

**Blue Ridge 80th Division  
The Service Magazine**  
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OAKMONT, PA 15139-1574

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# BLUE RIDGE

The Service Magazine  
Volume 86, Number 340

Spring - 2004  
Issue 1



Official Publication of the  
80th Division Veterans Association, Inc.

**A. E. F.**  
Artois-Picardy  
St. Mihiel  
Meuse-Argonne

**E. T. O.**  
Northern France  
Ardennes  
Rhineland  
Central Europe

## *God Bless America*



Deadline for the next issue is June 1, 2004


**Eightieth Division  
Veterans Association**

**BLUE RIDGE  
The Service Magazine**

The official quarterly publication by the 80th Division Veterans Association.  
 (Incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the State of Pennsylvania).

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*All communications, including articles, photos, news items for publication, changes of address,  
 dues remittances and death notices should be addressed to the Secretary/Editor.*

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Historian	<b>Edgar E. Bredbenner Jr. (B-318)</b>
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Flag Sergeant	
Color Sergeant	<b>Albert J. Cresson (C-315 FA)</b>
Sergeant-at-Arms	<b>Don Davis (K-319)</b>
Public Affairs Officer	<b>George V. West (C-318)</b>
Division Photographer	<b>Tom Pappas (F-318)</b>

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 2 Year; Felix Cistolo (G-317)  
 3 Year; Robert N. Nathason (L-317)

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 Richard Davis (905 FA Bn)  
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 Robert J. McDonald (C-319)

**3 Years**  
 Gerald V. Myers (G-317)  
 Laverne J. Schock (F-317)  
 Tom Pappas (F-318)

## Commander's REPORT



**T**he last several years have been full, happy, and eventful, as I have served as your Vice Commander last year and as Commander since September. I greatly appreciate the wonderful support I received from all members of the 80th Division Veterans both during the 84th Reunion in Roanoke, VA, and that I continue to receive as your Commander.

As many of you know, this has been a busy year for me personally. I was married on Nov. 9th at Pine Mountain, GA to Sybil Flournoy less than two months after the Roanoke Reunion. Many of you will remember meeting Sybil as my lovely Southern "bride-to-be" in Roanoke, VA. We first met in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina soon after I returned from serving with Patton's Third Army. We then lost contact for many years as both of us married and had wonderful families. Following the death of our loving spouses, we found each other a second time. The rest is history.

The long commute from California and my recent marriage has limited my attendance at many local Post meetings; however, Sybil and I are planning on attending the Florida Post 47 meeting this March at Melbourne. In June, we also expect to attend the US Veterans Friends meeting in Luxembourg, and are looking forward to visiting with the wonderful Luxembourg families who are so supportive of the Veterans who liberated their country almost 60 years earlier.

Following Luxembourg, we will visit the Moselle River area of France where the 80th encountered such long and bitter fighting during the fall of 1944. Last year we met French Army Captain Michel Mathieu who had discovered the body of Robert Horner 57 years after the battles along the Moselle River. Pfc. Horner of the 317th Regiment was from West Virginia. Captain Mathieu wanted a tree from West Virginia to plant in memory of Robert Horner at the site where his body was found. He asked if I could bring a tree from West Virginia. I said I would try and I have been busy trying to get permission to import a tree to France. I first went to the French Consul in San Francisco who referred me the French Customs Office in Washington, DC. The Customs Office answers only with a prerecorded message in French. Therefore, I have enlisted the help of Congresswomen Ellen Tausher of California to help bypass the French Bureaucracy. Will keep trying to obtain permission and hope to be able to plant a memorial tree on Capt. Mathieu's land at the spot where Pfc. Horner's body was found.

Thanks again for your support and dedication. When you receive your 84th Reunion notice from Sr. Vice Commander Marvin Spencer, please respond as soon as possible so that we will have another successful reunion in Pittsburgh, PA. Remember "The 80th Only Moves Forward". See you all at the Pittsburgh Reunion in August.

*Good Luck and God Bless All of You*  
 Archer H. Futch  
 National Commander

## Life Plus Club 2003-2004

All those whom sent in money for Life Dues, I had a computer crash. and you were left out of the last issue, please send me your name so I can give you credit.

Annon	I-318
Blatz, Louis	L-319
Booth, George	C-313th FA Bn
Basden, Bryan	M-319
Claussen, Mrs. Ruth, in memory of her husband Arnold	C-317
Clouser, Paul. J.	80th Rcn
De Muro, Jerry A.	L-318
Eckrich, John H.	C-318
Ewing Clifford L.	80th Signal
Jarr, Arthur W.	B-905 FA Bn

McDonald, Robert J.	C-319
In memory of	
Lloyd Bowles	A/C/SV Co's
Pflederer, Robert	Cn-319
Rasmussen, Richard	I-318
Reber, Sydney A.	Dv Hq Sp Trps
Schefic, Thomas E.	B-317 I
I.B. Bunn	B-305 Med
In memory of	
Jack Stonehouse	B-305 Med
Widmar, Edward	Cn-317
<i>Omitted from last issue due to hard-drive failure:</i>	
Anzaldo, Anthony	K-318
Drylie, Jim	A-318

## Welcome New Members

Goetz, Carl H.	M-318
1404 Holland Street Cumberland, MD 21502-1114	

Matthews, Gary E.	K-319 Assoc
699-Covered Bridge Drive Madison, VA 22727	

Miller, James G.	Assoc.
Son of Ralph C. Miller	C-318
7642 Salem Road Lewisburg, OH 45338 937-963-4915	

Oliver, Franklin T.	M-319
2570 W-100 N Monroe, IN 46772 260-692-6574	

Reifsnnyder, Norman	W.?-319
5729 Mount Pleasant Road Bernville, PA 19506-8208	

Spellman, Timmie	Assoc
Jerry's son PO Box 506 West Palm Beach, FL 33402-0506	

Wilson, Drue	A-319
3331 Glenview Drive Millbrook, AL 36054	

Over Looked from Roll Call	
Jerry Spellman	Hq/L/K/M
Timmie Spellman Son of above	

## McBRIDE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

*If you paid into the McBride Fund, send me your name if it was left out from the last issue, so can give you credit.*

Parks, Robert E.	L-317
In memory of PNP Mary Schappell	
Schoenly, Eleanor in memory of	
Borders, Kenneth	80th Rcn
Watson, Charles H.	319th Med Det

## Secretary's REPORT

FAX: (412) 828-7651

NEW "E" MAIL ADDRESS: divinf801@verizon.net

### Secretary asking for your change of Address.

Ladies, excuse the strong language, but men... *what the hell do I have to do to get you to send in your change of address when you move?* If you use the forwarding of your mail, that forward of mail expires in one year. When it expires, I have no address to send your Blue Ridge. When I get the notice it is a FOE (Forwarding Order Expired) it then costs the Association \$1.67. This past quarter I had 25 returned Newsletters at a cost of \$41.75. This is a cost to the association it should not have to bear. Please don't tell me to blow it out my Barracks Bag. Ladies you are no better, I also have to pay for your forwarding address. Also many of you have not reported in a few years. I have no way of knowing if you are still alive. If you wish your Newsletter to continue, you must write me (other than those who currently pay donations and the Life members) to continue. NO EXCEPTIONS. While I am on the subject, Men look at your dues card NOW if it reads anything other than 2004 you owe dues. Many of you are on the edge o being dropped for non-payment of dues. Executive Council ruled a few years back to drop those 3 or more years in arrears.

Again, while I have your attention, the Ball Cap that we now wear, and quite a few of us have them, after this order that I have just placed, (24) will no longer be available. What do you want me to do for designing a new cap. Perhaps some of you can design a new cap and send in the drawing for the men to vote on at the next reunion. Give me some feed back.

## Battle of the Bulge 60th Anniversary

*By Eric Reilinger PNC*

THERE IS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN REVISITING LUXEMBOURG on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge.

Most of us are aware of the outpouring of friendship and hospitality of Luxembourg during "Friendship Week" in June of each year. A number of our veterans have enjoyed this annual affair as the guests of U.S. Veterans Friends, Luxembourg. As I understand, there are at least six 80th Division men and their spouses planning to go this year. This promises to be a very respectable representation of our division.

What is not as well known, are the plans for the 60th Anniversary in December 2004. Everything is tentative at this time. The planned dates have been set to be Saturday, December 11, 2004 to Monday December 20, 2004. You can mark your calendar if you plan to go (The Battle of the Bulge started on December 16th, 1944). The purpose of this trip is more than a mere vacation; it's a commemoration of those comrades, who made the supreme sacrifice in December 1944 and January 1945. The U.S. Ambassadors to Belgium and Luxembourg are extremely supportive of the planned events. Means to underwrite the cost of transportation for returning veterans are being explored at the highest government levels. No promises yet.

As I said all plans, arrangements, activities, etc. are tentative at this time. After all, the commemoration is still a whole year away. As things become firm, we will be advised. I hope that the 80th Division veterans will support this important anniversary. We endured one cold winter in the Ardennes in December 1944. I'm sure it will be a lot easier this next time around.

## TAPS

Arnopolin, Victor K-317  
4545 W. Touhy Ave Apt 112  
Lincolnwood, IL 60712-1779 9/19/2003  
Rptd by wife Judith

Bowles, Lloyd A/C/SV-319  
103 Yealey Drive  
Florence, KY 41042-9409 2/10/2003  
Rptd By Frank Garone

Bruno, Ralph, Jr. L-317  
1007 Roberts Ave  
Toms River, NJ 08753-5438 4/8/2003  
Rptd by Postal Rtn marked Deceased

Brinker, Robert Hq-313th FA Bn  
4467 Esteb Road  
Richmond, IN 47374-9410 12/24/2003  
Rptd by Fran Poletti

Cherry, Charles C. Hq-318  
3872 Cherokee Trail  
Suwanee, GA 30024-2318 10/20/1999  
Rptd by wife Lorena

Crouse, Stephen C-319  
PO Box 62  
Whitney, PA 15693-0062 1/6/2004  
Rptd By Mel Beers

Dunagan, Edward W. 780th Ord  
PO Box 124  
Friendship, TN 38034 Unknown  
Postal Return marked Deceased

Eltzroth, Norris 314th FA Bn  
5831 Clark Ave  
Bethel Park, PA 15102-3319 2/3/2004  
Rptd by wife Betty

Erwin, Edward M. I-318  
5708 Silver Lake Drive  
Haltom City, TX 76117-2658 12/25/2003  
Rptd by wife Clara

Goolrick, William K. Dv Hq  
Nothing given as to date of death or address  
Rptd by Jack Edwards K-317

Lambert, Horace W. Lt. Col. F-318  
81-204 Alberta Avenue  
Indio, CA 92201-2857 1/15/2000  
Rptd by wife Edith

Marinelli, Joseph A. L-317  
931 McClellan Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19148-1610 11/15/2003  
Rptd by Robert E. Parks

Matthews, Frank W. Unknown  
C/o 699 Covered Bridge Drive

Madison, VA 22727 6/1989  
Rptd by son Gary

Paul, John J. D-317  
244 Highland Avenue  
Haddon Heights, NJ 08035-1327 2/14/04  
Rptd by Marvin Elsterman

Peck, Clyde A-318  
1371 Seagull Drive  
Englewood, FL, 34224-4635 2/7/2004  
Rptd by Stepson

Saunders, Elmer T. K-318  
700 W. Lake Avenue  
New Carlisle, OH 45344-1732 12/20/03  
Rptd By wife Ruby

Scrougham, Ernest H. "Buck" B-318  
Bean Blossom, IN 2/9/2004  
Newspaper Orbit sent in by  
Charles G. Parker

Slowinski, Joseph A. B-318  
5843 W. 64th Place  
Chicago, IL 60635 1/19/2004  
Rptd by Paul L. Mercer

Smith, James O. D-319  
Huntington, PA 16652 1/19/2004  
Robert E. Peters Funeral Home

Stienmetz, Donald ?  
Birdsboro, PA  
Rptd by Lou Shirey

Stonehouse, Jack B-305 Med  
Takoma Park, MD 12/13/2003  
Rptd by I. B. Bunn

Thomas, Sellie F-319  
909 Myers Avenue  
Anderson, IN 46012-4162 1/8/2004  
Rptd by wife Zelma

Truitt, Albert 80th Rcn  
1060 A Street NE  
Linton, IN 47441-1967 11/14/2003  
Rptd by wife Barbara

Yannarell, Anthony N. M-318  
118 W 4th Street  
Hazleton, PA 18201-4304 12/28/2003

Omitted from last Issue:  
vCampbell, John W. D-Med Bn  
17 Layne Way  
Northport, NY 11768-2107  
Rptd by Wife Jackie

Hand, John W. K-318  
3925 Woodhaven Road  
Hoover, AL 35344-4624 11/2003  
Rptd by Tony Anzaldo

## Reunion News

By the time you receive this Issue of the Blue Ridge Newsletter, you should have your Call to the Reunion Letter so when you are calling the Wyndham Hotel 412-788-8800 for reservations, please ask for Amy in Sales. This will really help both the hotel (Her hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and the Reunion Chairman.

## From Lee Hatcher

The 313th Field Artillery has joined with the AMVETS and the Carillon will be installed in Lorraine Cemetery, St. Avold, France. The Dedication Ceremony will take place 11:00 AM. Sunday 30 May 2004. Thanks to all who participated. Lee is attempting to attend.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

## OUR MISSION:

*To perpetuate the memory, honor and integrity of the veterans  
of the 80th Division.  
To establish a common repository for memorabilia, historical data  
and personal collections relating to the 80th Division.*



**Lee S. Anthony, Sr., Commander**  
**Visit us at our website: [www.80thdescendants.com](http://www.80thdescendants.com)**

*Looking forward to the 85th Reunion of the 80th Division Veterans  
Association in Pittsburgh. Please stop by to see our displays.*

## WW II Memorial

*Call 1-800-639-4992 if you haven't yet registered with your name, do so now.  
16 Million served during WWII but only 1.3 Million have registered.  
That is a small portion of those who served.*

### WW II MEMORIAL DEDICATION CELEBRATION:

THE WORLD WAR II VETERANS MEMORIAL now rising at the foot of the Reflecting Pool opposite the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, DC will be dedicated on 29 MAY 04, the Saturday of the Memorial Day weekend. The American Battlefield Monuments Commission (ABMC) is planning a four-day dedication celebration (May 27-30) that will feature a World War II Reunion on the Mall where members of the WWII generation will gather together, meet former comrades, record oral histories, and enjoy 1940's music and World War II military displays. Most of the groundwork on the memorial is complete and granite installation on the perimeter is moving briskly. The first of 17,000 pieces of granite was installed in early February and most of the 56 pillars are up. Construction should be completed on schedule in March 2004 and the memorial may be open to the public in April. The memory of America's World War II generation will be preserved by the memorial and through a related Web-based registry — an individual listing of Americans who contributed to the war effort.

Any U.S. citizen who helped win the war, whether a veteran or someone on the home front is eligible for the registry. Names in the registry will be forever linked to the memorial's bronze and granite representations of their sacrifice and achievement. The database will be hosted on the Memorial Web site [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com). There are already 1.3 million records in the database, but 16 million served in uniform during the war so the surface has only been scratched. Registry enrollments can also be made by calling toll-free 1-800-639-4992 to request a register brochure. There is no charge to enroll a member of the World War II generation in the registry, although there is a \$5 processing fee for a certificate of the enrollment and a \$10 fee to add a photograph of the individual to the record. [Source: NCOA National Capitol Office Update 22 JAN 04]

Julia Patesel widow of Edwin, A-319, sent in the address of Chalmer Colcord. She and he grew up in the same town. His address: 1147 S. Third Street, Niles, MI 49120. Phone number 269-683-1463.

### From the Last Issue...

We have received news of two Ladies who have passed away. Mary Schappell (February 2004) who was President of the Ladies Auxiliary 1988-1989 and Lillian Haines December 2003/who served as Secretary in 1983-1984. We also have received word that the daughter of Leroy Hutzler, (WW I Veteran) whom many of you will remember, Carol Daren passed away in December 2003...We wish to extend our Sympathy to all those who have lost Love Ones.

## MAIL BAG

### HELP-HELP

I have learned a cousin of mine, 1st Lt. Peter A. Jobo, who was KIA on 9/25/1944 and of the 318th Regiment (I don't know the Company, and would like to know). I have written the National Personnel Records Center, but they were of no help. Can any of you who remember Lt. Jobo help me? He was born and raised in NY (Manhattan) He joined he service January 21, 1941. My name and address: Gloria Berkenstat Freund, 142 West End Avenue - 5N, New York, NY 10023, E-mail address [glory1@rcn.com](mailto:glory1@rcn.com)

Sheila Jacobs would like your help to determine the Company of the 317th her father was in. His name is Otis Charles Jacobs, 2345 Glover Road, Salisbury, NC. 28146. He remembers the names of Captain Lewis; someone that was called Cosmo and was KIA, also a man named Weaver who died in his arms.

Captain Andrew Dekever an Army Captain who recently returned from Iraqi is writing a book on the MOH's and would like to contact anyone from L-318 who may have known 2nd Lt. Harry J. Michaels. You may contact him at 164Eagles Pointe Circle, Liverpool, NY 13090 E-mail address [andrewdekever@hotmail.com](mailto:andrewdekever@hotmail.com)

Todd Benware is searching for information regarding his great-uncle, Vernon Benware, who was with the 319th and was KIA on 11/25/44 near Longville, France. Any information regarding his uncle's service will be greatly appreciated. He can be reached at 2874 Celtic Lane, Baldwinsville, NY 13027. Telephone 315-635-2067, or via e-mail at [benware@dreamscape.com](mailto:benware@dreamscape.com). Feel free to call collect.

My name is Walter C. "Sonny" Miles, III. My father W. C. "Sonny" Miles, Jr. was a 2nd Lt. in Company M 319th 80th Division, and was wounded on 6 January and died on 8 January 1945 in Dahl, Luxembourg. I am trying to locate any one that may have known him or served with him. My address is: Sonny Miles, RT. 1 Box 110-A, Silesia, Mt. 59041..My phone number is 406-962-3832..My e-mail is: [sonnymiles@msn.com](mailto:sonnymiles@msn.com)..If you could be of any assistance it would be greatly appreciated. .I am trying to learn who this man was that I never knew...

Gary F. Matthews, 699 Covered Bridge Drive, Madison, VA 22727, Telephone 340-948-4997, would like to know if anyone remembers his dad Sgt. Frank W. Matthews. Says his dad worn the Purple Heart. Unit unknown.

Paul Mercer B-318 will be staying at the St. Gregory Hotel, 2033 M Street NW Washington, DC while taking in the WW II Memorial Dedication. Wants any B-318 men and any other 80th man who also will be visiting to stop in and reminisce. Also sends his Hello to Ed. Bredbenner.

Received a letter from Ray Dumrauf, (317) that he would be receiving a knee replacement in February. He had a knee done some years back....Also had word from Lou Kalita A-305 Eng. Bn. That Walter Brinkman A-305 Eng. Bn. Has fallen and is in a nursing home. Will forward his address later.

A note from the wife (Pauline) of Joseph Zabichuck, L-317. Joe is homebound after suffering a stroke. You fellows from L-317 write Joe, I'm sure he would appreciate a card from you.

### Greater Reading Post # 32

Our Post suffered two losses recently. Two Buddies joined the Almighty above. They were Donald Steinmetz of Birdboro, PA and Carl Blocked, Mansfield, OH. May they rest in peace until we join them in a pain free world.

We had a nice turn out at our Christmas Dinner as we had 17 in attendance. The food was delicious as always, but we must look for a new place as the Restaurant closed as of the 1st of the year.

Our Breakfast will be at the Queen City Restaurant, Lancaster Ave. Anyone who cares to join their Buddies, any 80th Man or their Lady are welcome to share the time with us. Time is creeping up on us, so come in and say HELLO.

May the year 2004 be a healthier year for all of us. See you in Pittsburgh August 11-14, 2004. *Lou Shirey, Sect.*

### Company H 319th Post # 33

I assume the extra cold weather has put a damper on the news.

Koral and Reggie visited her mother, Lois during the Christmas Season. Of course the decision was made easier as Lois winters in the Paradise, Southern Florida. C.D. Clements seems to be doing fine of course he has used therapy while visiting Hooters. Really not a bad idea. Yes, Louise had given approval.

Orin Ledbetter called to say he is doing well and looking forward to attending the Division reunion in Pittsburgh.

Jack and Kate Beebe say they had an exceptional winter that has kept them indoor most of the time. Ice and snow has the vehicle at a stand still. Large pantries are great for such hibernation caused by Mother Nature, yes, Kate.

I had knee surgery the 16th of December and am now on the road to full recovery. I still at times depend on a cane. Do have to report to the doctor for the OK to drive. Kris and Helen are eagerly awaiting the okay. Never mind that OK. Had to rush to the dentist to have two old teeth removed and drove.

Let's all start to prepare to make the 80t Division Reunion in Pittsburgh. Remember time is getting shorter. So, I hope to see many of you in Pittsburgh. *God Bless, Ohly*

### Cincinnati Post # 34

Post # 34 held their monthly Dinner at Habeg's Restaurant, on Harrison Avenue Cheocot, OH. Ten people were present they were as follows: PNC Russell Sick, Mel Schmidt, Stan and Gladys Benzinger, Jesse and Jean Obel, John T. and Vicky Wettig, Sr., Marge Walter, Rita Hollweck.

Betty Cammerer is still under the weather and we missed Art and Grace Rehling. Not much else going on around Cincinnati other than Vicky and I are expecting her middle son and wife along with their three sons to drive up from GA. Vicky is having trouble with her knee after a fall in our back yard. We wish to say Hello to all our 80th Division Friends and hope they had a good holiday. *John Wettig*

Those of us living in the northeastern part of the country look forward to Spring and warmer weather. We've had our share of cold, snow and ice. And now for the news of members of the 3rd Battalion.

Susan Clark Williams (niece of Lucille and O.J. Clark) writes she had to put Lucille in a Nursing Home as she broke a bone in her foot. Lucille is in a wheelchair and Susan says she probably always will be. Drop Lucille a card Thinking of you. Lucille's address is Roman Eagle Nursing Home, Room 204, 2526 North Street, Danville, VA 24540. Thank you Susan for keeping us informed.

We learn both Bob Moorhead and Frank Florence have health problems. Bob says his therapy treatments look good. Frank has developed a physical and health problem and may soon have to be put in a Nursing Home if condition get worse.

John Daniel and wife Simonne (I) write that both are feeling good. John had two operations within 18 months but is back on his feet again. He mentions visiting Charlie King (K) in Pinellas Park and had a great get-together. Opal Finch writes she is doing well. She is still in her home and can care for herself. She has a nurse that looks in once a week for a checkup. Neighbors and friends are wonderful. Bill Petrollini is heading to Florida in January. Leroy and Nancy had a medical procedure scheduled. They plan to attend the Pittsburgh Reunion. Pauline Zabitchuck writes Joe (L) is the same with his stroke. She takes care of him 22 hours a day. Life is hard. Some times Joe can't talk but finds Company L, 317th in the Blue Ridge which he enjoys reading. Dolly Crofoot writes she takes each day as it comes. She keeps busy going shopping and plying Bingo. Her little dog keeps her company and is a good watchdog. Jeff and Mary Wignall, Bill and Charmine Laing, Martha Linch, Harry and Fran Nutting, Bob and Pauline all write they are well.

Congratulations to our new National Chaplain, PNC Angelo J. Barone. Bob Smith attended the Florida Golden Triangle Chapter in November in Ocala when the Chapter dedicated a Battle of the Bulge monument. Bob, a highly decorated Veteran of the Bulge, was the featured speaker at the ceremony. We congratulate Bob.

Angelo Barone and wife Kay are headed for Florida visiting their son and Angelo's sister and also attending the Florida Post meeting in Melbourne. Bob Smith spent three weeks in California with daughter Pat and family and plans to attend the March Florida post meeting.

Bob Parks informs us of the death of Joe Marinell, Jr. (L). Our deepest sympathy to members of his family. Angelo and Kay Barone attended the funeral of Mary Scheppell, PNP of Ladies Auxiliary. Our deepest sympathy to members of her family.

We extend our prayers for a speedy recovery to all who are sick or have a physical problem. *Bob Nathason, Sect*

### 305th Engineers Post # 40

Greetings: By the time you see this, we will be thinking about cutting grass than shoveling snow. We in Zanesville, OH are enjoying a real winter with snow. I don't have any news, but everyone talks about the weather.

Russell Sick has been doing a good job of reporting with no news from anyone. He asked me to try it. Already I don't like it. Russ we need you. I do like to see the 305th Engineers Post # 40 heading in the Blue Ridge.

A few years ago, Post 40 had their Spring Reunions. Now we have our meetings when we are at the National Reunion. So lets all try to make it to Pittsburgh and the 85th Reunion come 11-14 August 2004. I will meet you at the Wyndham Hotel, located in Coraopolis, PA. Next to the Airport. *Byron Dovenbarger Sec't.*

## Lane Hall Post # 42

Hi everyone, I have quite a bit of news to tell you, I have been in touch with many of our friends and want to make sure that I pass it along.

I spoke to Dom Abbruzzese in December and he told me that Jeanette is still undergoing treatment and has been having trouble a bit with walking. We all send our best to both of them and hope that Jeanette will do well with her Chemo treatments.

Warren Burkhart has had a cataract operation and may have to have the other one done also. He was also in the hospital the end of December for a few days, and had to have a blockage removed from his stomach. He is not feeling well, so maybe some of his friends can get in touch with him.

Sorry to tell you that Karl Blocker has passed away. He died on 11/30/2003. Audrey told me they played recordings of his singing at the ceremony, and many of the attendees enjoyed hearing him again. We will all miss him very much, his songs will always linger on with us. Have talked with Audrey several times, and am hoping she will come out and stay with me awhile.

Lee Hatcher has some important news. (see page 7.) Lee may attend at St. Avold with a Travel Agent that AMVETS uses, which is New Skies Tours, and they are planning a Pre and Post Dedication tour. I heard from Lee and Ann, their son was in a bad accident, but thank goodness is doing well. At the time Ann wrote, Lee was not feeling well, he too goes to the Doctors twice a week for blood work.

Talked with Paul Burgio, his wife Mary has had some heart problems and was in the hospital. I called and talked with Mary, she sounded good and was happy to hear from me. If you can, call her, she loves to hear from people even though she can't speak but does understand and recognize voices.

Our traveling Lou Shirey took a trip to Mexico. Jim and Ruth Phillips received a card from him just before Christmas.

I had heard that Manual Gonzalez was ill, and called. Manual is diabetic, and was in the hospital for a tumor, which was found to be the size of a tennis ball, he also had two arteries blocked, and had both taken care of. Says he is doing fine, and was glad to hear from me, he had been in the hospital for two weeks. He had some sad news; he lost his daughter Almeda in July. Give him a call, I'm sure he will be happy to hear from his old friends.

Since I had not heard from Audrey and John Ingles for sometime, I called and they both sounded great and are happy where they are living now. I will keep in touch with them and when you can I am sure they would love to hear from any of the 313th.

I haven't received Charlie and Alice Noxen's new address as yet, as soon as I do I will let you know. They are moving to a home next door to Billy, one of their sons, it is a ranch and Alice is cleaning out and sending things to Goodwill, and knows it is a good move for her and Charlie. Everything will be on one floor, which is great. They moved right after Christmas.

Received an E-mail from Mary Brinker on 27 December. I don't know whether any of you know that Bob passed away on December 24th. His funeral was on the 27th. Mary said it was such a nice service, many of the attendees described it to Mary as one of the best they had attended. The music was very inspiring and the homily read by the Priest contained the foreword from Tom Brokaw's book, "The Greatest Generations". He also read a letter from Captain Dudman received by Bob after the war. At the cemetery after the religious ceremony, they had a military service with the volley of guns and taps. We will miss Bob, but we know he is at peace with God in heaven.

Jim Phillips has reserved Room 306 for our Hospitality Room in Pittsburgh. It's a Suite with two beds in each room and a parlor adjoining. Cost of each room is \$72 + Tax. If anyone has a problem moving around and would like to be close to the Hospitality Room, call Jim at 717-361-5025. He will arrange for you to use the bedrooms. *Fran Poletti, Ass't Sect.*

## New York Post # 43

We lost another of our long time post members. John W. Campbell who lived in Northport, NY on September 3, 2003. He served in Company D-305 Medical Battalion.

We are all set for our annual meeting at Turf Inn at Albany NY. Same room rates as last year. The date to put on your calendars is May 27-31, 2004.

The date is all set for our fall gathering at Geneva Lake Front Hotel by Ramada. At the end of beautiful Seneca lake, one of the Finger Lakes, and right in the wine and fruit area of the east. The dates are Monday through Thursday, October 4-8, 2004. Also right in the middle of the beautiful fall color season.

Harry Nutting is leading us to Saratoga, NY to the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center. We will be going on Friday morning about 9:15 AM. Started in 1863, it finally has a nice new home in the old Armory. The museum has over 10,000 artifacts from the Revolutionary War to Desert Storm. They have the largest collection of State battle flags in the USA and the largest collection of Civil War Flags in the world. Over 1,700 in all. The flags for from the War of 1812, through Gulf War of 1991. Includes a 2,000 volume library of military and NYS History and over 6,000 Civil War photos. Sounds like fun for all.

Mailing will soon be out on post gathering in Albany -see you there. We do need reservations for trip to Saratoga and two excellent meals to attend.

## Post #44 Company M 318th

I hope everyone had a good holiday and received most of what they ask for. As for the wife and I, we ask for very little, but received much.

I had a very newsy letter from Carl Goetz, telling me of his travels and the different positions he has held since coming out of service. He too, like myself came home on a Victory Ship and also had rough weather to contend with. Mine was like a matchstick being tossed around. It took twenty-three days all told, from Marseilles, France landing at New Port News, VA. His address is as follows: Carl H. Goetz, 1404 Holland Street, Cumberland, MD. 21502-1114.

Several of you sent a Christmas Card to Jack Stumcke and it came back due to his moving. His address is: John C. Stumcke, 215 Bicentennial Highway Apt. 301, Springfield, MA 01118-9962.

Again it is a sad bit of news that I write; "Tony" Yannarell passed away on 12/23/2003 from an inoperable tumor of the head. There are but a very few of "M" company left, so why don't we all try to make the Pittsburgh Reunion. Just one more time of being together. The most we ever had was eleven and today only one or two are present. Allen, Benny, Steve, Bill, (you can do it again) how about it. Meet me there.

## Florida Post # 47

Now is the time to finalize your Reunion plans for Pittsburgh. The committee has worked hard and longs to set up a wonderful program at the hotel and a trip to the only 80th Division Memorial in that part of the country.

Our weather has been cooler than normal the last couple of months, but it has been warming up in preparation for our March meeting. We had fewer rainy days but sufficient water to keep things green without watering.

Clarence Brockman gave Naomi a start with a health complaint but after a complete checkup he is okay. Maybe he was trying to get some sympathy from Naomi.

Scott, our grandson here in Florida, completed cadet training for Deputy Sheriff. In Coun-

ty and State test he did well finishing third highest. Of course we are proud grandparents.

All arrangements have been made for our March meeting in Melbourne. Looking forward to another compatible gathering in the sun.

Plans for our November meeting have been finalized and will again be held in Ocala at the Hampton Inn. The room rate will be the same as the last several years \$61.00 plus tax. This includes their very fine complimentary breakfast and delicious fresh baked cookies in the evening. The dates are November 4th to November 7th, 2004. *Francis Rajniecek, Sect*

### Company L, 319th Infantry

Remember that old song "Love is just around the corner", well spring is just around the corner and Boy Oh Boy I couldn't be happier. I feel like I've been living in the North Pole. Cold-Cold-Cold since late December. With the possible exception of those living in Florida and California we must all be getting a little tired of the frigid weather these winter months have given us.

Sylvia Salesby, Jim Young's Secretary wrote me that Jim still comes into the office a couple times a week and attended a McLeod seminar in Phoenix Arizona. She said Jim has a strong will and won't stop. Atta boy Jim, hang in there.

Bill and Billie Krehbiel had a terrible scare in December and January. Bill developed serious heart problems and had a near brush with death. Billie said Bill is slowly getting back to normal and that she is thankful for all of the prayers and support she received from Company L members during this trying time.

The Soloninka's are also having their share of troubles these days. Helene had surgery for a kidney stone on January 7th. On January 18th, she experienced severe pains in her left arm, her back and chest and was nauseated. Luckily her daughter who is a nurse was with her and called 911. At examination, three blockages were found and she had two stents implanted. She is now feeling much better and taking it easy. Frank has a rotor cuff tear which happened during their recent move and the Doctor is treating Frank with shots so as to avoid surgery. Why do bad things happen to nice people? Happy days are coming for them because Frank and Helene will be spending Easter in California with their daughter Pattie. Rudy and Carol are now cozily nested in their new home, but wish to advise anyone our age to stay put. Moving ain't easy says Rudy.

Talked to John Flynn in late February and got a fill in on John and Betts vacation in Florida. These two don't stay in one place too long. You're doing it right John and Betts. Stay away from the rocking chair.

I received a Birthday card from Lou and Rich Blatz and they are both well healthwise. I had a phone call from Marshall Hill at Christmas time and he told me he is doing OK but slowing down a bit. Aren't we all?

Haven't heard a word from John Balas, Bill Siebert, Fred Ecklemann, Walter Cooper, Ray Greene or Lemoine Vaughn and have to assume (I hate that word) that all are as well as can be expected.

Looking forward to Pittsburgh in August and hope that all of you who are reading this will make a conscious effort to be there.

*Hank Einolf*

## Continued from last Issue

EARLY ON CHRISTMAS MORNING IN THE BITTER COLD the 80th Division returned to the attack, its main thrust aimed at Bourscheid. Colonel Fisher sent the 1st Battalion of the 317th Infantry toward Kehmen and Scheidel, hoping to open the road east into Bourscheid. At Scheidel the attack surprised the enemy infantry; one platoon captured the hamlet and a large number of prisoners. But when the two battalions turned north toward Kehmen the enemy (a battalion of the 266th Regiment) was ready and waiting. Each assault, made across open ground, was repelled by deadly fire from the village and the woods to the north. When General McBride finally intervened to end the attack the assault battalions had lost nearly two hundred officers and men. Kehmen once again had proved a hard nut to crack. (Captain Robert W. Smith, commanding K, was awarded the DSC for bravery and leadership displayed in the fight at Kehmen.)

While the 317th Infantry hit head on against the main position held by the 79th Volk Grenadier Division, the 319th Infantry moved north into the gap on the German right flank. The 3rd Battalion which had withdrawn from the location close to the Sure River in order to back up the other battalions in the fighting around Heiderscheid on the previous day, simply marched back into Tadler. Since General McBride had ordered the regiment to close up to the Sure but eschew any crossing attempt, the battalion was content to outpost along the river. From Tadler small groups of enemy could be seen moving about on Ringel Hill, farther to the east. The 90th Field Artillery Battalion dropped a few shells into the village atop the hill; then the 2nd Battalion occupied the area with little trouble. The hill position seriously endangered the German bridgehead, but the 79th was too far understrength to mount any sizable counterattack on this flank.

During the afternoon an American outpost saw a small German detachment marching in columns of twos up a draw east of Ringel. The men at the outpost could not believe their eyes; they could only conclude that the approaching Germans were coming to surrender. When challenged the little column kept on coming, until a light machine gun put an end to this "counterattack." An hour before midnight more figures were seen approaching from the same direction. What had happened was that the Seventh Army Commander had intervened personally to order the Ringel Hill be retaken. Not only was its possession necessary to the defense 79th Volk Grenadier Division bridgehead but Brandenberger needed the services of an army engineer brigade that had been committed as infantry on the north bank of the Sure River, in the sector overlooked by the hill. If this high ground could be retaken and some command of the stretch of the Sure retained, the engineers could be employed elsewhere.

Since the fight with the 327th Infantry had died down some hours earlier, Colonel Weber was able to gather a substantial force for the counterattack, but there was little ammunition for the few guns supporting the 79th. The Americans, on the other hand, were wired in to their division artillery and by now had a prearranged pattern of fire: four battalions answered the 2nd Battalion call for help. A few of the attackers got close to Ringel only to meet the whistling ricochet of armored-piercing shells fired by a single tank destroyer that rushed around the village like a man stamping out a grass fire.

Christmas Day witnessed the most artillery of the entire division advance; the guns were well forward, the infantry held good ground for observation, and fighting now surged at many points out of the woods and into the open. (PFC. J. O. Bird of Company G, 319th Infantry, was awarded the DSC for gallantry in the Ringel action. When his company was pinned down by an enemy machine gun, Private Bird went forward alone, under direct fire, and shot the crew; he accounted for fifteen Germans with his rifle.) The total number of rounds fired by the 80th Division artillery was large when assessed against the terrain: 3,878 rounds and 142 missions. The 80th Division advance ended the day after Christmas,



with the 319th Infantry chasing the enemy out of the woods on the near bank of the Sure River. The 317th digging in opposite the Bourscheid bridgehead, and the lone battalion of the 318th exchanging fire with the Germans across the Sauer River, in the course of which the commander of the 352nd was severally wounded.

General Patton was in the process of strengthening the Third Army attack with more divisions. One of these, the 35th Division, was assembling in the rear before joining the III Corps. General McBride's division, as a result, transferred to the XII Corps on the 26 December 1944 without a change of ground. In the days that followed battalions rotated between the deep relative warmth of shell-torn villages, waiting while General Patton debated giving the XII Corps the go sign for an attack across the chill, swollen courses of the Sure and Sauer Rivers. In the corresponding German headquarters other plans were under consideration, plans to use the Bourscheid Bridgehead as a springboard from which to throw a spoiling attack against the flank of the American force congregated around Bastogne. But neither Brandenberger nor Kniess could scrape up the men, guns, and shells for such an ambitious adventure. The 79th Volks Grenadier Division did what it could with what they had in almost daily counterattacks of small compass, only to be beaten of each time by the American howitzers.

Ringel Hill continued as the chief objective in these fruitless and costly attempts, and here the 79th made its last full-blown effort in a predawn attack on 30 December. The previous Evening Company F, 319th infantry, at that time forming the Ringel garrison, learned from prisoners taken on patrol that the attack would be made. The American division arranged for nine battalions of field artillery to give protective fire, and the men in the garrison strengthened their outposts. The enemy made the assault, as promised, but with such speed and skill as to enter the village before a single salvo could be fired. One group of Germans penetrated as far as the battalion command post, but Pfc. W. J. McKenzie drove them off, killing the leaders, then taking sixteen prisoners. (McKenzie was awarded the DSC.) Their surprise tactics failed to save the attackers. Concentration after concentration poured in on the buildings that sheltered the garrison troops, killing, maiming, and demoralizing the grenadiers. Those of the enemy who could not escape surrendered in-groups to the first Americans they could find.

When the 80th Division got its orders on 5 January 1945 to resume the attack, it could look back on a record of important accomplishment. It had contained and badly mauled two German divisions, had helped delay and cripple the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, on its way to enter the Bastogne battle, and had advanced sixteen miles and erased the Ettelbruck bridgehead, so important in the communications system of the Seventh Army.

### **The 26th Division fight for a Bridgehead on the Sure River 24-27 December 1944**

THE 26TH DIVISION HAD NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO PUSH PATROLS through the woods to the Sure River when morning dawned on 24 December. Two companies of the 80th Division had crossed into the division zone and were waiting on the river near Heiderscheidergrund, but the foremost troops of the 26th division were at Dellen, three and a half miles away, while the main force still at Grosbous. Although small pockets of German riflemen fought stubbornly in the woods there seemed to be no cohesive, planned resistance by the enemy. To get the attack rolling and out of the woods, however, the Americans had to open the main road to the Sure River. And to open the road they had to capture the town of Eschdorf.

There are many trails and byroads leading to the Sure but they become lost in deep, twisting ravines or run blindly through dense timber. Snow and ice clogged all at this time. The road to Eschdorf follows a well-defined ridge and for much of its length gives a clear field of vision on both sides. Eschdorf a town with perhaps two thousand people is built on three hills which rise well above the surrounding countryside and give an excellent observation over open ground for a half mile to a mile in every direction. The ascent to the

town is made across ridge folds. The main road coming in from the south turns away east to Heiderscheid and the Sauer River crossing at Bourscheid, but other roads, three in all, continue north to the Sure River, one leading to the bridge at Heiderscheidergrund.

The road net centering at Eschdorf was very important in the German plans to hold the Seventh Army blocking position south of the Sure. Originally Brandenberger hope to use the town as a concentration point for a counterattack, by the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade along the road to Martelange. The brigade, as recounted earlier, had started this move piece meal commitment while the main body still was on its way to the front, but when the 26th Division banged into the Fuehrer Grenadier advance guard southwest of Eschdorf a part of the leading battalion, was cut off, and the way to Martelange effectively barred. The staff of the LXXXV Corps of the 23rd to conform to Brandenberger's order that the American attack must be checked south of the Sure River. The idea was that the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, on the west, and the 79th Volks Grenadier Division, from the east, should launch a concentric drive, pinching off the most forward units in the American advance. Although much of the heavy weapon strength of the brigade was loaned to the 79th, the brigade itself was expected to hold back the Americans south of Eschdorf, at the same time striking in strength east from that town to retake Heiderscheid. But whether the operation ordered for 24 December fared well or ill, the Seventh Army Commander was adamant on one point: Eschdorf was to be held.

General Paul was equally convinced of the importance attaching to the command of Eschdorf and its radial roads. As early as the night of the 22nd, when the III Corps optimistically prescribed the capture of Wiltz as the next step to be taken by the 26th Division, Paul ordered that a task force be created to leapfrog ahead of the 104th Infantry, capture Eschdorf, and chisel a groove to the Sure River. Unwillingly to expend his division reserve, Paul took the 2nd Battalion, 328th Infantry, as the task force nucleus and turned it over to an officer with the division staff, Lt. Col. Hamilton. A few tanks and tank destroyers were added, but through confusion in orders the engineer company supposed to be attached never joined the task force.

In the first hour of the 23rd, Task Force Hamilton left Hostert in trucks. As the column turned north it found the 104th Infantry busy along the roadside with small groups of German tanks who were holding out in the woods. North of Grosbous two German tanks lay in wait just off the road, but were dispatched summarily by an assault gun. The column dismounted about a mile and a half south of Eschdorf, sent back the trucks, and put out pickets for the night. By this time Germans had appeared in some numbers east and west of the task force and their tanks opened fire, but the 104th was coming up and by agreement was to cover Hamilton's flanks.

At daylight on the 24th scouts on the hills to the front reported much activity around Eschdorf, with vehicles dashing in and out of the town. The Fuehrer Grenadier attack against the 80th Division garrison in Heiderscheid was in full swing, although hardly developing according to plan. The road to Eschdorf, now ahead of Task Force Hamilton, rose and dipped to conform with the ridge folds reaching back to the hills on either side. The leading company had just climbed to the crest of one of these wooded folds when a storm of bullet and tank fire raked into its flank, coming down the length of the main ridge. The second company attempted to swing wide and to the van; it too found the ridge a bullet conductor. About this time the rear of their column came under direct and rapid shellfire from a hill on the right. Boxed in on front and rear, Task Force Hamilton spent most of the day trying to maneuver off the road and across the wooded nose ahead. The 81-mm mortars got a real workout, churning the woods until they had fired four times their normal load of shells.

Toward sundown help came in the air. P-47's of the 379th Squadron (362d Fighter Group), out on their last mission of the day, swept low over the pine stand on the ridge, dropping fragmentation bombs and strafing. For some fifty Germans, well and wounded,

this was the finishing touch; they came straggling out of the woods, hands high, Now that bullet fire no longer shaved the ridge like a razor Task Force Hamilton could move. It took the hamlet of Hierheck, where the woods gave way to the open ground leading up to Eschdorf, and then Hamilton gave orders to dig in for the night-orders that were countermanded almost at once by the division commander, who wanted Eschdorf that night.

While Task Force Hamilton was pinned down, General Paul had notified the III Corps Commander that the 104th Infantry was taking over the task force. In early evening the 104th Infantry received orders for the 1st Battalion (Major Leon D. Gladding) to take Eschdorf, while Hamilton went on to secure the Sure River crossing. Later the division ordered the 1st Battalion, 104th Infantry, to make the Sure River crossing and Hamilton to take Eschdorf. Taking Eschdorf would not be an easy job. When a small group of Hamilton's men started forward to set up an observation post, they encountered enemy fire before they had moved twenty-five yards from their foxholes. The Germans in Erschdorf were alert and waiting.

Colonel Hamilton and Major Albert Friedman, the 2nd Battalion commander, worked as rapidly as they could to devise a plan of attack and bring the task force into assault position, but it was midnight before all was ready. Two companies E and F were to lead the attack, moving on either side of Eschdorf with their inner flanks touching, but they were not to enter the village. Company G with tank support would follow the assault companies and clear the village. This plan had been adopted in deference to the ground, since Eschdorf rose well above the undulating ridges and there was no higher ground to lend itself to a wider flanking movement.

Forty-five after midnight the two rifle companies started to climb the highest of the three hills on which the town stands, this being the south side. The night was cold and clear, and the moon was out. As the attackers trampled forward, long, grotesque black shadows followed on the glittering snow. For the first few minutes all was quiet, ominously lovely and peaceful; then, as the first line reached the crest, all hell broke loose. The German rifle line lay along the reverse slope, the grenadiers in white capes and sheets blending unobtrusively with the panorama of snow. Burp guns and rifles cut loose at the splendid targets the Americans provided. In face of such a fusillade the attack wavered, then fell back. Three tanks, all that Hamilton had, churned to the fore through the snow but were checked by a little creek, extended by an antitank ditch, about 300 yards from the nearest building.

A hurried call by Hamilton, who wanted reinforcements to cover his flanks, brought no reply from the division headquarters except "Take Eschdorf." There was little choice but to continue with frontal tactics. At 0400 a second assault started, this time the tanks and Company G forming the center under orders to drive straight into Eschdorf without pause. Company G got only as far as the crest; the tanks went as far as before, and no farther. But the Germans facing the center were kept occupied long enough to start the wing companies moving. Firing as they went the two companies reached the village. Instead of marching past and around, the men closest to the buildings drifted inward, seeking the shadows and some kind of cover, dragging the two companies in with them.

What happened then cannot be recorded with any certainty. The story of Christmas Day inside of Erschdorf was one of confusion at the time and recrimination later. Members of the 104th Infantry subsequently claimed to have captured Eschdorf and believed that no part of Task Force Hamilton held on in the town. Officers and men of the task force, somewhat closer to the scene, have a different story. (The Eschdorf fight is well covered in the combat interviews held shortly after the event. The orders and counter orders given Hamilton are found in the 26th Division G-3 journal and the 104th Infantry journal. The journal of the 104th Infantry records that Company F was driven out of Eschdorf (at 0835 on 25 December) and seems to have been interpreted as meaning that none of Hamilton's force was in the town. However, no part of the 1st Battalion, 104th Infantry, was committed in this fight un-

til after the air strike on the afternoon of 25 December.) The men of the two companies that had reached Eschdorf on Christmas Eve were stranded there in the houses while German armored vehicles jockeyed about, firing at doors and windows. In the meantime the bulk of the enemy infantry gathered in the southeastern corner to meet any attempt to reinforce the attackers. When day came the commander of Company E, Captain Vaughn Swift took his chances in the gauntlet of bullets and ran out to the American tanks. By some miracle he reached the Shermans alive and led them into Eschdorf. Two were knocked out there, but not before they had quieted the enemy armored vehicles. (Captain Swift was given the DSC.)

As the day went on the two company commanders tried to sort out their men and resume the drive to cut through to the roads entering Eschdorf from the north. Whether this was accomplished remains a matter of debate. Finally in the late afternoon, the division headquarters responded to Hamilton's urging and instructed the 104th Infantry to send its 1st Battalion and envelop Eschdorf. The instructions were followed. Company C entered the village an hour or so after daylight on 26 December and by 0800 reported Eschdorf clear of the enemy.

Throughout Christmas Day corps and division artillery beat the northern approaches to Eschdorf, hoping to isolate the uncertain dogfight within the town. As it turned out the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade had no intention of intervening there but was slipping north through the woods and ravines, while a few rear guard detachments fought on to form a new bulwark to defend the Sure River Line. As early as the afternoon of 24 December the 3rd Battalion 104th Infantry (LT. Colonel Howard C. Dellert), had reached Heiderscheid, there secured guides from the 319th Infantry, and had gone on to relieve the two companies of the 319th on the river at Heiderscheidgrund. (There seems to have been some initial confusion as to the exact status of the troops already in the village, for one of the rare changes made in an official periodic report that of the III Corps was amended to read that the 26th Division "relieved two companies of the 80th Division" in place of "liberated two companies of the 80th Division.")

While the 104 put troops along the river, its sister regiment made a march of three and a half miles over rough country but against little opposition and by nightfall of the 24th was near the bridge site at Bonnal. On the extreme left flank at Bilsdorf, Company C of the 249th Engineer Combat Battalion was on reconnaissance when it was struck by a larger enemy force deployed in the village. The company commander, Captain A. J. Cissna, elected to stay behind and cover his men as they withdrew from Bilsdorf; he fought alone until he was killed. Cissna was awarded the DSC posthumously. The 1st Battalion of the 328th (Lt. Colonel W. A. Callan), aided by the 2nd Battalion 101st Infantry, found a rear guard group of the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade holed up in Arsdorf, near the division west boundary, an spent the night of the 24th digging the grenadiers out of the attics and cellars. By midmorning Arsdorf was in hand and the left flank of the 26th Division was fairly secure except for Bigonville, three miles northwest, which now passed into the division zone as CCR, 4th Armored Division, left that village to play a new role on the western flank of the Corps.

But the main mission of the 26th Division, to make a crossing of the Sure River, had yet to be accomplished when Task Force Hamilton started the fight at Eschdorf on the night of 24 December. General Paul, beset by incessant urging from the III Corps commander, passed the word to his two forward regiments that the attack must get into high gear, then sent a message to General Millikin that he hope to seize the Sure crossing before daylight on Christmas Day. Pitched battles at Eschdorf and Arsdorf so entangled the division that the idea of a general movement forward had to be abandoned, particularly when on Christmas Day an additional battalion had to be committed at both of these towns. Although the troops of the two attacking regiments were within sight of the river on Christmas Eve they found that there would be no surprise crossing. In the zone of the 104th Infantry the enemy, alerted by the presence of two companies of the 319th Infantry, had strengthened his posi-

tion at the opposite end of the bridge and it was apparent that a crossing site would have to be sought elsewhere. On the left of the 3rd Battalion of the 328th Infantry (LT. Colonel Arthur C. Tillison) reached the bare hill above Bonnal on Christmas morning, just in time to see the last German Half-track cross the bridge before it was blown.

The corps commander now released the 101st Infantry from reserve and ordered General Paul to "keep going" and get to Wiltz, four miles the other side of the Sure. Paul planned to relieve the 328th with his reserve regiment, but on the night of the 25th, word flashed back that the bridge had been captured and that the third Battalion was crossing. This episode of the Bonnal Bridge is an apt—and instructive—example of the "fog of war." The bridge actually had been destroyed eight or ten hours earlier, but it was nearly midnight before the 328th Infantry was able to ascertain that none of its troops had got across the bridge. Bad news never comes singly. The 104th Infantry had to report that the Germans had blown up one span of the bridge at Heiderscheidergrund.

The Sure River is in itself not too difficult an obstacle, at its widest point no more than twenty-five yards across. The current is not swift, and there are many places where it is possible to wade across. (Plans actually were made for sending an assault party through the bitter cold stream, then wrapping the troops in blankets and thawing them out on the far bank.) The problem is to get down to the river and get up the steep cliffs to the north bank. So twisting and tortuous is the river course and so blind are its bends that great care must be exercised in choosing a crossing point lest one have to cross the river twice. The approaches to the river, the meandering of the riverbed and the exits on the north bank combined therefore to dictate where the 26th Division might cross.

Whether the enemy was strong enough to dictate how the division had to cross remained to be seen. The lay of the ground gave three potential crossing sites in the 26th Division zone; from east to west, Heiderscheidgrund, Eschdorf-Sure, and Bonnal. All had stone arch bridges of solid construction—or did prior to 25 December 1944. Heiderscheidgrund normally would present the most attractive of the three crossing because it gave entrance to the main Wiltz road. But the fight for Eschdorf had slowed down the 104th Infantry and prevented a through going exploitation of the 319th Infantry toehold at Heiderscheidgrund. Furthermore the enemy had first concentrated to defend this, the most obvious of the three crossings. What he was set to do to defend Esch-sur-Sure and Bonnal remained to be tested.

The fragmented commitment of the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade had resulted in heavy losses and blunted the fighting edge of this "elite" unit. By the very nature of its dispersed and staggered commitment the brigade had succeeded in creating a picture of strength quite out of keeping with reality. The 1st Battalion of the brigade, for example, had first appeared in front of the west wing of the 26th Division headed southwest, then having been turned around, had bumped back across the front of the 328th Infantry-fighting here and there in the woods as it went-then had taken a hand against the 104th Infantry. Furthermore the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade was an amorphous organization which accorded with none of the tables carried in the American handbook on German order of battle. Since its numbering and unit names fitted much of the description of the elder formation, the Grossdeutschland Panzer Division, the brigade had been first identified as the division. It took much time and numerous prisoners before the 26th Division order of battle could complete the true picture of the brigade.

When the Seventh Army commander ordered the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade to withdraw to the Sure River on 25 December, he intended the defense to continue on the south bank of the river. But the brigade's rifle regiment, much under strength as the consequence of the rough handling received at Arsdorf, Eschdorf, and in the counterattack at Heiderscheid, could no longer provide the necessary infantry. The bulk of the brigade had apparently crossed to the north side of the river by the morning of 26 December, forming a line—or what passed for a line—east and west of Esch-sur-Sure. The only German reserve in this sec-

tor was the army engineer brigade at Nothum, a 21/2-mile march north of the Bonnal crossing. But General Brandberger was loath to employ any of his small engineer complement in the firing line except under the direst of circumstances. There was little artillery to defend the line of the Sure River; most of the guns and Werfers which had good prime movers and could be hauled along the crowded roads west of the Our River were at work around Bastogne or firing in defense of the Boursheid bridgehead. One advantage the defenders did have: good observation from the heights overlooking the separate crossing sites.

The morning of 26 December dawned bright and clear with the promise of air support for the 26th Division at the river. On the left of the 101st Infantry had relieved the 328th and stood ready to attempt the crossing. The 101st was fresh and its ranks were full. After its first effort to reach the piers of the stone bridge at Bonnal was met by rifle fire, a patrol discovered a good site farther to the west where the river loop curled to the American side. Engineer assault craft reached the 3rd Battalion (Lt. Colonel James N. Peale) shortly before noon, but a rumor had circulated that the enemy was lying in wait on the opposite bank and the troops showed some reluctance to move. Colonel Walter T. Scott, the regimental commander, took a single bodyguard and crossed the river in a rubber boat, returning without mishap. The battalion then crossed, the silence broken only by the sound of the paddles, an occasional hoarse-voiced command and a few rifle shots. The 1st Battalion (Major Albert L. Gramm), closer to Bonnal. Likewise made an uneventful crossing. The enemy, no more than a few stray pickets, did loiter. Engineers started a Bailey Bridge at Bonnal while two battalions, tired by their scramble up the steep banks, dug in along the edge of the bluffs. The few enemy planes that tried to strafe along the river were destroyed or driven off by alert fighter-bombers and the 399th Antiaircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion. Nor did a small German counterattack during the evening have any effect.

The eyes of the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade were fixed on Heiderscheidgrund where the German fighting vehicles and riflemen waited for the main American effort. Although one span of the stone bridge had been blown as a precautionary measure, the enemy threw a trestle over the gap, preserving the bridge as a sally port to the south bank. Twice German tanks and assault guns made a bid to recross and counterattack the 104th Infantry. The first attempt was stopped short of the bridge by rapid shellfire: four tanks and an assault gun rammed across the bridge but were abandoned by their crews when American guns and howitzers brought salvo after salvo of white phosphorus to sear the near bank. During the 26th, patrols operating in the 104th sector put their glasses on Esch-sur-Sure. They reported that there was no sign of the enemy in the village, but Colonel Palladino could not risk an immediate crossing on his left while the Germans opposite his right held a bridge and still seemed willing to carry the fight back to the American side of the river.

The troops in the attenuated 101st bridgehead easily repulsed a minor counterattack on the morning of 27 December. As yet there was nothing to indicate an enemy shift to meet this threat to the Sure River position. By midmorning the Bailey Bridge was open and tanks and tank destroyers crossed to support the 3rd Battalion as it climbed on up the bluffs to Liefrange. Since the two bridges at Esch-sur-Sure had been demolished, the commander of the 104th Infantry arranged for his left battalion to borrow the Bonnal Bailey. As the right battalion put on a demonstration with firing at Heiderscheidgrund, the left crossed, then swung back toward Kaundorf as if to command the road climbing from Esch-sur-Sure. While this maneuver was in progress the engineers constructed a treadway bridge at Esch and tank and tank destroyers were put across to reinforce Palladino's battalion on the far bank. By the close of the day it could be said that the Sure River bridgehead was firm and the way open to recapture Wiltz.

**Continued Next Issue...**

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