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~~Way~~ Capt'n and Commanded
~~the~~ B Company (Machine Gun)
in 1st Bn 110th Reg. 30th Div. 1st A.
(at Stoumout Station with Somen.

1/119



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I was an Officer in Co.D-119th Inf.Regiment-30th Inf.Division in World War 2. You have asked me to write of my events that took place from Dec.17th-thru Dec.25th,1945-

We were at that time in a rest area north of Aachen getting ready to train for crossing of the Roer river in boats. On Dec.17th, we were alerted to move out and without knowing where we were going, we were mechanized and going south-at night we stopped near Hauset, ~~9900~~ Belgium. The next morning we took off again and with heavy overcast skies we still did not know our destination. There was lot of Luftwaffe airplanes in the air, but with heavy fog, they could be seen for just a moment before disappearing again. Some of our jeeps had radios mounted and this was the first that I heard as I was travelling in a jeep from our friend-Axis Sally that the "fanatical 30th Division, Roosevelt's SS troops was going to rescue the 1st Army. Spa was headquarters for the 1st Army and 2 big Supply Depots were in this area containing gas and allied products. If captured by the Germans, it was enough supplies to take them to Antwerp. We detrucked and started on foot and stopped a mile to the rear of Stoumont where we dug in. This line was along a road from the south that crossed the Ambleve river to join the Romou Champs- Stoumont-Stavelot Highway-Daybreak of Dec.19th found us dug in in various little nodes of groups of soldiers with no boundaries-only handfuls of blocking mission. Very heavy fog continued and the previous night, the Luftwaffe was dropping supplies in our midst thinking it was German held ground. This day we received tank support from a new outfit from the U.S. but with tanks that were back for repairs that had no sights and we set them up on roadblocks, one of which was the curve in the road where we had dug in along the railroad tracks. I was given a mission about 11:00 Am. that day to go on a reconnaissance ahead toward La Gleize-to find our line of the 3rd Battalion of the 119th-I ran into a group of G.I.'s pulling back and talked to an Officer whom I knew real well and all I found out was utter confusion. Later found out that over 100 G.I.'s were then captured that day from the 3rd Battalion and I came back and reported this back to my Battalion Commander. Our decision then was to stay on our dug in positions and wait for the Germans to attack us. Around 3:00 P.M. on the 19th of Dec. we could hear German tanks ahead of us coming down the road towards our position. As I said previously, we were dug in on the curve in the road with our tank supports and waited. When the Panther Tanks came around the curve in sight of us-our tanks cut loose at them and without any sights on the tanks, their aim was off in that the shells hit the cobblestone road and ricocheted up under the belly of the tanks where their armor was thin and exploded the tanks-These young inexperienced tankers of ours fired 4 shells and knocked out 3 Panther tanks and this later on proved to be the furthest advance that the Germans made in the Battle of the Bulge. I had a chance to visit this spot 3 yrs ago and was shown the marker that is along this road. I was also given actual photos made at that time of this curve in the road, which I have seen in my mind for 28 years-It was unbelievable-I then took my own photos to compare and now see the tall Pine trees that have grown up against the small treelings that were there in 1944. In checking over a dead German soldier we found out that we were up against the elements of the 1st SS Panzer Division-Leibstandarte Adolph Hitler. We found diaries on soldiers and it was clear their target was Leige, center of the vast supply area serving our 1st and 9th U.S. Armies. One diary showed this young German soldier that they were going to spend NEW YEAR'S EVE in Paris! they had been really given propaganda in the buildup. The morning of Dec.20th found us counterattacking against the tip of the enemy who was called

up in Stoumont. We inched forward all day long and at dusk, part of our unit had control of the sanatorium on the high ground. This high ground to the west of Stoumont was vital to our attack and so we dug in. In our visit back in 1972—we were shown fox holes still there from 1944 and my wife had never seen one—it was amazing to know that remains were still there. During the night, the Germans counterattacked screaming "Heil Hitler" and did recapture part of the Sanatorium in hand to hand combat. On the morning of the 21st, we had lost 4 Officers and about half of the men in our rifle companies. It looked like all we could do was to try and hold our position. Our 2nd Battalion Commander was captured in trying to get around to the rear of the Germans in Stoumont. He later escaped and brought information that the German Commander was going to withdraw the bulk of his troops to Le Gleize, because of this threat of the 2nd Battalion to his rear. Knowing this, orders came down to continue our attack even with our depleted forces and pressure then was put on from the West where we were and also from the north where other elements of our division were. We brought 155 MM howitzers to the high ground and fired 95 lb. shells directly into Stoumont. On Dec. 22nd with the pressure from the West and North, Stoumont fell to us. A hospital in town found many of our wounded and captured G.I.s as well as German soldiers.

On Dec. 23rd we moved towards Le Gleize and we had by this time received heavy artillery support from our rear and we pounded Le Gleize all day long and into the night. We were also told that the Germans were running out of ammunition and fuel for their vehicles and tanks. On the morning of Dec. 24th, at around 6:00 Am. we then noticed the German equipment being blown up and set on fire, and within 30 seconds a sea of fire shown all around. We again pushed into Le Gleize and got resistance from the church area, and later found a fanatic band of SS troops were holding up and giving us trouble. We directed fire unto the church and knocked them out but virtually destroyed the church. All during the war, we showed respect as much as we could to churches, but found many times, the Germans would use the steeples for directing artillery fire on us and we had no other choice but to destroy this vantage point they had. We captured over 100 German SS troops and released 170 of our own American G.I.s who had been captured earlier as stated, plus many wounded soldiers that we found in the church. But also with the sadness that thru the heavy artillery fire on Le Gleize, we killed many of our own G.I.s who were prisoners at that time. I found in the church a good fellow Officer friend of mine whom I trained with back in U.S. for many months and came over to the War together and he was sent to a different company than I was. Our Battalion Commander in looking over the German soldiers saw many of them wearing brand new G.I. boots and wool trousers and here our own soldiers had on boots that the soles were wore thru and worn out wool trousers. He marched the German soldiers into the town square and made them in the snow and bitter cold take off their trousers and boots. We then handed them back to our own G.I.s who needed them. I can still see the young arrogant German SS troops cry like babies over this as they stood barefoot in the snow and some without trousers on. Fighting was still going on along the northeast bank of the river near Trois Fonts, but it was over in the afternoon. The next day—Dec. 25th—Xmas day found the first sight of the sun on a real cold, but still day. We witnessed a big air battle over our heads as this was the first day of good weather for our big bombers to fly and they were escorted by fighter planes and the German fighter planes met them right over us. We saw some spectacular "dog fights" in the air and one German plane came down not too far out of Le Gleize and the pilot parachuted down in our lines.

This ended the ill-fated blitz of the 1st SS Panzer Division. By the time the Leibstandarte Adolph Hitler withdrew, it had lost two-thirds of its equipment and half of its fighting men with at least 2500 combat troops dead.

My fate from then on was to go back up north to continue with our mission to cross the Roer and Rhine rivers by boat and work our way to the City of Magdeburg on the Elbe river where we waited for 14 days to meet the Russians. We could have gone right into Berlin as we had no opposition and what was left of the German army was used against the Russians. But thru our weak diplomacy of the "Yalta" conference—our sick leader at that time—FDR—had given in to Stalin for taking Berlin and this was a big mistake as it has shown later. I hope this info' will be helpful to you in what you can use.