

# Weird and wonderful tales

By Sgt. Maj. Walter S. Zapotoczny Jr.

From the accounts of 2nd Lt. Roy E. Lambert, historical officer, Company G, 1st Battalion, 110th Regiment, 28th Infantry Division – dated May 27, 1945.

Grandchildren of the Company G dogfaces will be treated to many weird and wonderful tales of World War II. In addition to the inside dope on how grandpop really turned the tide of battle with a strategic bazooka round, they will be gripped by the tales of narrow escapes and close calls. The stories will engender gasps of sheer astonishment ... no doubt justified in many cases.

Staff Sgt. Nelson Lee, of Danforth, Maine, for instance, can thrill his offspring with a tale of the time he, Sgt. Clifford J. Neylon, Staff Sgt. Dick Campbell, of Butler, Pa., and Sgt. Marvin Conway, of Shurz, Nev., were engaged in opening a C-ration box when a German mortar round plunked squarely into the middle of the case. Purple Hearts were in order all the way around, but none of the prospective poppas was seriously injured.



From the "Battle of the Bulge: Onslaught in the Ardennes." World War II Diorama at Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Madison, Featuring the 110th Infantry.

Tech Sgt. Bernard Treadwell is another of the group who figures to elicit close attention from his next-generation audience. He was cooking a meal for the company on July 31, 1944, when he discovered that the day's ration did not include the necessary condiments. He walked across the area separating his unit from H Company and

borrowed some salt. Upon returning, he had some difficulty reorganizing the kitchen. It had been blown out by a round of high explosive artillery fire.

Tech. Sergeant Robert M. Stump, of Bonneville, Ore., can stir up a few youthful listeners with his yarns, too. Included in the repertory is an occasion upon which the fate of a nation hung on a strand of telephone wire. Sgt. Stump had been checking communication after the outfit had dug into position, and he reported to the platoon leader, Lt. Nation, that everything was in working order. Lt. Nation started for the C.P. to inform the company commander of that fact, but stopped to examine a frayed telephone wire. A second later an artillery shell whizzed by the spot where the lieutenant would otherwise have been, and exploded harmlessly a short distance away.

Perhaps the most vehement "Ohs" and "Ahs" will stem from the children of Tech. Sgt. Frank Wooster, of Hamden, Conn., and Pfc. Ernest Allen, from Lumberton, Miss. Both men were riding on a tank when a Nazi 88mm shell exploded, catapulting both into the air. Allen landed 15 or 20 feet from the armored vehicle, but both were able to

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stand up, dust themselves off and proceed with their mission, muttering imprecations upon the inconsiderate “Boche.”

Yes, future descendants of Company G members will get the benefit of many strange and varied experiences. They will hear about Capt. Wiley, the company commander who was so universally admired that the men talk about him to this day with reverence in their voice. They will hear about “Dusty,” the private first class who took over the company after all the officers had been killed or wounded, and who later became one of the most beloved of all first sergeants. They will be entertained by tales of men like Pfc. Garland Austin who, spying two Tiger Royal tanks on the road near the company, slung his M-1 rifle over his shoulder and yelled to his buddy, “Come on, let’s see if they’ll surrender.”

Or, the time Pfc. Addison Looney, from Jackson, Tenn., tossed a dummy potato masher grenade into the C.P. during a solemn officer’s meeting. “Things got lively in a hurry,” said Looney. “There was a moment of utter silence, during which everyone stared at the grenade – then everything happened at once. I never saw so much brass moving in so many directions so fast. All you could see was feet.” (Incidentally, the reason Looney isn’t wearing blue denims marked “P” today is that the company commander, Capt. Kitchen, was in on the deal, which the good private first class had occasion to appreciate a few moments later.) “Those lieutenants were as mad as hornets,” he recalled.

They will hear too of the French donkey, which, objecting to his daily task of carrying rations up the steep Vosges Mountains regularly, fell off the mountain at a certain spot and rolled a hundred yards down into the valley where he lay in the soft snow playing dead until the ration detail pulled out and left him. After the coast was clear, he would trot rapidly back to the stable for a mouthful of hay and a warm nap, doubtless reflecting disdainfully upon the gullibility of the human race.

All the same, whatever the tale and whatever the occasion, the kids can be



Wearry Infantrymen rest in Bastogne on the third day of the Battle of the Bulge. The men were assigned to the 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. DoD Pentagram – Dec. 16, 1994.

rightfully proud of the men at whose knee they will hear it. He will be the real Soldier from a fighting outfit – Company George of the 110th.

Certainly, these and many other stories were told. We can be just as certain that the stories of the Pennsylvania Soldiers and Airmen who were in far-away places like Bosnia, Afghanistan, Germany, Kosovo, Egypt, Iraqi and elsewhere will be told to their grandchildren too. Telling wild and wonderful stories of their deployments is what veterans do. It is a Pennsylvania and an American tradition. ♦

Note: Company G, 1st Battalion, 110th Regiment was first organized as such on April 1, 1921. It was reorganized Company C, 1st Reconnaissance, 103rd Armor on June 1, 1959. The company was converted, reorganized and re-designated Company C, 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry on April 1, 1975.

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## The Army **NEEDS** your stories

By Walter S. Zapotoczny Jr.

Many Soldiers and Airmen have their own wild and wonderful stories from their deployments. Often, those stories are never told. Since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks the operational tempo and deployments has increased to a level not seen in Pennsylvania since World War II. This, coupled with the loss of the military history detachments, has caused a huge loss of historical information throughout the Pennsylvania National Guard.



Your story or pictures may seem insignificant but may have significant value to the historian writing your unit’s contribution to the operation. The stories illustrated in the article are examples of tales that enrich and add dimension to the unit’s facts and statistics.

The Army and the National Guard are interested in hearing your stories, seeing your pictures and journals, and making them part of the historical record.

Please contact Sgt. Maj. Zapotoczny at commercial (717) 787-0895, cell (717) 821-3304 or e-mail [walter.zapotoczny@pa.ngb.army.mil](mailto:walter.zapotoczny@pa.ngb.army.mil). He will arrange to collect all materials. ♦

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