

War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: Mason, Ohio

Age: Not given

This is a war story about my father, Rankin Dale Hubley. He lived in Cincinnati when he was drafted in 1943 at the age of 37. He served in General Patton's Third Army, 7th Armored Division. This is the story that he wrote years ago about being wounded outside of Metz and why he was a life-long Cincinnati Reds fan. My father died in 1997.

I was in a forest east of Nancy, France. My group assembled in the morning and left the woods. As the GIs were walking behind a tank, they would throw grenades into German dug-in positions. But the Germans were not killed and started firing from behind. The tank driver got orders to retreat. He yelled "I'm backing up," and put the tank in reverse. I turned around to get out of the way of the tank and just then a shell exploded. I remember dirt coming up into my face, but I am not sure if the tank passed over me or someone pulled me out of the way. I know there is not much clearance between the bottom of the tank and the road. I don't know how long I laid there. All vehicles and GIs were gone except one tank when I came to. I raised my head a little and someone took a shot at me. I knew I was not alone.

When I came to, my mind was sharp but things looked so different. A tank was over to my right with the BBC news on the radio. I did not know where the American or German lines were. I raised my head a little, and somebody took a shot at me. I peeked up under my helmet liner to see how I would get to the woods. I saw somebody look up and motion me with his finger. I was not sure who he was. I then looked over to my left and saw a small rain ditch by the woods. If I could crawl like a snake over to the low part I'd be okay, which is what I did. When I got to the edge of the woods, I rolled down into a deep shell hole and two GIs were standing up in the hole. It probably was 10 feet deep. I could tell they were shell shocked and I tried to get them to follow me when I ran out into the woods about 20 yards away. I laid down and called to them, but no answer.

The German artillery was shelling up and down the edge of the woods. I knew I could not wait on the GIs, so I ran another 15 or 20 yards, stopped and called again but no response. No one shot at me, so I felt I was in enemy grounds. I lowered my rifle so I would not shoot it at anyone. I thought I was walking into a German trap. I kept going in a straight direction. Finally I saw a soldier laying on the ground with a machine gun pointed at me. I walked up to him. He was lying in the weeds and I could not tell if he was American or German (the Germans were putting on American uniforms).

He said "halt, what is the password?" I told him our outfit left before we got the password but I'd tell him yesterday's password. The GI said, "that's no good." He asked me what outfit I was in, I told him and

he said, "I never heard of it." He asked "where do you live?" I said Cincinnati. He said, "that town does not have a ball team."

I said, "we have a good team, the Cincinnati Reds." We talked to each other about the Reds and the team statistics, then he was sure we were on the same side. Come to find out, the GI was from Covington, Ky. I told him about the 2 GIs in the shell hole. He said they brought up the engineers, cooks and anyone else to help take the town.

He told me where the American units were. I started that way and a tank with an officer asked me where I was going. He said turn around and go back the other way because we are getting a fighting force together, then he drove on. I followed him till he was out of sight then turned around and continued the way I was going where I found one of our half-tracks.

My right arm had no feeling, so they sent me to a field hospital near Nancy and then on to a hospital in Paris. After a day or so, the doctor asked me how I felt. I said. "good".

"Are you ready to return to your unit?"

I said "yes". He asked me how old I was. I said "38".

Then he said, "what the hell are they sending you old men over here for?" He said "I'm sending you to P2 or C2." I didn't know what that was, so I asked the nurse later what it meant.

She said, "you're lucky, you are going back to England." I was sure happy. The next day, a small four-seat plane took me to Paris. A few days later, they put me on a C-47 supply plane and left me off in Newberry, England. I knew I was on my way home sometime in the future."