

SOLDIERS' FOOTPRINTS

Yes, footprints in the mud, footprints in the snow, footprints at the altar in Inden, Germany.

Footprints across France, Belgium, Holland to [Zundert], then from Aachen to Berlin.

Up in Holland I left footprints in the mud, red with another man's blood.

One night we walked for miles up a levee. We found out we walked right up in among enemy troops. I walked right past a horse drawn cannon. I mean by this time all hell broke loose.

We got an order to get out and withdraw if we could. Bernard Taylor, from Mt. Vernon, Ill. was hit bad, paralyzed but wasn't out. I asked him where he was hit. He didn't know, he was numb all over. I told him I was going to get him back to the aid station and they would patch him up and send him back to the States. He would be out of the war. He informs me to get myself out and forget him, he wouldn't make it anyway. This made me more determined I would get back for help.

I got him over my back holding his legs with my left arm, carrying a rifle with the other. He told me several times what I was doing was wasting time, he would not live.

The road we went in on was cut off by the enemy. Out through swamp land was the only way out. They shelled that swamp. They didn't intend for anyone to get out. He got hit with shrapnel while on my back. In fact I still have some small pieces in my back from that night.

What Bernard Taylor got from that shell, he died within minutes, while on my back. I still carried him out of the swamp, laid him on top of the levee side of the road. His blood ran from shoulders to my shoes. When I laid him down I felt for heartbeat and pulse. There was no sign of life so I let him lay beside the road, east of [Zundert], Holland.

Then we moved over to Aachen, Germany, where we relieved the Big Red One on the 1st US Army spearhead. We fought all the way through the Roer industrial valley. It was a hard way to go. The enemy fought fiercely to

hold. We fought all the way up to Lucherburg which put us on high ground overlooking the Roer River. And then it snowed another heavy snow on top of the first snow. By this time the battle of the Bulge started. The enemy went all the way up in Belgium, Brussels, Liege, all the way to the seaport of Antwerp, Belgium. This area we cleared before moving out of Holland.

By this time the Americans launched a counterattack against the enemy, General Patton's tanks and all. At this time we held what we had gained. In December 1944 the sky cleared. They put everything in the air that would fly. I remember one morning one glance at the sky, seven bombers at one time going for dirt. Out of the seven, only the crew from one plane made it to the ground. You can't imagine how grateful their men were to know why made it to earth alive. They all were hit with shrapnel, all able to walk. I showed them the way and how far to the aid station. All were able to walk on their own power but when they walked in the snow they left a trail of blood in the snow.

This went on and on. I've seen men still walking with feet frozen up to their knees.

The enemy was shooting our planes out of the sky. It looked like ducks dropping out of the sky. Their aircraft guns were around Cologne, Germany. This was about 12 miles east of us, with Christmas Day coming up. On Christmas Eve it was clear and cold. They sent up work to us that next morning there would be church service back down the hill in Inden, Germany. Anyone wishing to go was welcome. Expressions never changed. Not a word from anyone. All I saw was grim faces that looked like I felt.

But leave it to me; I had to have something to say. I said Hell, I'll go but no one offered to go with me. So that morning I took my rifle, some extra hand grenades, and started to walk down to Inden. A pair of dead horses lay in the street. Dead bodies lying everywhere. So what I go to the rock church, part of the roof gone, no hear, about 30 below.

I walked in the church. G.I.s sitting there with steel helmets on, rifles between their knees, ready to jump and run on split second notice. I sat down, and in about 60 seconds the chaplain was reading from a book, when a shell hit the church. The chaplain was the only man who got hit. It almost knocked him down but he closed the book. His face turned fire red. He walked away from the altar and fell.

This story I've told many times. Here was a man trying to help troubled minds with torn with torn hearts, that gave his all for you and the Red, White, and Blue. He left his last footprints at the altar in Inden, Germany on Christmas morning, 1944. He will always be remembered by all who knew his as a great chaplain.

I've seen many a good man leave this old world. Some times it makes one wonder what is life and death all about.

I saved a man's life us in Holland, 1944. I sent him back on a stretcher and never knew whether he lived or not. Thirty-five years later I met him in Williamsburg, Virginia. He was grateful as hell for what I did for him. Here it is 45 years after WWII and I still get cards and letters from these men. These are some of the things that are very rewarding. To this day, when people show their kindness and appreciation, it makes life worth while.

Several years ago, while at the 104th Reunion in San Francisco, California, I was talking to a public relations man from Washington, D.C., that covers Military Reunions all over the country. He mentioned that he sees something with this organization that he did not see with other groups. He did not see the close brotherhood relations with others that he saw with this group.

I explained to him, these men are remnants left over from a combat team that served a hitch in hell. No one can visualize or understand. These mean have been down a hard, dark, cold and lonely road covering each other's backs, saving one another's lives and they will never forget. This is what has built a brotherhood bond. It's hard for some people to understand.

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