

Battle Of The Bulge Remembered

PARATROOPER WOUNDED TWICE IN 3 MONTHS

By Daun Eierdam
THE MORNING NEWS - DEERDAM@NWAONLINE.NET

BELLA VISTA — British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the Battle of the Bulge the greatest American battle of World War II.

But to paratrooper Mo Kunkel of Hamilton County, Texas, it was one of the coldest, most exhausting times of his life.

Kunkel, who now lives in Bella Vista with his wife, Jo, agreed to share his story to honor Veterans Day, which was Sunday. Many businesses and government offices are marking the occasion today.

Kunkel already had fought against the Germans in North Africa and had survived having his A-20 bomber shot down.

But, in 1944, Kunkel and his unit, the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, were sent to join the invasion of France. In December of that year after already having fought 90 days in the Alps, the 517th took part in what became known as the Battle of the Bulge.

The 517th was taken to the front by truck convoy, a journey of a day and a night during which the paratroopers found it impossible to sleep.

"I really don't think any of us had any sleep" throughout the entire battle, Kunkel said. "We'd take a little nap here, a little nap there. We were just living off adrenaline."

The 517th arrived at the front at night and immediately joined the battle, Kunkel said. The paratroopers could not see the crack German troops that surrounded them, but they could hear their tanks.

"When we got to the front lines, the tanks were all around us," Kunkel said. "We took any cover we could find." If he and his buddies hadn't been so tired by that time, they might have been more scared, Kunkel said.

The Germans weren't the only enemy in the field, however. Kunkel and his fellow GIs also had to fight the weather.

"It was extremely cold," Kunkel recalled. "I had never been in anything like that before."

As if weariness and weather weren't enough, there was no food. The 517th brought no rations with them. Kunkel said it was February — after the Allies won the battle — before he got his next decent meal.

The 517th took a lot during the Battle of the Bulge. At one point, it was ordered to Malmedy, Belgium. The German troops had surrounded the town. Kunkel said that, on the way to the already-destroyed town, the 517th was directed along the road by Germans dressed in the uniforms of cap-



Mo Kunkel, right, and his wife, Jo Kunkel, sit in their Bella Vista home Friday reflecting on his service during World War II.

tured American military police. The American soldiers didn't have a clue as to the real identities of the MPs, who spoke perfect English, Kunkel recalled.

The Malmedy Massacre, in which captured American soldiers were slaughtered by machine-gun fire, already had occurred. On the way into the town, the soldiers of the 517th saw the bodies of dozens of soldiers — both Allied and German.

The MPs directed the 517th into an open, snow-covered field, then opened up on them with mortar fire. Kunkel and his unit retreated.

"I don't think we ever figured it out," Kunkel said of the Germans' deception.

Kunkel was wounded twice during the three-month-long battle. The first time, Kunkel was wounded by an artillery shell that hit a wooden door as he opened it. The young soldier suffered a concussion of the lungs and shrapnel to the hand.

The second time, Kunkel had been fighting along the Rhine River when his lung was ruptured by

another artillery shell. Kunkel had run from cover to drag back a recruit who had been trying to catch a chicken.

Kunkel took cover behind a railroad track while German 88s sailed just over his head and exploded behind him.

"They lifted me off the ground every time they would hit," he recalled.

Kunkel was awarded the Purple Heart that time.

He was in a mobile hospital for two weeks, then sent back into the field as a "runner," carrying messages between headquarters and field units. He was even more exposed in this job, he said.

From the Battle of the Bulge, Kunkel and his unit were sent to fight in the Battle of the Rhine, in Bergstein, Germany. Each time a patrol would go out, the Germans would push them back with machine gun, mortar and rocket fire. A sniper killed a soldier standing right next to him, Kunkel recalled.

When his unit finally was relieved, it was ordered to France, where Kunkel spent the rest of the war — until Japan surrendered —

in a hospital because of the lung concussion. He was "129 pounds of skin and bones" when he was discharged and sent back to Texas.

World War II was a different situation for the United States, the veteran said. Back then, the whole country came together for a single cause.

Things changed after the war, but Kunkel says the pendulum is swinging back now. Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, he sees a more patriotic trend.

Kunkel and his fellow veterans of VFW Post 9063 are getting calls to speak to schoolchildren and hang flags in the schools at a pace they haven't seen in years.

The post honor guard, of which he is a member, just doesn't have the people and the time to accommodate all the calls it has been getting.

"I think it's very hopeful," the veteran said of the new patriotism. "How long it will last, I can't tell you."

CO Can Be Invisible Killer

FIRE DEPARTMENT BUYS MONITOR TO DETERMINE DEADLY GAS LEVELS

By Julie Allison
THE MORNING NEWS - JALLISON@NWAONLINE.NET

ROGERS — It's not always what you see that can hurt you. Sometimes, it's what you can't see.

The colorless, odorless, tasteless and deadly gas — carbon monoxide — can creep into a winter-proof house and cause illness or even death.

The Rogers Fire Department recently purchased a new carbon-monoxide monitor that determines the exact level of carbon monoxide, or CO, in the air. Firefighters will come to a home or business to check for CO, officials said.

Firefighter Mike Braswell demonstrated how the hand-held monitor works.

First, the probe is checked outdoors, where no CO is present, to make sure it registers at zero.

Then the probe — like a wand — samples the air to be tested. It only takes about 30 seconds for the probe to determine the CO level, Braswell said. A zero level means there is no CO in the air.

A Rogers family experienced CO poisoning last January during an ice storm.

Fortunately, family members

called the fire department and were told to leave the house immediately. The family of three spent the day breathing oxygen in the emergency room. After the incident, they quickly bought a CO detector.

Deputy Fire Chief Wayne Brashear said that one of the prime symptoms of CO poisoning is when everyone in one place — at home or at work — experiences headaches and fatigue.

Because CO gas is lighter than air, it can spread through a house quickly and invisibly.

People inhale carbon monoxide, which attaches to the hemoglobin in the blood, replacing the vital oxygen.

As one breathes more carbon monoxide instead of oxygen, the symptoms of oxygen-deficit will be felt — fatigue, headaches, nausea, dizziness and diarrhea, according to the Arkansas Department of Health. The symptoms are often mistaken for influenza.

Long-term exposure to CO can lead to neurological disorders, memory loss, personality changes and even brain damage.

In addition to a smoke detector, every residence should have a carbon-monoxide detector, fire department officials said.

Consider this a personal invitation!

The Chateau of Rogers is a beautiful, serene Independent living facility located at 1151 West New Hope Road in Rogers. It is hard to resist its private rooms that include a full bath and kitchenette that open up to patios through French style doors. Each room is unfurnished so that each individual can personalize it to fit their taste.

The Chateau's layout begins with wonderful carpeting for comfort and that "at home" feel accented with deep rich wood throughout. With its attractive central gathering/living area, residents can sit in front of the fireplace and read, participate in any one of the preferred recreational activities, or converse with friends or family. Safety and security is a commitment, so up to date fire and evacuation systems are in place. Emergency call lights in each room give residents peace of mind in the event they need staff assistance. The Chateau of Rogers includes meals, laundry, and housekeeping services to its list of amenities.

If life changes affect total independence, please remember that The Chateau provides each person the minimal assistance needed to maximize their individual potential for an independent and pleasurable lifestyle.

Contact Lisa Jennings at 501-636-6285 or Darryl Thomas at 501-636-6290

The Chateau of Rogers - we care for and about the whole person.

IN CONCERT

Tim & Mary Alice Lovelace

Friday Night November 16th 7 p.m.

Crossroads recording Artist's, Tim and Mary Alice Lovelace, have traveled in gospel music for several years. Tim with the Florida Boys, Kingsmen, and Jake Hess; Mary Alice as a soloist and then for many years with the Royalaires.

Tim has been nominated for instrumentalist of the year several years in a row, and in 1999, he was inducted into the Gospel Music association Hall of Fame.

The Lovelaces believe strongly that the joy of the Lord is their strength, and the focal point of their ministry is Jesus Christ and His Kingdom message.

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