



My father, Pfc. Vreeland “Vree” Embler, was called “Pops” because, at 38 years old, he was one of the oldest grunts in the Anti-tank Company of the 324<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The 324<sup>th</sup> was originally assigned to the 44<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. But in October, 1944, the 324<sup>th</sup> was attached to the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. That was the same month that he was wounded near Luneville, France, receiving a Purple Heart & three Bronze Stars.

According to his Honorable Discharge paperwork, he fought on through Central Europe & the Rhineland. When he was finished fighting, he recovered at a castle in Schwetzingen, Germany. There, on May 16 & 17, 1945, he wrote two letters to my mother, Kay, about what he had gone through in the Battle of the Bulge.

May 16, 1945:

*Dear Kay, this is a beautiful morning, birds singing, people going about their daily chores. I never told you much about my battle experiences. Remember when you sent me the headlines where the 7<sup>th</sup> Army slashes into Germany? We did go into positions in Germany but only stayed two days and had to withdraw. They were sending divisions down in the Bulge, when the Germans made that break thru New Years. Our Regiment was covering where a Division should have been. Then the Jerries hit us. It was New Years Eve, three minutes past twelve.*

*Our Company was cut-off. We had orders to hold at all costs. My squad and myself (seven left out of ten) got in a house that had three floors, all concrete, and we took posts at windows. The Jerry artillery started and lasted for two hours. They blasted the roof right off the house, each one of us thought we would never see another day. Two of the boys were all cut-up by shrapnel.*

*After they blasted hell out of us with their artillery, then came the attack. There was a clearing between the house and the woods, about two hundred yards wide. When the Jerries came across that clearing, we tried to make every shot count, and did. We just piled them up in the field. We had plenty of ammunition and we sure did use it.*

*They tried four attacks like that and each time we just slaughtered them. The Jerries also dropped some paratroopers in front of our machine gun nest. About fourteen, I believe it was, and the boys took one prisoner for information, and the other thirteen lay in the field where they landed.*

*It was cloudy when daylight came, but I thought it was the most beautiful day I had ever seen. That was when General Devers gave us the Citation. It was only a Division Citation—our Company had repulsed four attacks from a crack Panzer outfit. It has been tough going from start to finish, I hope I never have to go through another day of combat as long as I live. You just can't explain it to someone who was never there, they just don't understand.*

*The first two Jerries that I killed were on a patrol, five of them. I killed two with a hand grenade, Fires killed the other three with a rifle. This happened the third nite we were in combat. We both got nervous as hell.*

*I think I can tell this now—our Colonel was killed the first day in combat. You remember our little Captain? He was killed the fourth day. The Captain had come up to pay us, a Lieutenant was with him. They heard an 88 shell coming in, so they jumped in a foxhole, with a Private and a Corporal. The shell hit him right square in the hole, and all four of them were blown to hell. The Captain was the worst. I helped dig him out. I had about a helmet full of what was supposed to be the Captain. I sure got sick at the stomach.*

May 17, 1945:

*Dear Kay, This town I'm staying in was not bombed. But Manheim, which is about ten miles from here, was hit heavy, most of the houses were leveled to the ground. I mentioned Chamberlain in another letter. He had his feet cut-off by a piece of shrapnel two days before I went to the hospital.*

*We had a lot of casualties the first month in combat. Honey, your prayers must have been answered, for I have been so close to being killed that I could hear the Angels sing, and I prayed a little bit too, believe it or not, lots of times.*

*Before you go into an attack is the worst part, it's really hell, you sit there waiting for the zero hour, you have time to think what might happen to you, your throat gets dry, you perspire, you think of home, then the word comes forward, everybody jumps like a coil spring, the tension is broken, you are no longer a human, just an animal out to kill or be killed, it lasts for maybe two, three hours, you dig-in for defensive positions, then the sad part comes, check-up time, we would never say, "Who got killed?" just "Who went the hard way."*

Submitted by Paul Embler

Woodland, California

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