

Alan W. Layton, Capt
770th Field Artillery Bn

This is the Way it Was



Our guns positions were located in the Burg Reuland, Lascheid, Durler, Oudler area (Belgium). My Baker Battery was positioned in a defoliated wooded area and there were literally thousands of poles that the Germans had prepared for communications lines. Two of my men, from the gun sections, had built cabins in Maine and Wisconsin. Inasmuch as we were in a "quiet sector" behind the 106th Infantry Division, we started building cabins for the expected bad weather. We built 26 cabins and a mess hall 30" x 60'.



*Captain Layton & Sergeant Todd – cabin area 25 miles east of Bastogne.
November-December 1944.*

Battalion Headquarters was in Oudler in houses. We were making ourselves comfortable in the woods. With the limited supply of our semi-fixed ammunition, our forward OP's, with the **106th Division**, were finding it hard to find suitable targets.

Our wire section tapped in to the Belgium power lines and with light fixtures lifted from shot up houses, many of the cabins had lights. Our battery-powered radio gave access to the BBC News. We were sitting there fat until December 16 when everything broke loose. Quotes from our "After Action" reported the following:

It was hell every day. Withdraw. Go into a firing position. Pick up stragglers from the 106th Division. We even had a master sergeant from his "shot up" outfit helping our mess sergeant. From gun positions in Aldringen, Gouvy, Houffalize, La Roche, St Vith, Vielsalm, Samrée, Ciney, Baillonville, Lambermont, Dinant, Sedan we finally followed units into Bastogne and moved eastward throughout old gun positions in Lascheid.

The Germans had a lot of horse drawn artillery, and they had used our mess hall to stable their horses. The German soldiers were hurting for food and we observed many

dead horses where the hindquarters had been cut off. Dead GI's were everywhere, some of their combat boots missing. A wallet lying there with pictures of loved ones scattered about. It wasn't a pleasant scene. Grave registration troops were gathering up the frozen bodies.

With all the devastation, I knew it was a big mine field and I protested when Colonel Burnett assigned this gun position near Prüm, west of Coblenz, Germany. I said we'd lose some men and probably some of our vehicles. But he explained that was our assignment from General Troy Middleton, our Corps Commander.

Well, I got blown to bits by a Regal mine, evacuated through an aid station with Captain Wolfe our Battalion doctor, ambulance to a field hospital and then a hospital train to Paris. Then to the 154th General Hospital in Swindon, England. More surgery, then a hospital ship to the "good old USA." Then on a hospital train to Bushnell General Hospital in Brigham City, Utah.

Source: Bulge Bugle November 1999

<http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/stories26/us-army25/695-this-is-the-way-it-was.html>

Henri ROGISTER, webmaster