

## **“Bennett’s Bastards”**

I’m in the 70<sup>th</sup> Division now. They had the job of clearing out the Ruhr Valley, the industrial part of Germany. But before I got there, I’m ahead of myself, we were fighting in France with Bennett’s Bastards to Wendel, close to the Saar River. At the Saar River the Germans were pretty thick. Some of the French people liked the Germans, some of them didn’t. So the war changed for me, I couldn’t talk to the people because I didn’t know who to trust. We got in a battle at Wendel and it must have lasted about two weeks. I ran on patrols and I went on some patrols down to the Saar River. I would look across the Saar River and I could see Germans on the other side. Then I would run reports back. One squad went down to the edge of the river, Bennett went too. There was a railroad track on the French side, and another big track on the German side in Saarbrücken. It was night time. We made a commotion throwing hand grenades and hollering, “Bring up the boats.” We were trying to find out how much fire power they had over there. My dad had sent me a pair of gloves, rabbit fur lined gloves. I was lying down by the railroad track and somebody hollered, “grenade!” But I thought they said, “It’s a raid!” I rolled over on my back and was shooting up into the trees and bushes along the bank at everything I could see. The Germans were shooting machine guns. I had one bullet stuck cross-ways in my gun chamber. I couldn’t get my gun working. I could see from the light of the tracer bullets that one shell was cock-eyed because my glove got caught in the chamber. I pulled the glove off and never used gloves again to fire my gun.

Bennett was going to throw a grenade over to the river bank, but his hand got caught on the railroad wire. He dropped the grenade from his hand and hollered, “Grenade!” One guy jumped over the top of me and everybody hit the ground. It rolled up against the tracks and the damn thing went off. But it didn’t hurt anybody. Only one guy had the heel of his shoe blown off. One man’s boot out of seven guys raising all kind of cain.

Then I had patrols in the daytime along the Saar River. The Germans were shooting machine guns across the river. Tony Flossi was on a patrol with me. We were in a French town near the Saar River. He was on the left side of the street and I was on the right. I was on the safer side. There was a curve in the street

going down a steep hill and I had the better view. The Germans caught Tony with a machine gun and he jumped behind a pair of steps going up a bank, big stone stairs. Every time he moved they would shoot at him, and I hollered to him, "I'll pick them off." I jumped into the basement window of a house and landed in a coal bin, full of coal. I listened for any noise in the house. I went upstairs and nobody was in the house. I went into the yard and peeked over a stone wall. I still couldn't see anybody. I couldn't find the Germans and I couldn't see Tony. I went around the house and eventually came back to where the squad was. And Tony was there! This was about two hours later. They only shot his canteen off his belt and he never got hurt. And how he made it back I'll never know. I don't know how he did it, but he did! And that was our battle. Wendel was a very, very hard battle. Very hard. In and out, in and out. That's where a building caved in on me.

I came in one night and I was going to jump on the couch in this house and go to sleep. But another guy jumped on it ahead of me. So I pulled the couch out from the wall and I laid my pack down on the floor behind the couch. The shells were coming in and the plaster was falling down from the walls. It was terrible. When I got up in the morning the boy on the couch was dead. That's what happened. The wall caved in on me so they took me back to Nancy France to get checked by the medics in a field hospital tent. Everybody there was wounded. They had patches and bandages, and they're lying there wounded, all around everywhere. By this time it's getting pretty cold. They looked me over and said, "You're battle worthy, go back to the lines." They couldn't find any blood on me, but I was peeing and pooping blood. They said, "You go back to the lines." So, I did.