

## BASTOGNE IN 1944

by

Everett L. Morgan

The 609 Tank Destroyer Battalion (TDBn) arrived in Bastogne from Thionville, France on the Mosselle River, on Dec. 19, 1944.

After staying there for a night or two, the 3rd Platoon C Company was asked to go to Neuville, Belgium, which was about eight miles northwest of Bastogne. There was also a small town called Foye about one mile south of Neuville.

This group included about two-thirds of 3rd Platoon C Company 609 TDBn. Lt. Heggens was platoon leader and Robert T. Mays was staff sergeant or platoon sergeant.

One gun crew had Sgt. Beaster as tank commander, Corporal Colby Ricker as gunner. Elvie McManus was loader and John Penziwater was assistant driver to driver David Wilson, who was hit the night before at Neuville. Another TD had George Fuchs, driver; Slick Donahue as gunner; Frank Adkins as the loader. This was the one taken over by David Duncan as commander the next day, at Neuville.

The security section had Sgt. Horton, who got hit that night, as leader, Everett Morgan, Paul Chesnee, James Blessington, Joe Bernard, Kenneth DeHayes, Albert Aiello, with Oliver Dew as driver. This group was transported in an M-10 armored car personnel carrier. ← 11/27

David Duncan was a member the first day but next day took over the TD that had had Donahue as gunner, with Morgan taking command of the security section.

Another tank included Sgt. Pilon as commander and his crew: gunner Justin Double, loader Calvert, driver Bob Kurz, and assistant driver Hughes.

I was a PFC at that time in the security section, or a rifleman.

It was there at Neuville that Sgt. Horton was hit by shrapnel and taken to the aid station. Also PFC Paul Chesnee, assistant driver, and Dave Wilson, driver for one of the destroyers. We had artillery barrage all night there and got through the artillery barrage without any more casualties.

The weather was rainy and foggy all this time. We got very little rest that night and awoke the next morning to a large barrage of artillery fire.

The second day was as foggy and bad as the first except you could see a little farther.

We looked northwest of Neuville on a road and there was a long column of every type of armored equipment you could think of.

Sgt. Beaster, with Corporal Ricker as gunner and Elvie McManus as loader, shot six of these tank when they got hit directly above the driver John Penziwater's head. This set the ammunition on fire and a terrific explosion followed. Penziwater never knew what hit him and burned up in the destroyer. Beaster, Ricker, and McManus were blown out on the ground and we took them down to the aid station, about 100 yards. They recovered in hospitals later.

It was about that time the enemy sent over a group of Screaming Meemies which scared you to death. It was more psychological than anything.

I looked up through a hole in the fog and clouds and heard planes, and saw 21 German planes trying to come down to strafe us but the fog closed up again.

We received orders to return to Bastogne, to the southeast, through Foye but were being shelled on the road so had to go out in the fields.

Our M-10 armored car got stuck and was pulled out by Duncan's TD with George Fuchs as driver.

We were glad to get back into Bastogne again but had lots of artillery fire there.

A few days later Staff Sgt. Robert T. Mays, who was platoon sgt. when we went into Bastogne, along with TD commander John C. Pilon with one TD and Sgt. David Duncan and crew went out south of Bastogne to try and get through the encirclement blockade of Bastogne. Pilon's destroyer was hit, burned up, and lost the driver Bob Kurz and assistant driver Hughes were killed.

Duncan's driver George Fuchs got their destroyer turned around and brought the rest of them back to town.

While in Bastogne, 15 or 20 of us stayed in a large building with a dentist and his wife, both about 78 years old. They had two daughters, one 17, and the other was married to an army officer in the Belgian army. They also had a two-year-old girl who had lost her parents in the war.

On Christmas Eve, the two girls were going to make us a Christmas cake. We had all moved to the basement.

The only sugar they had was sugar in cubes which we were told to crush. We were working on a large table downstairs and were just about finished crushing the cubes when a bomb from a plane hit the hospital that was next door and set it afire, mixing plaster from the ceiling with our crushed sugar, so that fixed our cake.

We were lucky that we were in the basement, as the bomb blew out all the windows in the house above us, leaving just a shell. One shell did come in the window but didn't explode.

When the bomb hit the hospital, a Belgian civilian nurse, Renée LeMaire, was killed and burned up in that, with her patients. I had helped her set up the hospital just four or five days before, helping her carry supplies.

Later, while we were surrounded, the Air Force parachuted supplies to us with different colored chutes according to supplies, food, ammunition, etc., Two or three days later all the ladies and girls in Bastogne appeared with newly made blouses of blue, red, white, etc.

We were there in Bastogne for several more days and then were sent out to LongChamps and Monteville about seven miles to the northwest on another road to help the armored infantry several times. They were mostly holding the area which was west and southwest of Neuville as the Germans were trying to retake it.

We went back to Bastogne after a few days duty and my section and another section were sent by Lt. Heggens east of Bastogne to help guard the road into town.

After a few more days we could see the flashes of artillery at night and Patton and the 10th Armored were coming to rescue

It was here a few days before Christmas that Gen. McAuliffe told the Germans "Nuts" when they asked him to surrender.

After the road was opened south out of town, the Germans tried to get back, but lots of them were captured and turned themselves in.

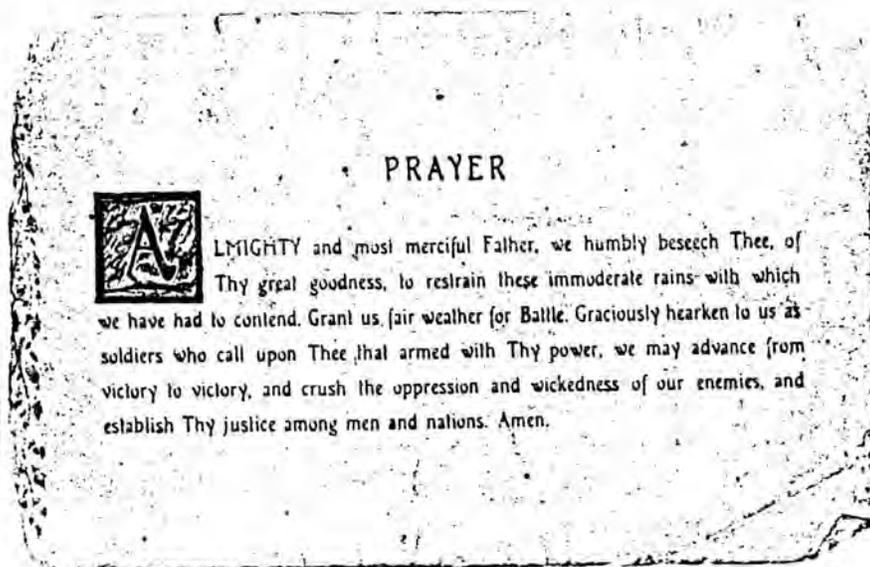
We spearheaded a force out through Monetteville and LongChamps past Cobru and chased them west of Neuville where we left the column, going back to Bastogne through Neuville, Foye, then Bastogne.

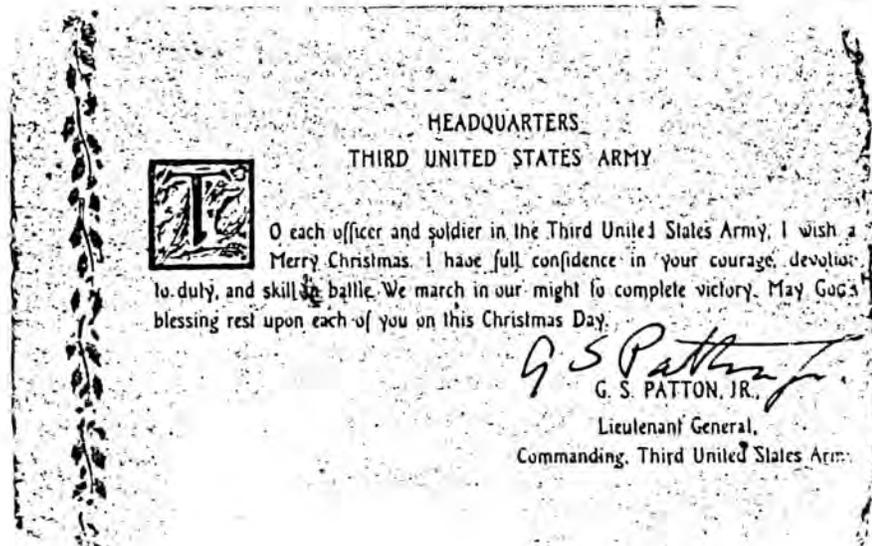
This is to the best of my knowledge what happened at Bastogne. Perhaps it is too much but I can think of a lot more that happened.

This small piece of paper with a prayer for clearing weather and lifting of the fog was given to us by Headquarters while we were in Bastogne.

The weather did clear and the fog leave so the U.S. planes could drive the enemy planes from the sky.

This made a believer out of me.





The Air Force was able to bring in ammo, food, supplies by parachute and gliders. Although I did see some C-47's shot down or hit in one motor but it dropped off and it left on one engine. Another crashed in as the pilot was hit. It exploded into a big black fire of fuel.

Everett L. Morgan  
Everett L. Morgan  
April 16, 1985  
(Date)

rmb