



# Company I Poopsheet

Company I, 502 PIR, 101st Airborne

September- 2007

Friday, July 20, 2007; Page B07, *The Washington Post*,

**Ann Dillon Hershner**, 80, a program analyst who worked for the Department of Education, died of congestive heart failure June 28 at Inova Fairfax Hospital. She was an Arlington County resident for 48 years. Mrs. Hershner began working for what was then the Office of Education in 1967. As a program analyst, she reviewed public school system programs,



assessing them for eligibility to receive public funding. She also visited college campuses and promoted cooperative education, a five-year college program in which a student would alternate semesters in academics with practical work experience. She retired in 1987.

She was born in Miami. Financial constraints caused her and her sister to be placed in an Episcopal convent, where she was educated until she was old enough to attend high school. She graduated from high school at 16 and was awarded a scholarship to Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Mass.

While at Radcliffe, Mrs. Hershner unwittingly became a pioneer for women in math, her daughter said.

During her senior year, she was required to get her new academic adviser to sign her schedule. When she met with her adviser, he immediately told her to get out of math and stay out of math, said her daughter, Karen Dedo of Redondo Beach, Calif.,

Her mother ignored the professor's advice and completed her bachelor's degree in math in 1947, Dedo said. After graduating, she had a chance meeting with her former adviser and eventually married him.

Mrs. Hershner went on to receive a master's degree in mathematics from American University in 1965.

Active in the American Association of University Women, she served as co-president of the Arlington branch from 1996 to 1998 and headed AAUW lobbying efforts. In 1990, she was honored by the AAUW for her contributions to the Education Foundation, which supports women in advanced studies. She was an active member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church since the 1960s and served on the vestry from 2004 to 2006.

Her husband of 56 years, **Dr. Ivan Raymond Hershner**,\* died in 2005. An infant son, Douglas Hershner, died in 1952.

In addition to her daughter, Karen, survivors include four children, Ronald Hershner of McLean, Gary Hershner of Richmond and Steven Hershner of Annandale; a sister; and six grandchildren.



July 23, 2007, Letter from **Gary R Hershner**, 2504 Brookwood Rd., Richmond, VA 23235, Ph: 804-320-4737 Dear Mr. Hartzell: My mother, Ann Hershner died June 28, 2007. Enclosed is a copy of my father's Bastogne Diary that I thought you might enjoy reading. My mother found it some time after my father's death. Some time ago you sent me a video with my Dad speaking at a reunion. It was great. Thank you!. I am sorry I have not thanked you previously. I would like to know about other reunions of the 101. I would wear my dad's uniform to a reunion, however, I am about two inches taller than my Dad, and about forty pounds heavier! Gary R. Harsher

*Editor: We will share the Diary (Dec. 18 - 30, 1944) in the next Poopsheet.*

July 17, 2007, **Dr. Lonnie Burnett**, Saraland, AL, My father, **Robert K. Burnett**, was in Company I of the 502 PIR during WWII. He received and enjoyed your "Poopsheet" until his death in 2004. I was wondering if you had a roster of Company I that you could email me or send me in the regular mail?

Thanks very much...Here is a little irony...My daughter had surgery recently here in Mobile. Her surgeon is Troy H. Middleton III. He is the grandson of **General Troy Middleton** who commanded the VIII Corps (including the 101st Airborne Division) during the Battle of the Bulge. Thanks again  
Dr. Lonnie A. Burnett Associate Professor of History University of Mobile, Mobile, Alabama

*Editor: Happy to provide copies of the roster.*

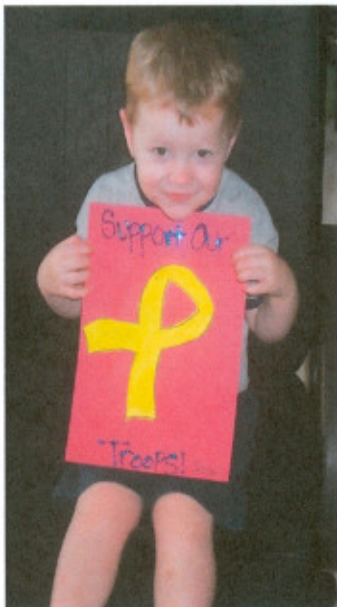
Ju;ly 24, 2007, **Ken Presley**, son of **W. G. Presley**, Betty: I did receive the newsletter and thanks for



sending that. It was a pleasure to see my Dad's stories there for the other vets that are left to read. I hope they were enjoyed. Ken Presley

July 9, 2007, **Christian Dijkhuizen**, Best, Holland, Really nice newsletter. I really enjoy reading your Item company 502nd newsletter every time. Christian

### A Yellow Ribbon



July 20, 2007, **Fawn Jones**, granddaughter of **Edward M. Smith, I/502**, Hi everyone - In an overly "politically correct" world, it warmed my heart to see my little son, Jesse, come home from preschool with this art project, and it will soon be framed in honor of all our friends and family that serve to protect the things near and dear to my heart. This is for all of you who deserve our the word "thanks". I was very happy to see them do that in his

school - so many schools are becoming too "P.C." - They had originally planned to "adopt a troop" to send them to, but couldn't get it together. This was my way of doing that! Hope you are doing well! Happy Summer! Fawn & Boys

July 19, 2007 **Joe and Myra Kelly**, Jonesborough, TN, Joe and I enjoy reading the Poopsheet. Thanks for adding us to your mailing list. Cannot tell you how much we appreciate the work you're doing, you are keeping the spirit alive for many. Joe and Myra

*Editor: Joe is the brother of Item Company's, **Earl Kelly**. Check the last two Poopsheets for information about Joe's book, "Confession of a CIA Interrogator", a terrific account of his 2-½ years in Vietnam with the CIA.*

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Phone call to **Bob Hartzell**, in Tiffin, Ohio, on Wednesday, August 22, Bob said the heavy rain and flooding in Ohio missed his immediate area. He is doing okay.

**THE MAILING LIST:** If you know of a name that is no longer with us, or a name that should be included, PLEASE, let us know: Betty Hill, 2222 Settlers Way # 914, Sugar land, TX 77478, Ph. 281-277-3787, email [bjth23@yahoo.com](mailto:bjth23@yahoo.com)

The widows and other family members who are also on the mailing list are not listed here.. If we remove a veteran's or widow's name from the mailing list, we are happy to include a family member to continue receiving the Poopsheet, but you must let us know.. Our current Poopsheet mailing list of the troopers of Item Company, 502, include:

Augustnowski, Edward, Wethersfield, CT  
Bledsoe, Nick V., Morrisville, PA  
Boone, Ervin C., Camden, SC  
Brangwin, Joe S., Ridgecrest, CA  
Camarillo, Fernando S., San Antonio, TX  
Cantu, Domingo, San Antonio, TX  
Cartwright, Marvin D., Elk Mound, WI  
Clark, Jack R., New Castle, PA  
Downen, William P., Middleton, TN  
Dunch, Louis B., Sharon, PA  
Dunlap, Ray L., Fayette City, PA  
Elliott, Chester H., Thomasville, MO  
Garcia, Joseph, Exton, PA  
Hartzell, Robert J., Tifiin, OH  
Hennessey, Joseph S., Southbury, CT  
Jurimas, Edward W., Delran, NJ  
Kelly, Earl R., Aberdeen, MD  
Kraus, Fred K., Bradenton, FL  
Lichtenthaler, Donald W., Newberg, OR  
May, Fonzie W., Acworth, GA  
Meason, Jesse M., Russellville, AR  
Mobley, Edward E., Lawtey, FL  
Nivens, Harry C., St. Cloud, FL  
Norris, James S., Roanoke, VA  
O'Neill, Donald J., Rochester Hills, MI  
Parham, Dr. W. Harold, Jacksonville, FL  
Penkwitz, William, Mishicot, WI  
Roush, Lewellyn W., Gallipolis, OH  
Shook, Warren C, Lenoir, NC  
Simmons, Alfred E., Rotan, TX  
Smith, Meredith E, Baton Rouge, LA  
Snow, Richard c., Lady Lake, FL  
Stephens, Bernard W., Sanford, NC  
Taylor, Floyd M., Oklahoma City, OK  
Thomas, Edward C., Oak Harbor, W A  
Tumey, Melvin, Struthers, OH  
Vaccaro, Richard P., Bayfield, CO  
Walker, Frank M., Lake Charles, LA  
White, Walter J., Chattanooga, TN



**New addresses:**

July 29, 2007, **Marvin and Charlotte Cartwright**, Elk Mound, WI, We haven't moved, just put up a mailbox rather than go to the P.O. For the mail. Our new mailing address is: 109 Juniper Avenue, Elk Mound, WI 54739

August 1, 2007, **Mabel Howell (Jim)**, I did not move, just cancelled my P. O. box. The new address is 10517 Binford Rd, Aberdeen, MS 39730

Returned mail, no forwarding address:  
Mrs. Michael Olesh, Allentown, PA

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**62<sup>nd</sup> 101<sup>st</sup> national Reunion, Omaha, nebraska**

August 13 - 17 saw more than 375 people in Omaha at the Holiday Inn Convention Center for the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual reunion. My first national reunion, and a great experience, met many interesting veterans, family and friends of the airborne. The program was emotional at times and inspiring, especially with the 25 active duty soldiers among the group. Three were women and one young man had lost a leg in service, but still on active duty and jumping from helicopters. There were three demonstrations jumps by these active duty soldiers. Two jumps at the hotel in the parking lot!! Amazing how they can jump from

thousands of feet and land right on target. Another jump at the dedication of the Airborne Monument unveiled in Omaha. The Heartland Airborne Memorial Association can be proud of such a magnificent monument to the airborne. Be sure to see it if you are in Omaha.



Speaker for the Memorial Dinner was the Commanding General of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, Major General Jeffrey J. Schloesser. (left)

On Saturday afternoon Josephine Kokol, sister of **Louis Morong**, I/502, came

by for a visit. Josephine lives in Omaha, and was great to meet her in person.

On Thursday evening, I attended the 502 Regimental Dinner hosted by the 502 Governor of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Screaming Eagles Association, Charles Gant and Ron Gillette. Among the 40 people present were the family from MacGregor, Minnesota of Dale Wayrymen, a 502 trooper, who died in 1966 in Vietnam when he rescued several of this wounded comrades then fell on a grenade to save that group of his comrades. One of the men he saved that day was at this dinner. Dale was awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery and sacrifice.

Next year, the 63<sup>rd</sup> National 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reunion will be held at Circus-Circus Hotel in Reno, Nevada.

Betty Taylor Hill

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The new President of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Screaming Eagles Association is Joe R. Alexander.

Joe served with Task Force 3-506 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment. He and his wife, Rikki live in Knoxville TN.



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**REMEMBER SEPTEMBER - 1944-2007**

Best wishes to all our citizens who this September are visiting the area of Operation Market Garden and other Airborne battle field areas of WWII and our love to all the wonderful people of those countries.





**SNOWBIRD REUNION, KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA, January 31, February 1, 2, 3, 2008.** (Thursday to Sunday) Within the Snowbird Reunion, Item Company, 502, WWII, will be holding our annual company reunion. We will enjoy the Snowbird events as well as an Item Company dinner at the hotel on Friday night for all Item Company attendees, families and friends. You are invited for a Dutch-treat dinner from the hotel menu. Snowbird registration forms will be available soon.

**We'd love to hear from you. Write us a note we can share in the newsletter**

**"My Buddy" -- the memoirs of Walter G Presley, I / 502 conclusion:**

### ***First Purple Heart***

So they loaded me in the ambulance with a bunch of the others and took me on back to the hospital. I got there and they laid me on a stretcher. They had stretchers all along on both sides of the hospital tent. They told me that was my stretcher, for me to stay there and they'd come and get me after a while and treat it.

Well, I laid there the rest of that night, all day the next day and nobody hadn't come around. A guy come by there and I hollered him over so I could visit with him a little bit. I found out he was a truck driver. I asked him, "Which way you going out of here? Are you carrying ammunition up to the front line? Whereabouts you goin'?"

He told me and I talked to 'im some more and found out he was goin' pretty close to where my outfit was. So I said, "You mind if I ride with you?"

"No."

So I piled in that truck and went with him because, hell, they wudn't doin' anything for me there. Just lettin' me lay on that stretcher. I guess they was too busy with more seriously wounded soldiers. So I went back up and went to our own medic. He 'put sulfa powder and bandaged it up. The thing healed. It didn't get infected. I got a Purple Heart for that.

***Brothers in Arms*** The whole company and by squad while we was in combat training, basic training, and the whole bit, we would be a barrack together. And we'd either maybe have a poker game or just set around and talk. You'd make friends or make enemies during those times. TW. and I was, you might say, the best of friends.

Rowsch was kind of a comical guy. He wudn't a big

guy, he wudn't a small guy. He was smaller than TW. and 1. He always had something to say when we was talkin' and we'd have a big laugh over it a lot of times. And wudn't anybody more likable than he was. Ever'body in the company liked him. He was in on almost ever'thing that happened because of the fact that he was so close to T.W. and 1. He was in the squad all the time. We was in the fust squad of the fust platoon. He was just one of us, you might say. No matter what we was doin', he was right in the big middle of it.

It was ironic that TW. and I never fought alongside each other. Orders would come down from the company. Company would relay 'em down to the platoon leader, which was either a first or second lieutenant. Then he would relay 'em on down to the squad leaders. Maybe I would be assistant machine-gunner, which was a buck private. And then I don't remember what they would do with TW., but anyway they would move me up as machine-gunner and put somebody else as assistant machine-gunner. Maybe T.W. sometime would go up as platoon sergeant. And then sometimes they'd bring him back and that would put me back. Then maybe a couple or three months well we'd be switched. He'd be down here and I'd be up there.

### ***D-DAY IN HOLLAND***

The second combat jump was more or less like a practice jump. We jumped in the daylight into an open field, and the whole unit assembled and moved off without a shot being fired. Just like we was at home. We jumped fairly close to Elst and Eindhoven.

The second day after we landed in there and drove the Germans out, here these three women come with a bunch of stuff for us to eat. They was dressed almost like nuns. They didn't have their faces covered, but otherwise they'd be dressed just like nuns. I don't know whether they were Catholics or what, but it was some kind of religious deal. Anyway, I don't believe anybody worked any harder than those three women did cookin' pastries and such-like and bringin' 'em out to us.

They was livin' in a little house. I never did go on inside of it, but some of the guys did. Maybe they needed somethin' moved or somethin' done and they'd ask some of the guys to go in and help 'em do somethin'. But they was all time bringin' something that they had cooked out to give us. Cookies or cake or some kind of pastry. We was close to one of those big dykes.

They was apple trees all in through there. At one place, almost the whole company dug our holes



under some apple trees. At two o' clock when they started with the artillery those apples would fall and you could just set in the hole there and reach out and get an apple. We ate so dem many apples 'til our stool looked like applesauce. At that time, dug in around that apple orchard, T.W. was platoon sergeant and I was over two squads. We was dug in close to a house a ways back from where T.W. and them was. They was playin' with a mortar without the bipod in the front of it: just holdin' the tube and droppin' the round in and tryin' to hit that house. Suddenly them dang mortar shells were comin' pretty close to us. I got on the phone and got T.W. on the phone. I eat his butt out, up one side and down the other. What the hell you tryin' to do? Kill us? But they was havin' fun with that dang mortar.

Another thing there in Holland. We had our holes dug long enough where we could lay down in 'em. I don't know what caused it, but we would hear the report from a gun and just almost immediately after that thud the ground would start shaking back and forth. If we were laying down in that hole, it would bounce us from one side of the hole to the other.

Evidently all of that land there where we was, was setting on top of a loblolly. You know, mud and water. The Germans would throw in a delayed action artillery. During that delay after the report of the gun, the shell would go down through the crust and into that loblolly and then go off. I mean the whole ground would shake back and forth. You'd be layin' in your fox holes and you'd rock back and forth against the sides. I guess they was tryin' to tear down our morale. We'd just hear that thud and then the ripples from the explosion would cause the ground to move back and forth kind of like an earthquake. It would be easy to get shook up over it until we got use to it. Then we didn't pay it any attention at all.

### **Promises**

In Holland, we was dispersed along a dyke. Rowsch was my assistant machine-gunner at that time and he had been out on patrol with a couple of officers. While he was out on patrol, he got hit. The bullet went in on one side of his neck and out on the other side. Just right under his jawbone. When I saw him he was still walking, but he'd been hit. The bullet could have very easily hit his jugular. As he was going back by, I told him, "Rowsch, don't worry, I'll bring ya 'n ear off a live German."

### **The Second Bronze Star**

I got the second Bronze Star there in Holland before we took that house. There was about the same thing

happenin' as the frst time I got a Bronze Star only this time it was a bigger group. We was pushin' the line back too fast and the Germans started pullin' in behind us to cut us off from the main forces. I pulled my squad out of the line that was movin' forward and threw 'em back from where the Germans was fixin' to come in and cut us off. I just held them there for a while until a larger force of Americans come in and drove the Germans back. I was placin' my men at the most strategic points to where we could hold those Germans off. Had I not done that, there would have been a hell of a lot of guys got killed. It's just a chance you have to take. You knew what was fuin' to happen and you better put a stop to it if you could.

### **Second Purple Heart**

We were both just loaded down to the gills as we started back to the house. We got about half way there when a German sniper way across the field took a pot shot at us. A bullet went through my billfold in my back pocket, through the two pair of pants and longjohn underwear I was wearing, then it turned and plowed a furrow around my hip and came out in the front at about the same place it would have if it had gone straight through. I don't know what made it turn and go around, but it went around. And you've seen the picture of ole Pluto when he'd jump up and his feet would get to whirlin' like a windmill runnin' in the air? Well, that's just the way I was. I jumped up and by the time I hit the ground, my feet was a poundin' just that way. It didn't take me long to get back to the ditch there by that bombed-out house. The hide blistered and peeled off all the way around my body. I got a Purple Heart for that. But I didn't drop a thing that I had.

### **Another German loses it**

When Wold and I got back to the bombed-out house, both of the German enlisted men had gone on in and they'd been searched. But the German officer wouldn't go in. He must have figured that we were goin' to kill him. He stood in front of a brick windowsill that hit him just above the knees.

I laid my stuff down in a foxhole there and went over to see what the problem was. One of my guys said that the officer wouldn't go on into the house. I walked up behind him and shoved him right between the shoulders just as hard as I could shove him. He was standing there with his feet up against that wall, and someway he went over that wall without falling down. How he did it, I don't know.

Once we were inside I was goin' to search him. He wasn't gonna let me, saying, "Me Officer. No search."



And that made me pretty mad. It came back to me what I'd told Rowsch.

I kept my jump knife sharp as a razor all the time, and when that danged officer said he wasn't gonna let me search him, I run my hand in my pocket and got that knife. I mashed the button and it flew open and before there could be any discussion, I grabbed his ear and just whacked it off. Then he let me search him.

I wrapped the ear up in toilet paper and put it in my pocket. I carried it with me 'til it started stinkin'. Then I thought, *Heck, I can't carry that thing* and threw it away. Late that ev'ning they was a bunch of the Germans give up. We sent them back across the road and as they were crossin', a German machine gun opened up on 'em.

### ***Third Purple Heart***

When we was there at that house, that bombed out house, they was kind of a little ole rickshaw or something. Anyway, it had metal wheels. Kind of a little ole car affair. Ever' time one of us' d move, that German machine gunner that had shot those German soldiers comin' across the road, well, when we'd move of course, he'd shoot at us. I thought I could ease down there and get my head up in amongst those wheels and find out where the watch was at.

I was going to find that guy and direct mortar flfe on him and knock him out.

About the time I got my head all right, where I could see maybe where he was at, he opened up on me. A bullet got one drop of blood out of my chin. I didn't stick my head back up there, I'll tell you for sure. I didn't try it anymore. I got a Purple Heart for that drop of blood.

We had the best mortar-man in the whole outfit. Once when he started to drop a round into the mortar he says, "Get in your holes, boys. Thisun's not even on the books!" It was so close 'til it wudn't on the books for the setting. He was just eyeballin' it you might say. They was a German foxhole so close he was warnin' us to take cover. He put that round right square in that hole. All kinds of stuff, guns and metal and meat came flyin' out.

One time me and Officer Shepherd had gone out to find the position of a German machine gun nest. We were walking alongside of a dyke and we walked up on a German in a spider hole. He tried to get up with his rifle to shoot. I hollered at Shepherd, "Move!" so I could shoot 'im. He spotted the guy and yelled, "You bastard! Are you trying to intimidate me?" Then he shot him right down through the top of the head.

We walked on and found the German position. We

threw hand grenades over the dyke and it hit the machine gun nest. We went up there to see if they were all dead. It looked like the niggers had got holt of 'em with razor blades. They'd been cut to pieces. We went back to our defensive position.

Way across the field in front of our position was a building with a cultivator in front of it. A German was sitting there just spraying the area with machine-gun flTe. It was about 300 yards from where we were. Murphy and Howell both frred at the same time. He fell back like somebody'd hit him with a baseball bat

### ***BASTOGNE***

#### ***Into Bastogne***

See, Hitler was making a last ditch drive to recapture Europe. He'd broke through our line of defense in the Ardennes and the break became a bulge. They took us down there to force that bulge back.

We were on those trucks all day long and just before night when we were almost there, we stopped. They told us to dig in and then we was to form a line that went by this card table. They had a whole bunch of this real thick rum. They gave us our canteen cups dem near full of that rum. They'd told us to get out and dig in. But to hell with that "diggin' in." After we drank all that rum, we just lay down on top of the ground and went to sleep.

We spent the night there. The next morning we advanced through Bastogne. We didn't engage not over one or two Germans and of course they didn't last long enough to say "scat."

We went on through Bastogne and set up a defense along a big ravine. About two or three days after we got there, it started snowin'. It snowed just a little bit to kind of make the ground white. And then the next day it snowed more and ever' day it would snow some more. It continued that snowin' ever' day and then it would freeze at night. In the evenin'

it would melt a little bit on top and then snow some on top of that at night. Then the next evenin' it would melt a little bit. That snow was 18 inches deep. You could walk across it and your foot would pop pop pop as you broke through those layers of ice goin' on down to the ground.

But we just set there and held our position. Gradually, the Germans pushed out on both sides of us then closed us in. That was what they called the Ardennes Bulge. We was inside that donut. In place of forcing the bulge back, we'd got caught inside the donut with Germans all the way around.

#### ***Groceries in Bastogne***

While we were in Bastogne, we were dug in around



the rim of a big wide canyon.

The Germans was on the other side of that ravine. I guess it was from rim to rim probably a quarter to a half-mile. Then it sloped down in the middle. In the bottom, there was a little place where they had cleared the land and was farming. There would be little plots of farming land and then a little plot of brush.

They was an old wild boar that'd go up that canyon one night and come back the next night. He'd come by about the same time ever' night. Snow was about 18 inches deep on the ground. We could hear him goin' through that brushy part. He'd get to the edge and he'd stop. Sometimes he'd set there for 30 minutes. You couldn't hear a wiggle out of 'im. And all at once across that open space he'd go just as hard as he could go and both sides would open up on 'im. You could tell right exactly where he was from the report of the guns. That went on for about, I guess, about three weeks.

I shot him. He stopped where I could see him one time. He just shouldn't have done it. But we didn't go out there to get him.

They was a bunch of deer over there that was smaller than our white-tail deer here. I don't know what kind of deer they were, but they'd go down in there and they'd paw the snow away. They'd take whatever. There was some green stuff under it and so they'd graze in there. Well, our supply sergeant had gotten hold of a little .22 target rifle that the sharp-shooters had used to practice with. It had a scope on it and I borrowed that thing. The supply sergeant let me use it.

I'd go down there at night and find me a place where the wind couldn't get to me and I knew the sunshine would be when the sun come up. I'd kick the snow back and then I'd lay there in the sun and sleep all day long. Then that evenin' when the deer would come out and started grazin', well, I'd shoot one of 'em. The flTst part of the night I'd drag him up in there. Sometimes it'd be close enough I could drag him up in there in the daytime. I'd gut him and turn 'im upside down and he'd lay there all night and freeze. Then I'd carry him up to the mess hall and they'd dress it out and cook 'im and we'd really have a dinner. It fed the whole platoon but there wudn't very much for each one. They wudn't very big deer.

When we were surrounded there inside the donut right there at Bastogne, we were only getting' 1/3 of a K-ration a day. In a K-ration you have a breakfast box, a dinner box, and an evenin' meal box. One-third of a K-ration is just enough to keep ya alive I guess.

Mter they closed us in, we eat all of the livestock. It

didn't last but a day or two. All the cows and goats and chickens, anything that was eatable, we had already eaten it up. In the basement of our platoon CP there was a pile of little Irish potatoes, about as big around as a silver dollar. It was at least a truckload of 'em down in there. I bet they was three thousand pounds when we moved in. We kept anywhere from one to two or three men down there all the time peeling those danged potatoes. The dinner ration had some cheese in it. We'd boil those potatoes and put a piece of that cheese in with 'em for seasonin'.

They was also about 15 barrels of ground up chicken feed down in there. We'd have mashed potatoes and make hotcakes out of that chicken feed. It was pretty good when you got hungry.

### ***Hittin' the hay***

There at Bastogne we slept as warm as we would have in our own beds at home even though there was about 18 inches of snow on the ground. It was snowin' all time we was doin' this, but this is how we kept warm:

We dug our holes just wide enough and long enough where a man could stretch out.

Each one of us had one shelter-half and one wool blanket. That was all we were supposed to sleep in in that damn snow. They was two men to each hole. We was on guard an hour and off an hour. They was a big haystack on the hill. We run up and brought that hay down.

So we filled those holes about two-thirds full of that hay, spread a shelter half, the two blankets and the other shelter-half on top of that. Then we finished fillin' it with hay. Then we put sticks across it, then hay on top of those sticks and then put dirt back on top of ' that hay.

We dug a little hole out to the side where the man that was on guard could stand.

Then we tied hay into bundles where we could stand it across the opening and the guy that was on the inside could scoot down in between those blankets and sleep snug. We only had an hour to sleep then we had to go on guard duty, so we got to where we could go to sleep just as soon as we hit that sack.

I had electric lights in my hole. I got a lightbulb out of a bicycle headlight. It looked kind oflike a flashlight bulb. Then from the radio operator I 'got a battery that was too weak to operate the radio but was still strong enough to burn that lightbulb real bright. I tied the wire across there where we had that stack of hay at the end and we'd have light in there. We could write mail home or read mail from home or do anything we



wanted to. company commander. He wanted to come down to check the lines and of course he and the platoon leader had a couple of guys that always went with the battalion commander. They tasted that snow cream. From then on I had enough ingredients to make snow cream for the whole outfit.

### **Third Bronze Star**

Another time there at Bastogne, at the head of that canyon, oh I'd say about 50 yards across, the natives had cleared the brush out from around those trees, from there on down and on both sides. Around ever' one of those trees they had dug the dirt back and made a little dam all the way 'round.

This one particular tree, when you walk up to it, was probably about 3 or 4 feet straight through the trunk. Our machine gunner had dug in there and put his hole right where he could cover an area at the head of that canyon.

One day when he was at a different spot, the Germans was tryin' to drop mortar fITe in on us. I thought to myself, I can get up there by that tree, on that comer, and find out where they're shootin' that mortar from and then take the walkie-talkie radio and call for artillery to knock 'im out.

I got up there and that dem German machine-gunner spotted me. So I got down in the ditch around that tree. When the German opened up on me, our machine-gunner saw me and thought I was a German. So he started shootin' at me too!

I thought, *Hell, I can't stay here!* and I scooted around on the other side of the tree.

Then the German shot at me again with his machine gun. The whole time I was on the radio tryin' to get our machine-gunner to stop shootin'.

You see, I was talking to somebody at the platoon CP on that walkie-talkie and it was, I guess, 7500 yards from the CP to where our machine gun was. After I got them to understand what was going on, they had to send a runner down there to stop our machine-gunner from shootin'. "That's one of our men out there you're shootin' at!"

They finally got our guy to stop. When you go out on something like that you have to take your pack in case you get stuck. The bullets just riddled my pack again. That was the second pack I got shot up.

That's when I got my third Bronze Star. But I didn't think I needed one for that because I didn't have any men with me.

### **Christmas turkey and cognac**

At Christmas they dropped turkey drumsticks and thighs in to us. And they would issue us cognac ever'

day there at Bastogne. Each squad would get a fifth of cognac. I'd get it and dole it out to the squad members. We had one boy there who said he never had tasted any kind of alcohol at all before he went in the service, and he wasn't gonna drink any of it. He was about 17, 18 years old. That was a fifth a squad they gave us. There was 12 people in each squad. Of course we didn't get very much, each person.

One day they brought us two fifths and he said, "Well. I've decided that I'm not goin' to get to go home so I want my share of cognac today." So we gave him his share and sure enough that night, the Germans threw an 88 shell and it went right into the foxhole where he was at. There wasn't enough of him left hardly to recognize that it was a human being.

### **Nuts!**

They sent a runner in there with a note saying they had us surrounded, and they would annihilate us if we didn't give up or surrender. The officer that got the note turned it over and wrote NUTS! on it and he gave it back to the runner. He took it back to the Germans.

We was holed up in there about two weeks.

I don't remember how long before Christmas it was when we went up there, when they trucked us in, but it was about a day or two after Christmas when Patton broke through. Then he started using us to push out a ways.

*For the Screaming Eagles, the battle of Bastogne was the climactic battle of the war. Similarly, the Battle of the Ardennes, of which Bastogne was a vital part, was the last great battle of the European war. When Hitler's last offensive-his final gamble- failed to payoff, it was clear to all but a few blind Nazi fanatics that the days of the Third Reich were numbered. A saner mind than Hitler's would have surrendered after the Battle of the Ardennes and saved much bloodshed and much destruction* From *The Screaming Eagles* p. 180-181

At Bastogne, we went in there with a full company and when we came out they was 18 of my original platoon. A platoon consists of 4 squads, I believe, I can't remember of either 8 or 12 men. There was only 18 of us left of the original ones that went in there. Of course now they weren't all casualties. There was some that had frozen feet and frost bite ears. They wudn't very many of 'em had got hit. They were walkin' wounded you might say.

For about a week, they used us for fightin' troops to open up another route for the American troops to come in. Actually there wasn't any contact, the



Germans had already pulled out. We went through two or three little timbered areas and then into openings.

One day when we had our pup tents set up back in the pine trees T.W. spent most of the day settin' in the front of that pup tent. He wouldn't say anything unless you said something to him. And that wudn't like him. Usually he was outgoing and talked all the time.

There was one place there that one American tank pulled up there on a little rise and knocked out three German tanks. These German tanks would come up over a hill, oh I don't know how far out there they was and they'd see him a settin' there. Well, they'd start to turn around to go back and he'd put one in their side. When he'd fire that thing, it'd sound like he was tearin' half of the earth off. And then right behind him another'n would come. I don't know why the third one came up after the first two got knocked out, but he knocked out three of 'em there just as fast as he could load and fire.

You might say we were going through, clearin' out the area. We didn't find any Germans at all. I don't know why those German tanks were coming up there. It looked rather stupid to me, because there wudn't any German soldiers that they were coming up to defend. At that time, I was the squad leader and T.W. was the platoon leader. They called him back to the house we was usin' for battalion headquarters to get some orders. See, there was a road and the 506 was on the right hand side of the road fightin' German tanks and my company, the 502, was on the left hand side of the road.

Our bazookas was knockin' the tanks out on our side and we were holdin' 'em, but the 506 wasn't doing any good. I don't know whether the Germans had better tanks or what the deal was, but anyway, the 506 was gettin' pushed back. When the 506 called for air support to bomb those German tanks, Air Support dropped the bomb on the wrong side of the road. They dropped it right on that house. T.W., the battalion commander and about 10 or 11 men was in there. They didn't know what hit 'em.

A captain come up to the front lines to tell me what happened. I grabbed that officer by the shirt, shook him back and forth, cussed him, did ever thing I could think of.

I told him, "You goddamn son of a bitch, you better not be lying to me," and he didn't do a thing in the world about it.

We fought one more day after that.

18th of January, 500 men representing the various units of the 101st stood or a ceremony. **Gen. Middleton, the Corps Commander**, presented Silver Star medals to Maj. John D. Hanlon of the 502nd, Lt. Frank R. Stanfield of the 506th, and Staff Sgt. Lawrence F. Casper and Pvt. William J. Wolfe of the 327th.

Then Gen. Middleton said, "From personal acquaintance with your gallant fight at Carentan, knowledge of your deeds in Holland, and now, here in Bastogne, I think you're the best bunch of fighting men in the United States or any other army in the world!" From *The Screaming Eagles*, p. 180

They called the whole battalion together and issued all of the metals and Purple Hearts at the same time. It was the medics that kept up with who got the metals because they would treat the wound and then send the soldiers back to the hospital. It was in their records who got shot and how. It was a dress ceremony. The Germans found out about it and they started throwin' artillery in there. And you talk about a scramble! They was a scramble of people gettin' out of there. It was the stupidest trick that I've ever known of a bunch of officers pullin'. Pullin' a whole battalion into one little place.

*At the end of February the 101st returned to Mourmelon-le-Grand for a complete rest. There, in a remarkable ceremony on March 15, Gen. Eisenhower awarded the 101st the Distinguished Unit Citation, the first time in the history of the United States Army that an entire division was so honored.*

*Said Gen. Eisenhower: It is a great personal honor for me to be here today to take part in a ceremony that is unique in American history. Never before has a full division been cited by the War Department in the name of the President for gallantry in action. This day marks the beginning of a new tradition in the American Army. With that tradition, therefore, will always be associated the name of the 101st Airborne Division and of Bastogne.*

*... it is entirely fitting and appropriate that you should be cited for that particular battle. It happened to be one of those occasions when the position itself was of the utmost importance to the Allied Forces. You, in reserve, were hurried forward and told to hold that position. All the elements of drama, of battle drama, were there. You were cut off, you were surrounded. Only valor, complete self-confidence in yourselves and in your leaders, a knowledge that you were well trained, only the determination to win, could sustain soldiers under those conditions. You were given a*

*In the battered town square of Bastogne on the*



*marvelous opportunity, and you met every test.*

*... it is my great privilege to say to you here today, to the 101st Division and all its attached units, "I am awfully proud of you."*

*... Good luck and God be with each of you.*

*From The Screaming Eagles p. 181-182*

### **Fall out on the side**

When we left Bastogne we went across the channel back to England on PT boats from Marsailles, France. Then they lined us up and called the names out that had enough points to go home and told us to fall out on the side. See, you got so many points for the amount of time you was in the service. A Purple Heart is so many points. A Bronze Star is so many points. And the time of service was so many points. We had to have, I believe it was 65, 75, or 85 points to come home. The rest of 'em they marched them off and started givin' them trainin' to go over and fight the Japs.

They trucked the ones that had enough points to go home down to a marshalling area there on the Riviera in France. We lived in pup tents until they got a boatload. Of course settin' there doin' nothing, we really got bored.

I had plenty of time to think.

T.W. got killed by an American bomb the day before we done our last fightin'. Ifhe could've lived through that day and the next day, he would've been able to come home with the rest of us. It was about two days before we started that last push when we had pup tents set up back in the pine trees. I remembered T.W. settin' in the front of that pup tent all day long. I fmnlly believe that he knew that he was fixin' to be killed.

### **French Hospitality**

We was right close to where Hitler's Eagles Nest was. We'd go out on a stroll and in that area they would be, you might say, a pasture. There'd be a tree here, and maybe fifty yards over there'd be another tree with good foliage on it where you could get in there and lay in the shade. I can't remember who it was that was out for a walk with me, but we run into a couple of girls out there layin' on a blanket in the shade of one of those trees. Of course we struck up a conversation like you're gonna do anyway. She invited me home to eat a meal with her family. So I would go and spend the night with her. Her dad the next morning would bring a stein of either beer or wine, set it on the table by the side of the bed and wake us up.

I would get fresh-ground coffee ... go to the mess hall

and talk 'em out of some coffee grounds and take 'em out and give 'em to the family and I mean they would have a fit over those coffee grounds. Boy, they enjoyed that somethin' fierce, because there wudn't anywhere that they could buy coffee or get their hands on coffee.

We was there, I guess, probably three weeks or a month before they got enough for a boatload. Just before they loaded us on the ship, they paid us off in full and issued us new uniforms. Of course we hadn't been paid since we jumped into Normandy. We had a pocketful of brand new ten-dollar bills. That's what the currency was.

### **Going Home**

They loaded us up and we sailed from Marsailles, France on September the 6th, two days after my 25th birthday. They brought us out by the Rock of Gibraltar at night. I wanted to go through there in the daytime and see what it looked like, but we went through at night.

On the boat coming home, they was, I mean, BIG card games and dice games all over the deck on that boat. See, we had oh, three, four, five months back pay comin'. They paid us off in brand new ten dollar bills. And the dice games! They'd have one guy that wouldn't do any shootin'. He'd just run the games, count the money, and first one thing then another. He had a footlocker with a blanket over it on the deck of the ship. They'd bump the dice against that footlocker.

At one time I saw one ole boy throw down ten dollars. He made a seven, left it lay, made 'n eleven, left it lay. He made either a seven or eleven five times. I believe it was five times. That would be 10, 20, 40, 80, 160 dollars. Then he threw a seven. He drew the money back and threwed a ten-dollar bill and he throwed a snake eyes. That was an acey deuce, or double ace. I don't remember which it was, but of course, he had to pass the dice to somebody else then. But he made that 160 dollar throw and then fell off.

He had enough of those new ten dollar bills, I don't know how much he won, but it was enough to where he throwed all of his clothes and ever'thing out of his duffel bag overboard. Then he had that duffel bag crammed plumb full of brand new ten-dollar bills. He hired three guys to guard him. Eight-hour shifts, 24 hours a day. He had enough money there to set him up for life.

And a couple or three days before we landed on this side, he got in another game and he lost ever damn cent of it. That was the sickest lookin' human bein'



you ever saw in your life.

It took us about eight days to come across the Atlantic. When we landed in Boston, Massachusetts, they took away the uniforms that they had just give us in France and issued us another new uniform.

They had a bunch of German prisoners taking care of the yards there around that barracks and everything. I recognized the German officer that was in charge of that group. I recognized him with that left ear bein' missin'. I don't know whether he recognized me or not.

We stayed there almost a week then they loaded me on a train. It was just a troop train goin' home for discharge. And I mean everything sidetracked for that train. They didn't let no moss grow under that train. It didn't stop for nothin' except when we'd pull into a station. They'd pull that engine off and put another one on that was already serviced and fueled up. While they was changin' engines, there'd be about four or five guys on each side of that train greasin' the hot boxes. About 15 minutes was the longest we ever stopped from there to San Antone, Texas. From the time we left Marsailles, France, we didn't let no grass grow under us.

I was discharged at San Antone on September 22, 1945.

### FIFTY YEARS LATER

We went to that little town, Chilton Foliat, and we walked out to the edge of town to see the camp. You might say it was just at the edge of that Chilton Foliat. They've completely done away with the camp. You couldn't even tell that they had ever been a camp there. It give me kind of a empty feelin'.

Actually the place they took us at Normandy, we wudn't there. We jumped oh, about six, eight miles inland. And they took us right down to the beach where the amphibians landed. That wudn't where we done our fightin'. After seeing that place I was sure glad we landed inland rather on that beach, because there was about 50 yards of sandy beach for them to cross then a sheer cliff about 35 or 40 feet to climb while German machine guns was shootin' at 'em. Also there was a bunch of bomb craters all around a German pillbox that our air force was tryin' to knock out. There were several bunkers in the area for the German soldiers to stay in.

When I went back over there to Bastogne on that fiftieth anniversary, the bus pulled up to a canyon or actually a little ravine and he said, this is where I company was. It wudn't the place because it wudn't near as deep and wudn't near as wide. They was no stone buildin', no stone house there. There was a

stone house when we were over there fightin'. And I know dem well they wudn't've tore that stone house down. Didn't any of the places look right. I saw a guy I fought with. He was from Florida.

*We saw dad's old Company Commander, Ivan **Herschner**, and Dad was beside himself to tell us what a great commander he was.*

*I think one of the things you should know about the D-Day trip was that it was real clear how much 1: ~~1~~. Norris had meant to Dad. One of the things we did was every military cemetary we went to, Dad wanted to find out if 1: ~~1~~. was buried there. Dad has never known where he ended up.*

Ken Presley .

Almost every little town we went through we would stop and the mayor would make a speech and praise us. The town's people would have erected a monument honorin' us. When we'd be on a bus goin' through a ~ttle town, ever'body would line up on both sides of the street. They waved just like they was really glad to see us.



Photo to the left: The P-38 pistol and dagger taken from a dead German Officer. W.G. Presley discovered these items while searching for leather to repair his watchband.

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*Walter G. Presley died November 6, 2002 in Odessa, Texas  
We are deeply grateful to the Presley family for allowing us*

*to share in these memories.*

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Betty Taylor Hill, 2222 Settlers Way, # 914, Sugar land, TX 77478 Phone: 281-277-3787, email: bjth23@yahoo.com



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This morning when the Lord opened a window to Heaven,  
He saw me, and asked: "My child, what is your greatest wish for today?" I responded:  
"Lord please, take care of the person who is reading this message, their family and their special friends.  
They deserve it and I love them very much."

=====

"A veteran - whether active duty, retired; national guard, or reserve - is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States Of America," for the amount of: "Up to and Including my life."  
That is HONOR, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it.

~Author Unknown~

.....

Remember: You don't stop laughing because you grow old, You grow old because you stop laughing.

