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Mr. Lucas Martin, Historian
75 Salty Way East
Selbyville, DE 19975


Dear Mr. Martin,

I didn't go over with the 103rd but I was among the first stateside battle casualties. I fell in the Spinal Meningitis campaign. Thanks to the excellent care at Field Hospital and their leadership in the sulfa drugs, I made one of the few complete recoveries. I learned that angels have big noses. As I gained consciousness, there she was and I will always be grateful. I became an engineering student with ASTP at University MS. When the program folded my collegiate colleagues were dumped en masse into the infantry mostly to fill out the 94th in what I call a genocide based on intelligence. The 103rd did well for me since the 94th considered me fit and I was a survivor of a number of rough campaigns.

I have a soft spot for the 103rd since you have kept track of me despite my checkered career. The 94th has not. I enjoy your newsletter. My check for \$15 is enclosed.

My best to survivors of Co, F from 1943 and your outstanding newsletter staff.

Sincerely,


Donald M. Brill
W2745 Mitchell Road
Eau Claire, WI 54701

January 31, 2009

Mr. Lucas C. Martin
75 Salty Way E
Selbyville, DE 19975

Dear Mr. Martin,

Thank you for the telephone call. I enjoyed it immensely. I am glad to provide the information that you suggested, herewith.

The Draft was still fashionable in 1942 and I had a number. I had enlisted in V7, the navy program that would let me finish college and then carry my bed for me. My color vision didn't measure up and I was not accepted. Two uncles had served in the navy in WWI and my brother Richard was in the navy, lost at sea in 1939. With college on my mind, I tried all of the reserves and then all of the regulars except ground forces which turned out to be my destiny. Color vision was still the problem.

As a first semester Junior at (now renamed) UW Stout when my number came up, I was able to finish my quarter courses and lost the semester courses to report for processing and mustering in on Dec 8, 1942. My duty was with the 103rd Infantry Division at Camp Claiborne, LA for basic training. The camp was victim of a plague of Spinal Meningitis for which I had to be carried out to field hospital for a month or two. After a fifteen day sick leave I returned to duty at Camp Claiborne where my first assignment was 24 hour guard duty in the rain.

The call went out for engineers and I applied for ASTP. The procedure was to refuse the OCS committee before access to the Review Committee for ASTP. I was accepted for ASIP and sent to University Mississippi for their engineering program. I finished the basic engineering in 9 months. Then the program was terminated and I was sent to Camp McCain for a refresher in basic to help fill out the 94th Infantry division which was ready to ship out. The TO was complete and schools were done so positions of hazard were available. I was fortunate to be assigned to HQ company, 301st Regiment, in the wire section for communications. We were transported to Ft. Dix from where we shipped out on Queen Elizabeth I. I had my first attack of heat rash on D deck where 16 troops shared a stateroom for two. Rampant sea sickness kept the environment below to be avoided at all costs. I spent all time possible on the fantail watching flying fish and Liberty ships, in the distance, trying to ship water in their smoke stacks. We changed course about every 7 minutes to give torpedoes a better challenge as a lone vessel without convoy.

We went ashore near Glasgow and drove military vehicles to Trowbridge Barracks about 50 miles east of London where we were for a couple of weeks and then to Southampton to ship aboard an India Merchantman to cross the channel to Utah beach, about 12 miles from where they had put our equipment ashore. We had a forced march through French mud to claim our equipment. We dug in near Lorient to contain the submarine base that

was still active there. In several months our fox holes, blacked out, with light and sound, became quite comfortable. Mine was six to seven feet deep. My living place for close to six months. I started a library of French books but the dictionary never came from home. The 66th Division was torpedoed in the channel and landed at about half strength. Orders came down for it to replace the 94th while we headed for the bulge. A fellow from the 66th lives here in Eau Claire and thinks that he inherited my foxhole.

At some point we were transported in 40 and 8's (8 men or 40 horses). Our car jumped the tracks and bumped along on the ties, until one courageous fellow, with help from others went through the open door of the train, scrambled up on top, ran forward and told the engineer our car was off the tracks. The problem taken care of, the trip continued cross country to our ordered destination.

"War. The Price of Freedom", inserted next, was used with a presentation I gave to a high school class recently. Following the insert, are comments on experiences that occurred after the Bulge and occupation in Czechoslovakia.

WAR, THE PRICE OF FREEDOM
Donald M. Brill

Psalms 91:7 "A thousand shall fall by thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand but it shall not come nigh thee." This was my verse through Europe. This was not entirely true. It did come nigh. There were fields of bodies the morning after. They could have touched each other if they weren't already gone. I recall one fellow who lay nearby, he looked just like my brother, Richard, with a bullet hole right in the middle of his forehead but I knew it wasn't him. He had been lost at sea five years before. I recall another who had expired in the trail. He looked like lawn furniture after the convoy had run over him. You can see a lot from the tail gate of a 6 x 6 truck. My first day of combat was in 1944 on my 22nd birthday.

We were under fire a lot and shelling without end. At one time we were operating a communication center at a command post in the basement of an old mansion at the top of a hill. We were under shelling about 5 minutes out of every fifteen. Most of them hit the house or close by. There was a shrapnel hole through the chair that we used and shrapnel holes covered the wall behind the bicycle that I was working on and had just abandoned to search for supplies. Half of the spokes were missing and tires were flat but I still rode it out from under the shelling pattern when all of our communication lines went out from the shelling in the blackest of nights. A shell burst overhead just as I passed a stone house. It was hit and tumbled apart. When still at the mansion, we didn't know if we were their target or if they were trying to hit the pontoon bridge across the Moselle River at the bottom of the hill. When the (above) stone house was hit, the disabled bike and a split second had saved my life. Else I should have been under the 10 foot pile of rubble that resulted and blocked the street.

At one location the cooks tried to serve us hot lunch. They had the field kitchen set up and were serving the troops when the mail came in. Two shells exploded in our midst spraying the area with shrapnel. Many troops were hit and there were not enough aid men standing. The fellow at my elbow chatting with me was hit in the head and dumped his brains in a little steaming pile at my feet. The blast left me off balance for I had to leap over his body to avoid stepping on him. By this time the verse seemed right and I was spared. At times when our blackout failed, a machine gun would open up teaching us a discipline. We could often see tracers from small arms in the night sky or see a tank assault up the next hillside covering infantry less lucky than we.

There was no way that we could grasp the totality of the grinder that we were in, or comprehend the carnage that was all about. I stopped trying to track my friends in other companies by telephone. I was too often referred to an older recruit who had helped carry him out if they had been there long enough to know who he was. "D" company with 300 per cent turnover by January confirmed my good fortune at being in HQ with only 100 per cent turnover. Now, sixty some years later, I am getting the picture from a history of my 94th Infantry Division supplied by my son, John, who, of course, would not be here if my fortune had been different. Psalm 91:7 is still one of my favorite Bible verses.

A published report lists the casualties of the 94th Infantry Division at 74%. This would be based on the cumulative membership including the stream of replacements that entered our division. With hazards much lower in units to the rear, including support units, that leaves the terrible carnage that I remember for units toward the front.

The towns we entered in Germany, before the Moselle River, were in shambles and abandoned. After the Moselle we would move in with a family. Several of our communications members moved in with a lady and her two teen age daughters. They were terrified and hysterical having been warned of the brutality of American troops. They cried just as hard when we left three days later, perhaps missing the security that we represented. Later, in a larger town, our commandant moved the occupants to a selected part of town as we occupied their luxuriant abode. Two young ladies did not take their move gracefully and made their displeasure obvious. I fought with their feather bed for an hour or two and then gave up in utter defeat and spent the rest of the night on the floor. Sometimes we would move into the basement in an occupied house. One house had an older gentleman in residence. He built a fire in the water heater and several of us had the very unusual experience of a hot bath. These were rare circumstances since we were normally in a camping mode with shelter halves (half of a pup tent) on the ground. Opportunity to take shelter was always welcome. We had a memorable experience in Luxembourg. Who made the connection I do not know. Several troops supplied the meat (abandoned cattle were everywhere) and the gracious lady put on a steak dinner for the whole crew.

We were on a farm for a few days rear the dragon teeth*. There was an open well with a windlass to draw water. The cattle had not been tended and there were mounds of snow covering the bodies of cows that had stepped on a mine. Everything was frozen and, apparently our body weight, compared to a cow's with their small footprint, was not enough to set them off. Toward spring vehicles began blowing up on the road as the mines thawed. As the towns became more normal some shops were opened. The poor shop owners did not know what currency to use. They didn't trust our Invasion Marks and, of course, the German Marks were worthless. A colleague and I decided on a shave and a haircut. The situation was still tactical and we had to carry our weapons. I had a moment of discomfort as the barber shaved my neck with a straight edge razor. Our guns were against the far wall and my partner was fraternizing with the manicurist and paying absolutely no attention to my situation.

Despite terrors that defy description, some of us survived. Patton's philosophy was to keep the troops moving. We were usually not in one location for more than one or a few days. Command posts might be a little longer as forward became rear CP. Occupation duty in Czechoslovakia after VE day was welcome relief from the war with a different set of challenges. I am fortunate to see the freedom that the war paid for when peace lasted for a time.

*The German defense line

Our first post in Czechoslovakia was at Krumlov. We had crossed Sudetenland and witnessed the migration of displaced people being evicted from their land in retribution for when they were the offenders. Our base became the Rotenhoff, a Barron's estate with a stable of thoroughbreds and a chain of five man made lakes. The motor pool sergeant from Cheyenne was put in charge of the stable. Troops had all of the riding that they wanted. The horse herd included a beautiful black mare with a belly wound from shrapnel that he was carefully dressing. He announced one day that she could be ridden bare back without a saddle or even a surcingle.

Since I had never ridden any other way, I went for the ride of my life. Discounting the fact that we didn't gallop plow horses because of intestinal surges, I sallied forth. She had to leave the barn and it was only with patience and encouragement that we made it about a mile to the furthest lake. Turning at that point there was no holding her. I did not know whether I was afoot or horseback, alternating my knees over her back. I managed to stay with her all the way and we didn't stop for the open door to the stable. Luckily it was a tall one and, by crouching, I was able to save my head.

We had a couple of broken arms in the outfit to prove the cleverness of a horse. The tall bay thoroughbred was a good ride until the path came near a large tree with a low branch. It would dart suddenly off of the path and scrape the rider off his back. I knew about his trick and when the moment came I enlarged his mouth and set the brakes on all four wheels. I slid over his head, remounted and had a good ride.

The staff, largely female, seemed to be operating the estate. They were using wood dowel rakes to gather hay and grain. Our Intelligence and Reconnaissance company was quite busy rounding up Russian personnel who were looting Czechs in our sector. We were about a mile from Brno and the Russian area. They seemed to treat Czechs as captives. We treated Czechs as allies, making them a good field for their looting.

We ran our communication lines on electrical power poles keeping ten or fifteen feet below the high tension wires. Induction charged the jeep and the wires we were trying to splice. Kids looking for candy soon learned not to touch the jeep. Only a couple of us could brave the charge to do splicing which had to be done every mile (the length of a reel). I got my reprieve on the way to camp when the jeep, going too fast, hugged an inside curve in soft sand and headed for the ditch when the driver tried to compensate and hit the brakes. There were no brakes and his large shoes caught the accelerator giving us a final spin to the field five feet below. The driver suffered a broken neck and I, in the suicide seat, a damaged back. There is not much room under a jeep when it rolls.

Two men in back, with the A frame between them, were uninjured. We lay on the frozen ground in November until the service ambulance found us. A local lady brought a blanket. I exhausted my German language skills: "Du bist ein gute frau! Which I hope was not insulting to her. I did not lose consciousness and the 90 mile trip to field hospital laying on my stomach was an ordeal. I was on hypos for several days and wondered at the queue of soldiers filing past my bed. I asked one fellow what they were doing. They

were waiting for their x rays for reenlistment while I wondered about my broken back. I was then taken for x-ray which turned out negative. I knew that I was missing the boat home so I carefully got to my feet and headed for the door to the surprise of the attending nurse. I had been immobile for eight days taking hypos from her throughout. I managed by walking very carefully. I hitched rides in military vehicles to get back to base.

About a month later I got orders to ship out to the cigarette camps, deployed on the way back home to America. I could not lift my duffle bag and wore it out by dragging it. Then finished the trip with a barracks bag. I was scheduled for discharge and survived by giving a cigarette from a K ration to a person near the depot to carry it for me.

We returned on the George Washington and ran into heavy seas off of the coast of Labrador. We lost the automatic pilot and wallowed in the trough for 48 hours. Heeling over, it was said that we came within 3 degrees of capsizing. No one could stand on the decks. We slid to the next post or a bulkhead. I was turning yellow with jaundice by the time I got home and had not digested any food for some time, and missed all of the delicious meals being served to returning veterans. I was discharged and returned home December 26th, 1945. I returned to college for the second semester of my junior year, at UW Stout, not far from my home. With the jaundice I fit right in with the malaria people.

In 1955 I was called in for a medical review and they found where my spine had been jumbled, which had been termed as "contusion of the thoracic spine". I had a handicapping condition except for the most sedentary activities, for decades.

I completed my BA and went on for an MA at U of Minnesota and became a member of Phi Delta Kappa. Later, as a part timer with family responsibilities, I received my PhD at U of Wisconsin, Madison (1973) on the GI Bill while employed as State Supervisor of Technical Education. For over one year (mid '60's) I took a project with the Great Cities Program for School Improvement in Chicago, as a coordinator of National Conferences on Vocational Education. Returning to Madison, I was again employed by The State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, (now Wisconsin Technical Colleges) as Supervisor of Technical Education for a few years before becoming Assistant State Director. I remained in that capacity for thirteen years until retirement in 1983, followed by adjunct professorship at UW Stout, Menomonie, WI for three years.

We had moved back to Eau Claire, my wife's hometown. I had been employed in the Wisconsin education system for over 31 years, with 24-25 of those years in Madison. In 1962 or '63 I was President of the American Technical Education Assn. Presently I am President of the Tainter Chapter of Sons of The American Revolution. Despite the exigencies of military service, I have managed to lead a satisfying and productive career and am still able, at 86, to enjoy retirement and take sides on the national crisis. I served on the local School Board and ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1994.

I was teaching in Eau Claire, WI in the 1950's, and in 1955, married Meredith Wright, also a teacher. We have four lovely children. One son and three daughters, all of whom