

Marty Troutman

106th Infantry Division

January 10, 2005 - **Local veteran recalls fear, luck of fight**

TREVORTON — Scared, lucky, grateful and proud are the words Marty Troutman uses to summarize his feelings about having served in the deadliest battle of World War II.

The fighting from a lifetime ago is fresh in Troutman's mind as the 60th anniversary of the historic Battle of the Bulge continues this month.

The 82-year-old lifelong Trevorton resident was among the thousands of American soldiers who fought in the heavily forested Ardennes region of eastern Belgium and northern Luxembourg during the great battle, which began Dec. 16, 1944, and ended more than a month later on Jan. 25, 1945.

In the 106th Infantry Division alone, which is where Troutman served, 641 men were killed in action, 1,200 were wounded and more than 7,000 were captured and taken prisoner.

Troutman wasn't exactly prepared for combat when he was transferred to the 106th, known as the "Golden Lion."

"I served as a chemical warfare instructor before serving in the infantry, and unlike other servicemen, I wasn't really trained to fight in any battles," he said. "I was a technician 5, but during my service in the Battle of the Bulge (also known as the Ardennes), Rhineland and Central Europe, I ended up serving as a company clerk and messenger."

The battle played a major role in the demise of the German offensive and ultimately helped bring an end to the war in Europe.

Among those captured in the battle from the 106th Infantry Division was Paul MacElwee of Shamokin, a former longtime editor at the Shamokin News-Dispatch and The News-Item, who died a few years ago. Also locally, Harry Haas, of Elysburg, fought in the Battle of the Bulge (he was featured in a Memorial Day story in The News-Item in 2004).

Avoided capture

Troutman was among the 1,000 soldiers in his 5,000-member regiment to escape capture by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge.

"We were very fortunate," he said. "Our unit served in St. Vith, Belgium, near the German border, and most of our guys ended up surrendering."

"Our division was practically wiped out by the Germans in three days," he said. Troutman said soldiers had to endure deep snow and temperatures that often hovered around zero during the battle. He said many men suffered frost bite. "It was the coldest winter in Belgium in 50 years and we were all scared that we were going to die or be captured," he said. "But about 1,000 of us who were stationed at

St. Vith for about two weeks were very lucky when an American half-track unit rescued us before retreating to Eupen, Belgium.”

After enduring the war’s most deadliest battle, Troutman and other members of his unit were transferred to a POW camp in Biebelsheim, Germany, where they were responsible for guarding thousands of German prisoners.

“I feel blessed and lucky that I survived the Battle of the Bulge and I’m very proud to have served my country during wartime,” Troutman said.

Staying in touch

Troutman, who has a vast collection of military memorabilia, including several books and magazines about the Battle of the Bulge, said he still stays in contact with several of his war comrades in other states. “I write letters and send them Christmas cards and I have attended a couple military reunions over the years,” he said.

Troutman, who resides with his wife, Dorothy, at 105 W. Shamokin St., believes Americans need to show more patriotism, not only toward current military personnel, but also for the thousands of men and women who previously served their country to protect the freedom Americans enjoy.

He encouraged people to read more about military history, particularly the Battle of the Bulge.

Prior to his combat duty, Troutman was known as “Marty the Gas Man” for providing chemical warfare instruction to troops in World War II. (His unique wartime occupation was featured in a May 2003 article in The News-Item.)

The personable U.S. Army veteran enlisted in the armed forces in December 1942 as a 20-year-old and was quickly transferred to serve as a chemical warfare instructor under Lt. Glenn C. Bell at Second Army Headquarters at Camp Crowder, Mo., which was a signal corps camp.

During his approximate two-year tenure as the only chemical warfare instructor in his division, Troutman trained an estimated 15,000 men.

One of the things that has kept him busy during the past decade is his mini “military museum” in his home that contains numerous wartime memorabilia including the Bronze Star, a ribbon with three Campaign Stars, a Combat Infantry Badge, Good Conduct Medal and Victory Medal he earned through his military service.

Troutman is a life member of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, both in Trevorton, the Battle of the Bulge Inc. and [106th Infantry Division Association](#). He also belongs to the Franklin Mint, American Historical Association, Zerbe Township Rod and Gun Club, Trevorton Fire Company and Trevorton Senior Citizens. (Mark Gilger, Staff Writer, Shamokin News Item - Shamokin,PA,USA)

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