

'Quiet front'

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ed on the first day of the battle at Winterspelt, as soldiers raced to dig fox-holes to protect themselves from the shells Hitler's army was lobbing at them.

The first bullet struck Hayden's ammunition clip and was stopped. He's kept that clip; the bullet is since lost. A second bullet grazed his hip bone.

After a brief recovery, Hayden was sent back into the field, only to be wounded a second time on Feb. 4, 1945. In that instance, he was among a group of engineers clearing a mine field in the Ardennes Forest.

A mine exploded and shrapnel struck him in the back. He was saved because a rifle strapped across his back took most of the impact.

"I could have been carrying a carbine or a .45" caliber pistol, he said. "If I hadn't had that rifle, I probably wouldn't be here."

After a three-week recovery in a hospital in Liege, Hayden went back to the front for a third time, crossed the Rhine in March and stayed in the field until the European war ended in early May.

"In just a few months guys went through a lot. We went from kids to men," Hayden said.

Hayden said the 106th was the last division in the U.S. Army to be trained as a complete division. The men trained, ate, slept and played together as a unit, to prepare them to fight as a unit.

"We never had an opportunity to show and prove our capability, the training we had. We were outnumbered 20 to 1 and we still came back and won the war," Hayden said.

Hayden was awarded the Purple Heart with cluster, signifying his two wounds.

"I don't think any of us are looking for any credit. I give credit to the GIs who lost their lives over there. You wonder over 50 years, if they had come back, what their lives would be like."

Herman van de Bogart of Three Points was in the 424th Regiment's A Company and served as a driver. He was 22 years old.

As the battle raged, van de Bogart said he somehow got hold of a jeep and "hauled ammunition until we were overrun. We went down the line for ammunition and resupply. I scrounged up every bit I could find" for the rifle company's machine guns and rifles.

Van de Bogart said he cannot pinpoint his exact location during the battle, but, "We were surrounded. To this day, I don't know how we got through their lines. We were helped by the Belgian people."

Although he was sent back to Paris on Feb. 5 for new clothing and supplies, van de Bogart said within a couple of weeks, he was back on the front lines to work with other units.

The soldiers' philosophy was, "If they didn't kill you today, they'll get you tomorrow." Eventually, the 106th Division was put in charge of guarding German prisoners, he said.

Henry Garcia, a native of Tucson, was already in Germany, 16 miles east



Henry V. Hayden at the end of the war, above, and today, below. At left is Hayden's ammo clip that deflected a German bullet. Later, a mine exploded and shrapnel struck the young staff sergeant in the back. He was saved because a rifle strapped across his back took most of the impact.

Photos at left and below
By Bruce McClelland
The Arizona Daily Star



of Aachen on the west bank of the Roer River, when the Battle of the Bulge began.

Garcia was a private first class with the 104th Division.

"Our outfit was projected further east than any other outfit in the western front. We were getting ready to cross the Roer when the Germans hit to the south of us at the 106th Division, a quiet sector," Garcia said.

"Strong German patrols came into our lines nearly every night. Paratroops dropped and we captured 26," he said.

"Hitler promised the German people he would capture Aachen by Christmas. To do that, he would have had to come through the 104th Division. He never

kept his promise," said Garcia, who was a 22-year-old field artilleryman during the battle.

"The Nazis never succeeded in breaking our lines. We held the right flank all through the Bulge," he said. "Our artillery was considered the best in the European theater of operations."

As the battle was waged on the ground, Phil Guba was in the air, an intelligence officer with the 422nd Night Fighter Squadron.

"We alone provided night cover for the First and Third Armies - (Gen. Omar) Bradley and (Gen. George S.) Patton - flying the Black Widow," the P-61, the Tucson man said.

"The night the Bulge started we were covering the Bastogne sector, and as the action started, we knew something was

up" because the unit shot down six German planes, "something unheard of for any U.S. night fighters in those days."

"We were scared," Guba recalls 50 years later. The 422nd squadron was based at an airfield in Florennes.

"After the first night, the weather was socked in and we didn't fly. The first clear day, Christmas Eve, I'll never forget.

"I was going from our little outfit to the control tower. I got a red light from the tower so I stopped. About 50 feet off the deck, a JU-88, a German night fighter and bomber, buzzed the runway," he said. That airfield had been used by the Germans before they were driven out by Allied forces.

"It was a clear, bright, moonlit night. I could see the pilot in the cockpit. I could see his insignia. I was shaking a little bit," he said.

"That pilot knew the airfield and saw the landing light on. Our radar people and the people in the tower thought it was one of our guys coming in. He did that and got the hell out of there."



Van de Bogart



Guba

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