

Letter from Consul General W. D. Warren, KHS, to Mr. Marvin Alpert–Newsletter Editor

Dear Marv,

No doubt you have received many well-deserved compliments on the face-lift, etc. you and Mrs. Alpert have performed on the Division Association News. You have done a remarkable job and I hope you will find the time to continue this task in the future.

On page 9 of the April 1998 issue, you printed a “Letter from Germany.” The name of Platoon Sergeant Don Lawson, Co. C, 399th, is mentioned but he is neither the writer nor the recipient of the letter. If possible, I would very much like to have the name and present address of writer because, as you can see from the attached, I had an experience quite similar to that which the writer describes. On the slight chance that we were in the same place at the same time (1 to 3 January 1945 near Freudenberg Farm) perhaps even in the same foxhole, if the writer is still alive, I’d like to touch base with him to compare notes.

I look forward to hearing from you and send meanwhile cordial greetings to you and Mrs. Alpert.

Editor’s note: “Letters from Germany” on page 9, April ‘98 Newsletter, was written in 1945 by Yours Truly to my older brother, Norman. The letter was discovered last year among some long forgotten albums. Marv.

Memo re the “Letter from Germany” which appeared in the April 1998 issue of the Division Association News

by W.D. Warren, 398-K

In the late spring of 1944, I was transferred from Fort Benning to join the 100th Infantry Division, then stationed at Fort Bragg. I was assigned to the 3rd Platoon of Company K, 398th Regt. and the Platoon Leader was 2nd Lt. Henry J. Pajak who can be seen in the attached photo copy of the award ceremony held in Schorndorf, Germany on 16 June 1945. The Platoon Sergeant was T/Sgt. Lynwood T. Martin.

We left Bragg in October of 1944 and went to Camp Kilmer, N.J. which was our last station before we shipped out to Europe on board the Army Transport, General William H. Gordon. We landed at Marseilles on 20 October 1944 and marched from the port to a staging area located in the town of Septemes. After about 10 days, we shipped out by train (40 and 8’s) and went to an area near Raon-l’Étape where we relieved units of the 45th Division.

On 1 January 1945, at which time I had been promoted to S/Sgt. and when Co. K was near what we then called Freudenberg Farm (it was actually a fort, part of the Maginot Line) I was ordered to take my squad out of the town where we quartered to establish contact with a unit of the 399th Regt. and to mark the boundary between the 398th and 399th at a spot just a few miles outside of Bitche. We reached our position just before dark and I placed my squad in a vertical line on the down side of a hill facing Bitche but near the crest. I made contact with the 399th unit (I believe it could have been A or D company) about 200 yards to the right of my squad and then returned to our position.

I should mention that, just shortly before the action I will now describe, the von Rundstedt Offensive began with the main thrust moving through the northern part of Luxembourg and into eastern Belgium. We had been told that the Germans might try to break through our lines but we considered this unlikely, as we were over 200 km south of the action in the Ardennes. I should also mention that, aside from Pfc. Louis G. Di Prizito, a soldier from New Jersey whom I knew well, the only other member of my squad I

can recall was Pfc. Robert V. Coon, our BAR man, whom I placed at the point of our line facing the German troops defending Bitché. Around 1 a.m. on 2 January, the Germans attacked and, hearing the unmistakable, slow motion sound of BAR fire from Pfc. Coon, all members of the squad started firing their M-1 weapons at the vague outlines of enemy troops who meanwhile had surrounded us. Although it was pitch dark, I could tell from the number of voices shouting in German that we were also outnumbered. I decided that there would be little point in staying put to slug it out with the superior German forces and I shouted to my men that they should follow me to try to reach the 399th unit which was closer than the rest of K/398 in the area to the left of us.

Together with two members of my squad (I can no longer recall their names) I managed to make it to the safety of the 399th unit without mishap. Unfortunately, Louis did not make it and Pfc. Coon was captured but released after VE Day. Because the Germans had penetrated our lines on a broad front, the 399th unit was also surrounded by the time we reached them. Together with the C.O. of the unit, a 2nd Lt. whose name I can no longer recall, about 10 of us took refuge in a large, deep foxhole, actually, more like a cave, the entrance of which was so well concealed that the many German soldiers who passed by did not notice that we were hiding so close to them. We stayed in that cave/foxhole for two nights and two days, finally making a break-out on the third night to find our way back to the nearest town still held by U.S. Forces. We made it and even captured a German *Hauptmann* (captain) on the way. He was the C.O. of a Signal Company who gave the impression that he was greatly relieved to no longer have to fight a losing war.

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