

16A

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Battle

Continued from page 15A

nevertheless held fast until his commanders ordered withdrawal or until he was overwhelmed," MacDonald wrote.

"It's the book that saved my life," Kline said. "It shows that the Germans look three days to chew us up, and in those three days they lost their impetus. They used up a lot of gas and men."

■ He had left New York in the early morning of Oct. 17, 1944. Did not see *Star of Liberty*, he noted in his diary, which he had printed two years ago. The trip was peaceful. I ate mostly Spam sandwiches and Mallo Cups . . . could not stand the greasy English sausage and potatoes.

After training in England and France, his unit reached front-line positions in Belgium.

12/11/44 Every sound is amplified, every bush could be an enemy crawling towards you. Your eyes grow blurry from staring into the darkness. You are happy when the relief crew shows up. The next day, you take a good long look at the stump that moved during the night. You take note of all unusual objects, and then things start to settle down.

On Dec. 16, the Germans attacked just before dawn with half a million men and all the tanks, artillery and planes they could scrounge. Their goal was to retake the Belgian port of Antwerp with its supply depots, and in the process trap several U.S. and British armies. Hitler hoped to demoralize and perhaps divide the Allies, make the war seem too costly and maybe win a negotiated peace.

The 106th Infantry had been placed in what was thought to be a quiet sector, for more training. Allied strategists, preparing for an offensive elsewhere, figured there was little risk of German activity in the Ardennes.

12/19/44 During the day, Smitty, my gunner, was injured in the leg by an artillery shell. I was hit in the left boot on the same burst. . . . The first artillery barrage was unbelievable. . . . It seemed that every square yard of ground was being covered. I could hear men on the slopes below screaming for medics.

In three days of fighting, two of the 106th's three regiments were destroyed. The division lost 416 killed, 1,246 wounded and 7,001 missing—including Kline.

"Many of us didn't fire a shot at the Germans," he said. "I had my machine gun at the top of a hill, in the woods. We were pinned down. . . . I didn't really see a German until an American officer walked up with a German officer and said we had to give up. That probably was part of my shame: I personally didn't do a hell of a lot as a soldier in a battle.

"And then we had a lot of time to think. We didn't know what happened until later. We didn't know about any 'Battle of the Bulge.' All we knew was that we had been overrun."

The captured Americans were marched to camps deep inside Germany. Along the way, Kline scratched diary notes and favorite recipes on scraps of paper and on the backs of pictures of his mother and father.

12/25/44 On the march by 6:30, marched all day and night, no water



United Press International

At left, U.S. soldiers in the Belgian town of La Roche searched for mines after the Germans were driven out. Above, Belgians took GIs into their homes and treated them as members of the family. A GI, at right, taught a young girl English, using the "Yank," an army newspaper, as a textbook.

4/13/45 Liberation, 10 a.m., Friday the 13th. An American artillery captain just walked into the infirmary with a large box of cigarettes, chocolate and K-rations. He says he is happy to see us. If he only knew how happy we are to see him, I couldn't help it, I had to cry.

Later, in a U.S. field hospital, Kline saw himself in a mirror.

4/17/45 I am skin and bones, with bruises on my hips, and the skin is taut over my face.

On April 26, he was flown to Paris, where he was hospitalized for another week. He returned to the United States on May 5. After two more weeks in hospitals, he was allowed to go home to Indiana.

beets that were in the barnyard and one of the guards shot him. George and I volunteered to dig his grave.

1/10/45 My 20th birthday. I am spending it as the guest of the German government at Stalag 4-B. I had 1/6 loaf of bread, one tablespoon sugar, one slice of margarine and a pint of grass soup with five boiled potatoes. Not bad fare. We were finally registered as prisoners of war. I became German prisoner #315136.

Kline arrived at Stalag 8-A, near Gorlitz, Germany, on Jan. 13, 1945. He suffered from diarrhea, and his gums bled. After a month, the Germans marched their prisoners 415 miles to the west, to stay ahead of the advancing Soviet armies.

2/14/45 Valentine's Day. Evacuating Stalag 8-A on foot. We do not know where we are going. The guards are silent. We know that they want to get away from the Russians. The guards are older men. They wear long grey winter coats and have the little red triangular patch on the lapel that shows they have had service on the Russian front.

3/2/45 We are all so skinny, our clothes hanging like rags. My hips have bruises on them because I have no meat on my feet. Several have dropped out from exhaustion. I don't know what happens if you do.

Each day the sky is filled with vapor trails from the bombers. They are flying at very high altitudes and must be B-17s. Somewhere the Germans are getting a shelling. That is the only good sign we have right now.

3/9/45 Walked 17 miles today. . . . All we talk about and think about is food. I have written menus for just about everything there is. We will be talking and someone will start telling us about their favorite recipe, like beating turkey with cola or making peanut butter fudge.

3/14/45 One of our boys was killed last night. He tried to get some sugar

"When I came back, I had to put my nose to the grindstone and get to work," he said. "I had a family. That probably helped me."

But he couldn't shake the bad memories, the nagging guilt. "Watching the former prisoners returning from Vietnam, even those people breaking through the wall now in Germany, it affects me," he said. "There are times when I drive down a road and into a forest of green pine trees and it reminds me of the Ardennes. This time of year, when it snows . . ."

He heard about the 106th veterans' association and attended a reunion. He found people from his company and they talked about the fighting, the prison camps, the guilt. Somebody recommended the MacDonald book, and Kline read it.

When the association's magazine needed an editor, he volunteered. Now he encourages veterans of the 106th to share their stories in the quarterly, which he publishes out of his basement. "I relive the war just about every day, as the mail comes in," he said.

He hopes the Oregon veteran reads "A Time for Trumpets," then comes to the next reunion. If he does, "he will wonder what's been worrying about all his life."

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