

# A Medic's Baptism Under Fire

by Glenn Vladimer, Medical Detachment 399th

The 399th Infantry Regiment entered the line on November 1st relieving elements of the 45th Division.

I was stationed in the Regimental Aid Station, when a medic from the 45th came up to me and said, "You're looking for serious trouble wearing those 4 bright white circles with a red cross in the middle of your helmet."

With his help, I removed them. He put an adhesive tape cross on the front of my helmet, covered it with Iodine and a camouflage net over the entire helmet. He also muddied up my red cross brassard on my arm. We lost 2 medics Allen and Richardson within the first couple of weeks due to sniper fire. I always felt I might have been one of them if it weren't for that medic of the 45th Division.

A week later, I was transferred to the third platoon of Easy Company, replacing a medic, Andy Salamo, who had been wounded. I stayed with them until the end of hostilities. Company E had been engaged in action for a few weeks and I considered them veteran front line troops and looked to them for guidance.

My first action with them was an attack at Neufmaisons. As we were advancing along a stream in a keep ravine the Germans greeted us with a mortar barrage. Watching the "veteran front liners," I buried my head in a hollow stump. The platoon guide who was the last man in the line said, "That's it Doc. If they can't see you they can't hit you."

My position in the platoon was just in front of the platoon guide so I felt secure. The barrage lifted and everything became very, very quiet.

After a while, I stuck my head out of the tree trunk and was surprised to see no one there. They were gone. The adrenaline started pumping. I thought if I climbed on the top of the ravine, I could see where the platoon went. Up the hill I climbed with my aid pouches and about 5 K Rations and probably the same amount of C's. I loved to eat.

As I was climbing up the side of this hill, I heard a burp gun firing above me, and one of our .30-cal. Machine guns firing from below. It didn't take too many brains to figure out that I was walking into a German unit and the only weapons I had were K and C rations. I could have won an Olympic medal coming down that hill. The rations I had went flying in all directions as I unloaded weight. Food was no longer important. As I fell into the stream at the bottom of the ravine, the platoon guide came up and said, "Keep your head down." The guy had never missed me! I made sure to keep my head up and eyes open to see what was going on from that time on.

During the New Year's Eve counterattack, elements of our company had to evacuate Freudenburg Farm. They made their way back to the Platoon CP where we took up positions on both sides of the road coming up from the farm. I was in a barn which had a pillbox in it. Another pillbox was on the other side of the road. The Germans, not wanting to see empty real estate took up residence at the Farm and had clear observation of the road. We could only cross the road at night and at a dead run delivering food, mail and holding sick call.

One night one of our men crossed the road to my area for sick call. He came up to me, complaining that he had frost bite and trench foot. Upon examining him, I realized he had the very beginning of a problem, but not enough to warrant evacuation. When I told him this, he berated me, saying that I would cause him to lose his feet. Not wanting to be the bad one, I sent him back to the aid station.

At dawn he returned screaming at Army injustice and many other matters. They had told him to return to his position and keep his feet warm and dry. That was good advice, if he were sitting in his living room. I said in a very quiet voice "I told you so." Needless to say, he was upset and wanted to go back across the road to his position in the pillbox. We suggested he stay with us until nightfall.

Apparently he had had enough of us and took off across the road. Sure enough a German sniper got him and down he went. Now we had a dilemma. He was moving and we couldn't let him lay out there all day.

We threw some smoke grenades out onto the road and went out, to drag him back to our position. When we got to him, he was hysterical.

We thought he was severely wounded and in shock, but when we got him back to safety, we realized he was laughing and yelling, "The SOBs will have to evacuate me now." He had the million-dollar wound. The bullet just hit muscle. There was no nerve or bone involved. In fact, the slug was protruding at the exit site.

I pulled it out, gave it to him as a memento, shipped him back, with a big smile on his face, to the aid station and never saw him again.

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