

War Era Story Project 2012

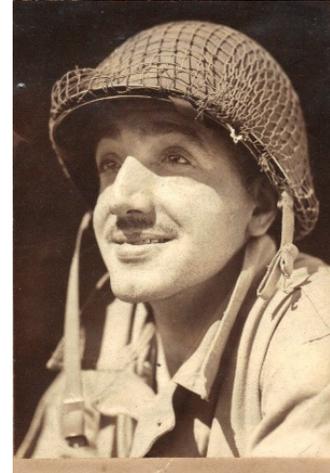
Submitted by: Martha Blankenhorn
Current home town: Columbus, Ohio
Age: Not given

Joseph Bernunzio – deceased, formerly of Worthington – a was a private first class with the 2nd Infantry Division, Company E, which arrived in Belgium on Jan 6, 1945. He participated in a month-long standoff with the Germans on opposite sides of the Roer River.

“That was my first battle,” he said. As first scout, his job was “to go out and make contact with the enemy.”

“That’s when I got baptized in fire.”

He was not wounded and said that he always hoped that he would go to Europe and not to the Pacific. “If you read about what happened to the guys in the South Pacific, they suffered.”



As infantry, he had to walk long distances and fire at the enemy at close range through trees and brush that obscured sight lines. “They were shooting at me, and I was shooting at them, and I was lucky I didn’t get hit. Nobody can tell me anybody wasn’t scared.”

They were cautioned against taking souvenirs from German corpses because the Germans had booby-trapped the bodies of their fallen soldiers.

He was part of the occupation force in Czechoslovakia after the war. He kept a photograph of the private home where he stayed during that time.

He got a much-delayed reminder of the Battle of the Bulge at the end of the Persian Gulf War. On Feb 26, 1991, he was presented with the Bronze Star for “meritorious achievement in ground combat.”