

MY RECOLLECTIONS OF JANUARY 7, 1945

By Bill Lynch (193 MD)

I was a Pvt. assigned to the Regimental Section of the Medical Detachment of the 193rd, G.I.. On Sunday January 7th, I was sent out from the Regimental Aid Station located in an ambulance parked along side of a barn that was being used as Regimental Headquarters to find a site for a forward Aid Station. We were but a short distance west of Bastogne and the 101 A/B was on our right flank.

Leaving the Regimental Aid Station, I joined a column of troops heading west on the only road in the area. A short distance from Regimental Headquarters, the column came to a cross roads where the Germans were landing five artillery shells every five minutes. Between shellings you could cross the intersection and so the column continued safely on its way.

You may recall that it was a most inhospitable day, a gray overcast sky, bitterly cold with temperature in the low twenties, knee-deep snow, blowing winds, and periodic snow flurries. You may also recall that the troops discarded overshoes, overcoats, and field packs, so that unencumbered, they might move more rapidly. Something we all regretted in the days to come.

The column continued west toward Flamizoulle and Flamierge. In the village of Mande St. Etienne (which we called Monde) I found the 193rd's 1st Battalion Aid Station that was housed in a sturdy two-story stone house on the main road in the village. Lying on litters in front of the aid station were a number of wounded G.Is. Across the road from the aid station was the shattered remains of a house and in the rubble of the house the "walking wounded" huddled for protection. The noise of screaming meemies, 88's, burp guns and small-arms fire was continuous. A jeep came down the road, stopped, and General Miley got out and helped move one of the litters into a more protective area. The General got back in the jeep and left. He couldn't have gone very far for the front line was only 100 to 200 yards in front of us. Beyond that was a frozen snow covered field of 200 yards or so. On the other side of the field, in a clump of woods, on the high ground, was the enemy.

The enemy was the best the Nazi Wehrmacht had to offer, including the Fuher Beglit (Escort) Brigade, an elite organization of division strength that had been Hitler's bodyguard. They were among the Nazi troops defending the road between Flamierge and Flamizoulle that was to become known as "Dead Man's Ridge".

I went into the aid station through a side door. It was dark inside and there were walking

wounded in the entry way. To the right in a hallway I saw Lt. Leonard McGee, a Battalion Surgeon, working on a casualty. Looking over his shoulder I saw that he was working on a young G.I. who was lying face down on a litter, with a gaping wound in the back of his chest. McGee looked up at me and said, "Don't stand there do something."

I went into the next room where there were many wounded G.Is. waiting for medical care. I spent the rest of the day treating the wounded, applying dressings, splinting broken limbs, sedating and relieving pain with morphine, and evacuating, by Jeep, those who were ready to travel.

Throughout the afternoon the aid station came under heavy fire from mortars and 88s. During the height of the shelling an 88 hit a window on the second floor of the aid station. An aid man on the second floor became seriously disorganized by the explosion and had to be sedated and evacuated. An 88 hit in front of the aid station killing Donald Blessing, one of our aid men, along with with another G.I. and the wounded G.I. they were carrying into the aid station.

In the late afternoon as the skies became darker, I saw a two and a half ton truck coming down the road through the swirling snow. It stopped across from the aid station where the "walking wounded" were. The driver loaded all the wounded on board and took off for safer territory. The two and a half was driven by an aid man who had 'requisitioned' it.

I recall only a few names of the medics in the aid station: Lt. McGee, Robert McBride, Don Blessing, and Edmonds. There were others there and they were all doing what they could do to help the wounded.

As darkness deepened, the shelling stopped. All the wounded had been evacuated. The aid station was quiet except for the occasional report of small-arms fire in the distance. Lt. McGee withdrew his small group of medics, perhaps five in number, back along the road toward Bastogne and he set up another aid station in a barn somewhere between Monde and Bastogne.

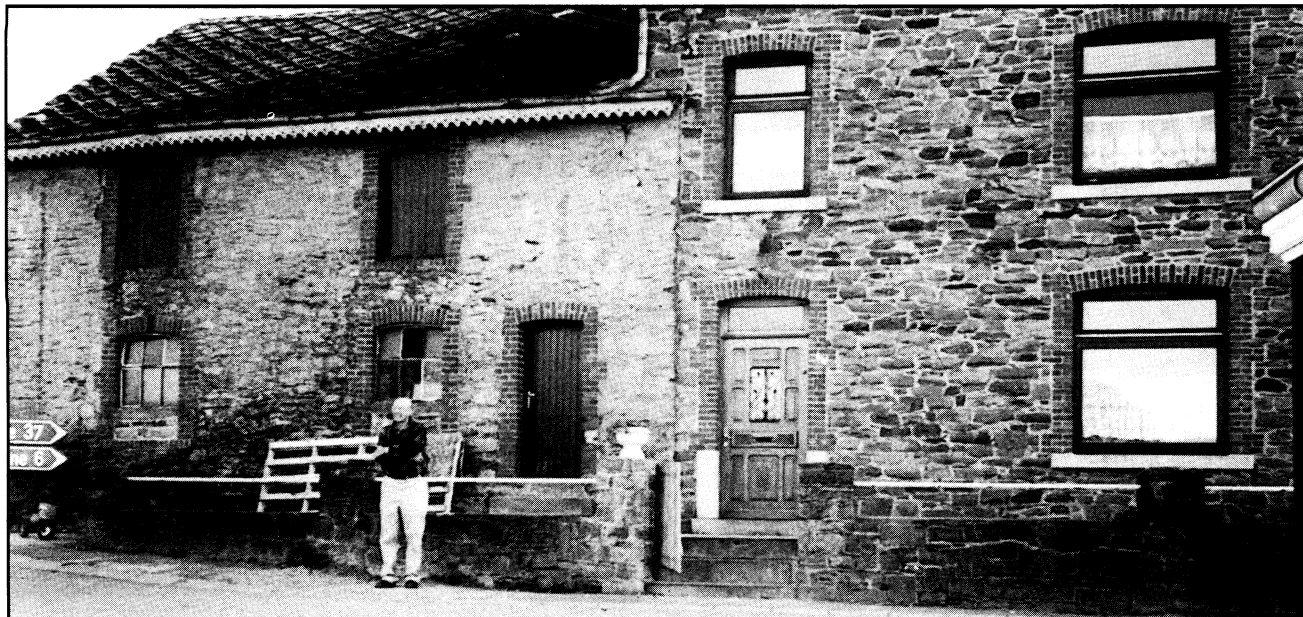
Fortunately, the intensity of the battle was over and no further casualties were carried to the aid station that night. In the relative 'warmth' and 'safety' of the hay loft, I sat there listening to the crackle of small arms fire a thousand or so yards away. It was an eerie night. From what I had seen, I thought our front line had been decimated and that the enemy could walk on through. Fortunately that didn't happen because the 17th had delivered an

equally or perhaps a more destructive blow to the enemy.

I never got back to the Regimental Aid Station. The First Battalion of the 193rd had lost a number of aid men and litter bearers that day so I stayed on with the First Battalion for the remaining days of the Ardennes as an aid man at-large. There was time spent with A Company and C Company. I remember the Company Commander of A Company telling his small contingent to spread out so that one

shell wouldn't get the entire company. My final days during that campaign were spent with Headquarters Company's weapons platoon, the 81 mm. mortars and 30 cal. water cooled mgs..

I recall January 7, 1945, as one of the worst days of our time in combat. The casualties that day were second only to March 24th which was "Operation Varsity", the Rhine crossing, when the 17th suffered the greatest number of casualties in a 24-hour period and on that day Capt. Leonard McGee was KIA.



A photograph of the First Battalion Aid Station, taken just shy of fifty years later. Bob McBride is standing in front of the main entrance to the aid station. The upper windows are shuttered and there are visible cracks in the masonry. In front of Bob is the area where the wounded were lying on litters waiting to be helped. You can see two road signs in the picture. Visible in the lower sign are the last four letters of Bastogne 6. The child's tricycle just below and behind the road signs makes the picture more poignant.

WW II, Korea, Viet Nam ????

Here are the names of two additional 17th Airborne troopers who "stayed in" and thus served during the Korean or Viet Nam era or both.

T. William Preston	513E	Korea
Thomas M. Sellers	PM	Korea, Viet Nam

Editor,
Joe Quade