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Quotation 1:

Sergeant Rocco J. Moretto of 1/26th's C Company (temporarily attached to 2nd Battalion) remembers the talk along the road to Dom Bütgenbach.

We encountered many American troops who had been overrun, were disorganized and in full retreat...Some of the men related weird accounts of what was going on. The one account that has always stuck in my mind was that Tiger tanks were being dropped by parachutes...[which] turned out to be false...and that German paratroopers dressed in American uniforms who spoke perfect English were dropped behind the lines. This turned out to be true. This and other stories we heard made us wonder what we were headed for.

We arrived at Dom Bütgenbach late at night on December 17th and immediately started to set up a defense. The area had been occupied by evacuated the area. They had departed in an awful hurry leaving behind a few tents, partially eaten food, and all sorts of clothing including women's unmentionables.

Rocco J. Moretto, *Memorable Experience*,
Undated manuscript,
First Division Museum at Cantigny

Quotation 2:

Rocco Moretto was not the only soldier who noticed the disarray that the previous troops had left the area. Sergeant Leroy Stewart of the 26th Inf corroborated Morreto's account when he wrote:

This American troops that had been in the town had taken off without firing a shot. We found all their duffel bags with their clothes and things in them. We even found a room full of maps and all their colors and records. There was all kinds of equipment and rations. It looked like they had just dropped what they were doing and took off. Our whole Co. was fighting mad. Not so much at the Germans but at the Americans that had put their tails between their legs and ran. I think at that time if we had a choice who we wanted to fight it wouldn't have been the Germans.

We had all been set for a long rest behind the lines but because some GI's hadn't stood their ground, here we were right in the middle of the war again.

At no time while I had been with the 1st Division did the idea ever come to us or was it ever mentioned when or how would we ever retreat. There had been times when it would have been a lot easier to retreat but we knew the ground would have to be retaken so we hung on.

Sergeant Leroy Stewart
Hurry Up and Wait

Quotation 3:

It was decided that the AT guns would have to stay on the MLR [main line of resistance], organizing the positions to cover as much terrain as possible and still provide interlocking fire. The antitank guns were to establish the first line of defense, stopping the enemy armor before it could chew up our front-line troops, and at the same time point out targets to the M-10's [tank destroyers] and tanks situated 300 yards back. This target designation mission was an important factor at that time as fog and mist of early morning made it almost impossible for our armor to see the approaching enemy tanks.

Donald E. Rivette
The Hot Corner at Dom Bütgenbach, 1945

Quotation 4:

Colonel Daniel was personally directing artillery fire over the radio...He was even asking for corps artillery and at one point he yelled over the radio, "Get me all the damned artillery you can get."

There is no doubt in my mind that Colonel Daniel almost single handedly slowed the German advance until reinforcements slowly began to arrive and started to build on our positions. Thanks to Colonel Daniel and fortunately for us the German infantry had taken all sorts of casualties from the artillery fire and were unable to penetrate our defenses in any number.

When Colonel Daniel was informed that tanks had penetrated to within twenty yards of the building, he asked to be kept advised of their movement. I would inch up the cellar stair and when the tank crews [spotted] me they would turn the 88s and fire a round. But before they did, I would come flying down those cellar steps.

The situation remained that way [for what] seemed...an eternity. Colonel Daniel continued with the artillery fire and then called for fire directly on our positions in an effort to knock the enemy off us. He then called for volunteers to knock out the tanks with a bazooka. One young soldier somehow, with help, managed to get on the roof of the farmhouse and miraculously disabled one tank. It seemed like an impossible task but somehow that kid got the job done. The remaining tank stayed for awhile and then turned tail, probably realizing that he was stuck out like a sore thumb without support. It was fortunate for us that our artillery inflicted so much damage to German infantry- otherwise we would have surely been outflanked.

Moretto, *Memorable Experience*

Quotation 5:

Henry Warner was described as a "quite, red-head from West Virginia (Blue Spaders, 111)." As member of the 2nd Battalion, 26th Infantry he earned the Congressional Medal of Honor for single-handedly taking out three German tanks at the Battle at Bütgenbach. The section below is the account of Warner's commander regarding Henry Warner's heroic actions.

At 0600, December 20...about twenty enemy tanks attacked through the fog and mist of early morning...The tanks were close when the antitank crews crawled from their muddy foxholes...the first gun squad, commanded by Staff Sergeant Stanley Oldenski took over the job of assistant gunner and ordered Corporal "Red" Warner, the gunner, to commence firing...Corporal Warner put four rounds into the nearest tank, setting it on fire and putting it out of action. A second tank then appeared out of the mist in an attempt to overrun the main line of resistance...Warner sighted and fired. The tank was evidently surprised to find an antitank gun in the MLR, and three more rounds knocked [the tank] out. On the last round the breech block failed to close...A minute later a third tank appeared from the right, spattering machine-gun bullets at the antitank gun. The gun crew dived for its foxholes except for Corporal Warner, who remained at the gun. The enemy tank swung left and came head on in an attempt to overrun the emplacement. When about ten feet away the German tank commander stopped his tank and stuck his head and shoulders out of the turret...Warner, still trying to free the breech block, drew his pistol, fired at the head of the tank commander and quickly ducked into his gun pit. Expecting to be run over and crushed any minute, Warner crouched in the bottom of the narrow pit...He heard the tank gun its motor as it started to move toward him, slowly clanking its track. As it was about to hit the gun, the tank reversed itself and began to move back toward him, slowly clanking its track. As it was about to hit the gun, the tank reversed itself and began to move back toward its own lines. Stealing a quick look, Warner could see...its commander slumped out of the hatch, evidently killed by Warner's .45.

Rivette, *Hot Corner of Dom Bütgenbach*

Quotation 6:

In the late afternoon, when the German assault was dwindling, the 2d Battalion commander paid the infantryman's heartfelt compliment to the guns: "The artillery did a great job. I don't know where they got the ammo or when they took time out to flush the guns but we wouldn't be here now if it wasn't for them. ...A hundred [Germans]...came at one platoon and not one of them got through.

The regimental cannon company, the 1st Division Artillery, the 406th Field Artillery Group, and reinforcing batteries from the 2d and 99th Divisions fired over ten thousand rounds in support of the Dom Bütgenbach defenders during an eight hour shoot on the 21st, plastering the enemy assembly areas and the road net and plowing up fields across which the German attack came. For one period of three hours all communication between the hard-pressed rifle battalion and the artillery broke under German fire, but the American shells continued to arrive with devastating effect. A patrol sent into the woods from which had come the final assault reported a count of three hundred dead enemy infantry- the reason, perhaps, why the tanks that penetrated to the 2d Battalion Command Post came alone. At any rate, the 12th Volksgrenadier Division had had enough. The division commander told his superiors that no more attacks could be made unless a promised assault gun battalion arrived to ramrod the infantry. The total German casualty list must have been high, and after three days of battle heavy inroads had been made in the tank strength of the 12th SS Panzer Regiment.

Cole, The Ardennes

Quotation 7:

As we went on checking the town we knew we had beaten the Germans to it but we didn't know where they were. We were told to push on to the high ground to the east of town and set up a defense. It was real cold and [there was] a lot of snow on the ground and [the] thought of staying out in it didn't sound too good to me. Luck was with us when we got to the high ground [the position of Company K]. There were ...a lot of two and three man holes already dug. They must have belonged to some artillery outfit to have had the tools to make that type of holes. The one we took was a three man hole and I thought that three of us in it wouldn't be so cold.

When it got dark it started to get colder. After we got all the lines ran [telephone wire laid] we felt half frozen.

While two men rolled up in the hole, one had to stand outside to guard. At first we thought that with each of us having one blanket, we could put one down and two over us but we soon found that the guy outside on guard had to have one to wrap around him or he just couldn't take it. We hoped that after a few days we could get used to the cold and it wouldn't be so bad but it didn't work that way. We were always cold.

All of our rations and drinking water froze. I tried putting my canteen inside m shirt to keep it from freezing but it was so cold I had to take it out. I tried eating snow but it seemed like it just made me want water that much more. I never thought much about wanting a drink in the winter but when there wasn't any [water and] I was always wanting some...We started to lose a lot of men to frostbite. We were to take our shoes off every so often and rub our feet to keep them from freezing but very few men did. There was a big chance we would come under attack when you had your shoes off.

Stewart, Hurry Up and Wait

Quotation 8:

In the attack on Büllingen there were 22 German machine guns in one quarter mile of hedgerow...the Germans said that they didn't think anyone could attack in that weather...

By any means I could I had gotten some winter cloths to wear...First I had a pair of wool long johns and two G.I. sweat shirts, next OD shirt and pants and a wool sweater Mom had made and sent to me. Over the OD pants I had a pair of wind and almost waterproof pants that we had been issued...I had on a field jacket and wool overcoat. I had a wool scarf around my neck that I could pull up over my face. I still had the sheep lined helmet to wear under my steel helmet. We had...wool knit mittens with a trigger finger in them. Over these we had a pair of leather mittens...They were warm but [we] couldn't do much with them on...With all the clothes I had on and the deep snow, there wasn't any way I could move very fast. All the other men that were on the line very long had different clothes on trying to keep warm.

Stewart, *Hurry Up and Wait*

Every time I think of the Bulge, the thing I think of most is the weather we lived in. There wasn't any way to describe what the men in the [infantry] went thru that fought in the winter campaign. From Büllingen there was only one way to go and that was into Germany. Between us and Germany was the Siegfried Line that we would have to go thru again.

Stewart, *Hurry Up and Wait*

Quotation 9:

The freezing cold weather did not last forever. As the torturous cold subsided in February, a new difficulty took its place. Leroy Stewart explains the infantrymen's struggles with the melting snow.

Our holes would fill up with water. I would try to dig my holes so they sloped to the foot so the water would drain that way. I would dig a deeper spot at the front to catch the water so I could dip it out. The water would melt out of the sides and top and drop all over me. It was ice water and we would about freeze. After I got a hole dug, I would try to find pine branches or anything to lay on the bottom of my holes to keep me up out of the mud and water. When we had been on the hill [in Bütgenbach] freezing, all we could think of was warmer weather and now here it was and we weren't much better off...We got ready for the attack on the Siegfried Line...I have never been able to understand it but we got thru the whole thing without any fight at all. The Germans pulled out...We moved into the town of Hollerath...on the edge of the [Siegfried] line.

Stewart, *Hurry Up and Wait*

Quotation 10:

The [crossroads] area was heavily defended by self-propelled guns, tanks, artillery, and mortars, and an oversized company of German infantry...

Company C was relieved and taken out of the defensive line at Dom Bütgenbach, where we could get a good night's rest, receive equipment such as shoe packs, camouflage snow suits, and a half-pound of dynamite for each man to be used for breaking up the frozen ground so that the men could more easily dig their foxholes in the shortest possible time after securing their objective...

Captain Donald Lister, Company "C" commander, immediately organized a patrol for the night of January 22 which consisted of 16 men and one officer. A radio operator carrying a SCR set was also included...The patrol went out at 2200 hours and returned with the following information.

The snow in some places was four feet deep. The enemy had a series of dugouts which were probably used as strong points...There were footprints in the snow...Antitank mines were observed...[and the] road would not be passable for vehicles until cleared of mines...

Armed with the above information, Captain Lister laid out his plan...The Company was to be awakened at 0100 and receive a hot meal and last minute instructions...At 0300 we started out in what was the coldest weather that I'd ever experienced in my whole lifetime. It was so cold that the snowsuits were frozen stiff and crackled as you moved...The snowsuits blended in perfectly with the snow as they moved down the road, and no opposition was met till the 1st platoon swung to the east. At that point they were met with fire from two machine guns and about a squad of riflemen. We very quickly gained fire superiority, killing four of the enemy and six were taken prisoner...

The 2nd platoon, in the meantime, ran into enemy [troops] around the house and, after a brief fire fight, two were killed and five more were captured.

Additional Germans were caught in their dugouts [and] surrendered without firing a shot. As a matter of fact...the dugouts [were] heated with cans of sterno and [the Germans] had even taken their boots off for more comfort. They probably never expected an attack under such horribly cold conditions. It was a textbook attack.

Moretto, Memorable Experience

Quotation 11:

This is a journal entry from an unknown member of Company K in Jan 1945.

The Germans opened up on us. The moon was very bright and even though we wore the camouflage capes and followed the hedgerows the enemy must have seen our shadows moving...Most of [our] weapons were frozen solid, however almost every person carried a pistol either G.I. or foreign [and] those are the weapons the 1st Platoon used to drive a wedge into the enemy positions.

We found a lot of abandoned G.I. equipment that had 2d Division markings on them...G.I. LMG (light machine gun) A1 and A6 guns all oiled and fully loaded. Apparently the enemy figured on using them, however they did not use them very much. During the night bulldozers came up and cleaned out the mines... No one slept because they expected a counterattack which never came.

History of Company K, 26th Infantry,
First Division Museum at Cantigny

Quotation 12:

Bert Morphis was a soldier in Company B, 26th Inf. Here he writes about his experiences in the American counter-offensive to close the Bulge in late January 1945.

We started pushing the Bulge back slowly. We would move forward a short distance and dig in, advance again and dig in, and so on, sometimes three or four times a day, if memory serves. It was bitterly cold, and the ground was covered with two to three feet of snow. So we carried quarter pound blocks of TNT with detonators to loosen the frozen crust. With a pickax we would dig a small hole to accommodate the TNT, set it off then proceed to dig our foxhole. For this purpose we carried full size picks and shovels to expedite the frequent digging in. Moreover, since we were fighting in dense forests, we carried axes and crosscut saws. An open foxhole provided little protection from "tree burst" from artillery shelling. Frequently we would no sooner finish a shelter that we would move and leave it. I don't recall ever being so tired...I think everyone's most vivid memories are of the numbing cold. Mine certainly are!

Bert H. Morphis
World War II Veterans Survey
U.S. Military History Institute

Quotation 13:

This excerpt goes along with the photograph # 32 of the Belgian refugees.

As we got deeper into Germany we ran into a lot of displaced people from other countries that Hitler had taken over. They didn't have very good clothes and hadn't been eating too good. As we would take a town and find these D.P.s as we called them...the first thing we did was get them food and fix them up with something to wear. If we could find something in the German homes for them we gave it to them.

Stewart, *Hurry Up and Wait*