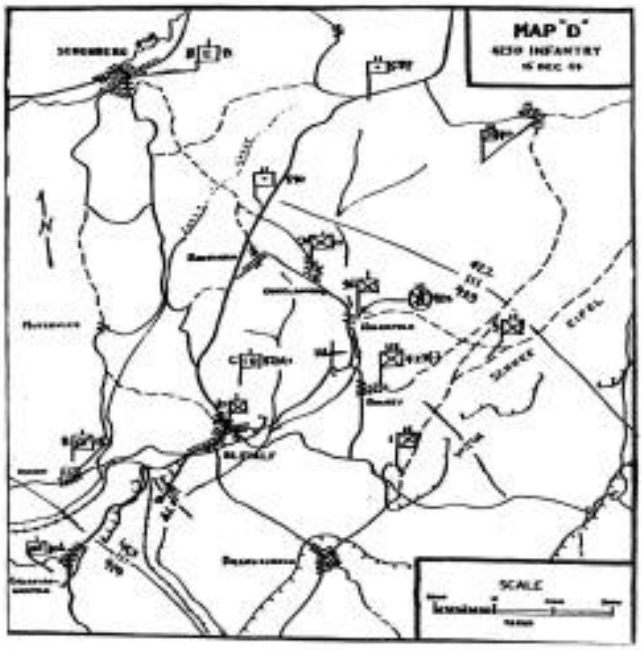

FIGURE NO. 3

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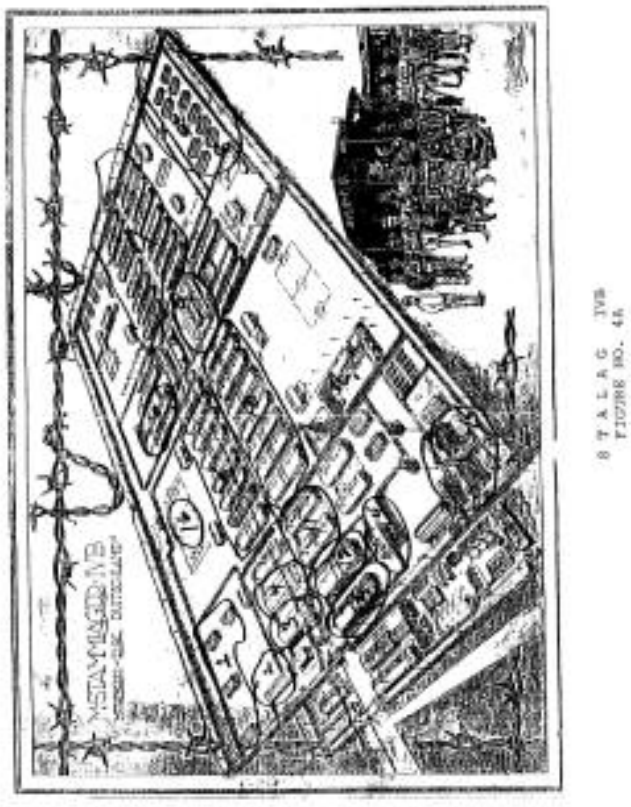

STALAG IVB
FIGURE NO. 4A

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STALAG IV B

#1 - Transit Barracks

#2 - Search Barracks

#3 - Food Warehouse

***4 - Disciplinary Barracks**

***5 - RAF Prisoners**

#6 - Cook Houses

#7 - Mixed Nationals

***8 - Russian Compound**

***9 - Building where records were kept. (Photos and Medical)**

***10 - Mixed Nationals - mostly British**

#11 - British Hospital

#12 -= American Hospital Which we started=Mentierr

***13 - Warehouse**

#14 - Latrines

#15 = Delouser and Shower Bldg.

#16 - Parade ground where all Nationals paraded for the Americans in respect of Roosevelt's death after the Germans told us about it.

NOTE: Above information furnished by former POW Wayne Mentier.

FIGURE NO. 4B

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FIGURE NO. 5

FIGURE NO. 6

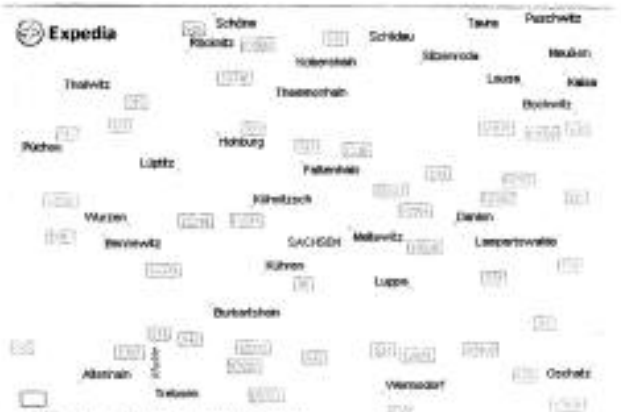

FIGURE NO. 7

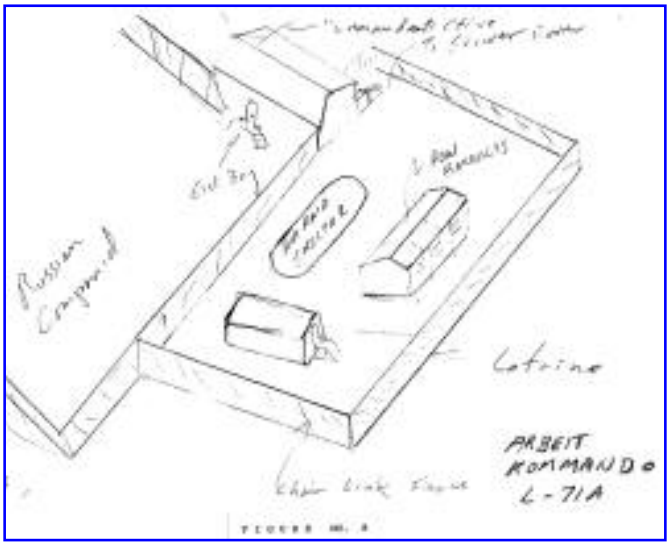

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FIGURE NO. 9

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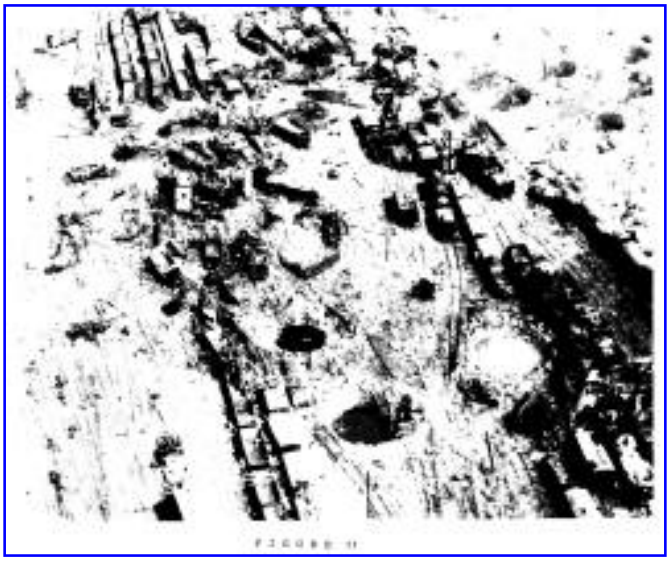

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