

Feb. 14, 2002
Merrick Place

Dear Chad:

We enjoyed your call and the report on your deciphering. Glad your grades were good.

It was glad to get your reaction to the book by Ronald Bungitt. It was the most realistic account of combat in WWII that I have read. He was in the 2nd Squad of A Company, 506th Parachute Infantry of 101st Airborne Division (Hawkeye Eagles). His entry into battle was the night of 5-6 June 1944 when he paratrooped into Normandy.

My entry into battle was about a week later when we relieved a sister regiment at Singy back of Omaha Beach. My first day of fighting was in fields with dead paratroopers still on the ground.

Bungitt was wounded twice 13 June 1944. He was shipped back to England to 21st Hospital. I like the policy of Paratroopers better than the one for regular Infantry. Instead of going to a replacement depot he was returned to his unit which was next used in operation "Market-Garden" in the attempt to capture a bridge across the Rhine in the Netherlands. It is the story of the book you and Heather gave me for Christmas "A Bridge too Far". I'll save that book for you.

Market Garden was a combined (British + American) operation under control of British General Montgomery under the overall command of the Allied Supreme Commander, Gen. Eisenhower. The operation was a dismal and costly failure, wasting ~~many~~ many lives and much equipment and time.

After Market - Garden failed, Gen. Montgomery used the 101st + 82nd airborne like combat infantry until 27 Nov, 44. When he was forced to release them by Gen. Eisenhower. This was wrong. Airborne forces should be used as a shock force to capture and hold strategic targets for 2 or 3 days, then pulled out, refitted and retrained and made ready for another operation.

In Burgett's book their next combat was in the Battle for Bastogne which was just a part of the larger Battle of the Bulge. My outfit the 30th Division was there too. I had been wounded twice and transferred to Military Police.

My history of the 120th Infantry Regiment gives this account of one incident in that battle. "Christmas Eve day (1944) was bright, and the Village of Malmedy, Belgium (close to Bastogne) looked like a Christmas Card. Two hours after noon the buzz of planes was heard. At 1430 eighteen B-24's dropped bombs which nearly leveled the main square. The 3rd Battalion (which I belonged to) suffered most of all. Kitchens of "I" and "K" were destroyed with their complete staffs and that of "M" company seriously damaged.

At the time I left K company it was over 200% replacement in fighting units but almost no casualties in the rear echelon which is made up of office personnel, kitchen crews, supply Sgt. motor pool Sgt. This Christmas Eve bombing by our own planes killed several top French Paratroopers who were thought had a good chance to survive the war. Friends I had killed that day included Mess Sgt. Joe Lewis, 5/Sgt. John Sping from supply, and I've abandoned our armour artificer, and others.

That's more than enough for the book review.

This is Valentines day. Our started early with a knock on the door soon after Breakfast. Ann brought Mary by on her way to school with home made Valentines from her girls. In the visit we received gifts from your mother and Storie. I hope you did not forget Heather!

I'm using the upstairs apt. to write this. Its a pretty day and I keep looking at the View out the Window. Storie called. Tom got over his surgery very well. He worked a half day this week. They plan to come home the first week in April. Their apt. is nice and it needs to be used by them and any of our family or friends.

We know you are busy with work, school, fishing and home activities so we do not expect a letter. You have been good to keep in touch with us by phone and we appreciate it. Keep it up.

With much love,
John
"your Proud Grandfather"

Chad, John did not win our card game - He won the last ^{hand} game so he says he won the game - Guess who won?