

Charles M. Hunter, Capt  
2nd Infantry Division

*It Was More Than "Spooking"*

This was October 1944. We were in the area of the 2nd Infantry Division, which was later replaced by the 106th Infantry Division. Realizing we were in for a winter campaign, we started winterizing. I put some men in pillboxes in the Maginot Line (the French defense line against the German Siegfried line in World War I), some in stone buildings like the command post, and some in wooden huts that the men had built.

During this time, we could hear, but not see, sounds of vehicles at our front...mostly at night, moving about. I reported this to my battalion headquarters back at Bastogne. I received back an intelligence memo saying that the Germans were playing recordings to "spook" us.

Suddenly, however, in the cold, snowy, early hours of December 16th, we received a heavy artillery barrage. I sent a patrol up the hill in Auw and they reported back that Germans in white camouflage uniforms were streaming up the hill and, just as suddenly, we received direct fire on my command post. I even had one mortar round hit in the machine gun pit, which guarded the command post. This stung my driver, Charlton, in the pit, but didn't hurt him.

Since either the artillery barrage or enemy patrols had cut my wires, I was no longer able to function as a sound and flash unit, so I requested to battalion headquarters to withdraw, which they granted. I was able to gather most of my men and equipment. However, I was unable to get about 30 forward observers back and they were ultimately captured and became POW 's, along with many of the 106th that were in the area.

Having been in position since October and knowing the roads, I was able to lead these men on a retreat to an open field in St. Vith, Belgium (about 30 miles), where we joined with Battery "B" in a "circle the wagons" defense. Fortunately, the Germans, on their way to Bastogne passed us by. We were then ordered to Houffalize, Belgium, and from there to Arlon, Belgium, to join Patton's 4th Armored Division for the push to Bastogne.

The push to Bastogne was a hard fought campaign in the snow and cold, often at night. Upon reaching Bastogne, I saw General Patton in all his sartorial splendor directing traffic at the crossroads. If you've even seen the movie "Patton," this is the scene that was shown. This movie was directed by Frank McCarthy, a friend of mine from VMI.

During this whole engagement, we had no one killed in action. One man, Remke was wounded and received the Purple Heart, 30 men were captured, made POW 's. I received the Bronze Star, and one "wire" man was captured and was declared missing in action. He was captured the first day of battle trying to repair the line that had been cut by the Germans.

After Bastogne, I was told to move all my men eastward back through Auw, where we saw a German soldier's grave near my machine gun pit. We went all the way to Saxony, Germany, and there we found out that the war had ended.

Source: The Bulge Bugle May 2007

<http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/stories26/us-army25/947-it-was-more-than-spooking.html>

*Henri ROGISTER, webmaster*