

# On the Line with Company B

by Wil Howsmon, 397-B

*Wil Howsmon was a member of Company B, 397th. Some of his recollections have been put into the 100th's Archives at the Marshall Library. Here is an excerpt from them.*

**30 December 1944:** No action.

**31 December 1944:** No action—had some beer on New Year's Eve. The Division book reports that the 398th had taken fifteen PWs in Urbach; they seemed to have left our right flank during the night of 30 December. At least, they were no longer there.

**1 January 1945:** At about 0200 (Lieutenant James and I do not agree on this time, he thinks it was about 0030) an estimated forty Jerries came up the road out of Urbach. They were making an awful racket and we heard them before we saw them. All nine of my squad were ready, and since it didn't take the form of an attack, I waited a while to pull the flare. Though they were not in lines on the road, more in an attack front across the draw, they really didn't seem to know we were there, until I pulled the flare. When I did, the place was as bright as the sun, and we let go on them. I had planted our BAR in the left hole by the road and I realized it didn't have as good a field of fire as Collie, Scherrer, and I had in the middle hole. (I can't for the life of me recall who the BAR man was, it could have been Koeppen). I went to the BAR and took it back to the right of my hole. We were all firing away and with the BAR in that location, I was able to sweep their whole line. At some point, one of our heavy machine guns on the left cut loose and we had those guys in the neatest cross fire I had ever seen. They tried to fire back but they were completely at our mercy—"like fish in a barrel." Several of them broke and ran.

I got on the phone and talked to Lieutenant James and asked for artillery (I had seen no tanks, but I thought they might be coming). We got 105s, I believe, and I passed firing orders through Lieutenant James. When the artillery came in, the Jerries just quit, and started to surrender. We let up, called off the artillery, and the machine gun stopped also. Lieutenant James and English arrived and took several of my guys (Chavez was one) down the road into the draw. There were nineteen dead, and we took eleven prisoners most of whom were wounded. We had no casualties. We later learned that this thing was, in fact, a part of widespread assault on our division, which turned out to be stuck way out front of the 7th Army line. All I can say is that the outfit that hit us sure didn't act like assault troops. They apparently didn't know we were there and they didn't do any assaulting after they found us. We had them over a barrel from the first minute and it was no contest. Nevertheless, we were pumped higher than a kite. This was the sum total of the action we saw around Rimling, and it was nothing compared to what the 3rd Battalion had in Rimling, itself.

**2 January–11 January 1945:** This was a quiet period. Aside from mortar fire which blew out our phone lines to the CPs almost daily, we had no action. Of all the places where we were, this is the one I remember most vividly and even warmly. Even though it was cold, we had good holes, hot chow, and the memory of 1 January, when we had really torn them up. During this period, we re-installed the flare but never used it.

The only other thing was that somewhere in here several of us realized that we had head lice. Now that was fun!

**12 January 1945:** We said goodbye to Mehlingerhof late on this day after relief from Company E, 398th. I remember the company exactly because I had a friend, Bill Kidd, from Benning who was in Company E. I learned this day that he had been killed in the Vosges. We went on foot back to a little town the name of which I never knew. It was about two miles from Achen.