

Battle of the Bulge: After Action Report

I want to thank our members that attended the Battle of the Bulge event at Indiantown Gap. The event this year was the best that it has been in quite some time. Many of those in attendance have said that it was the best ever of the Bulge events put on by the Federation.

Big Red One Attendees:

T/3 Markey, Robin	Pvt Hain-Matson, Jeff
Sgt Genowitz, Mark	Pvt Kirby, Russell
Sgt Travis, Robert	Pvt Kirby, Scott
T/4 Kern, Charles	Pvt Knaper, Thomas
Cpl Aulenbach, John	Pvt Lehrmann, Matt
Cpl Kowalkowski, Steve	Pvt Matuszek, Walter
Pfc Jeffers, William	Pvt Stratton, William
Pvt Bard, Travis	Pvt Wagner, John
Pvt Barton, Robert	Pvt Zappone, Andrew
Pvt Brown, Michael	Hipple, Roger (War Correspondent)
Pvt Budnick, John	Hipple, Linda
Pvt Bush, Gary	Lare, Nancy
Pvt Bush, Jacob	McGinnis, Laura
Pvt Dolhanczyk, Jeff	Updegraff, Lorraine

Big Red One Vehicles:

M3-A1 Half-track (Hain-Matson)
WC-52, weapons carrier, ¾-ton Truck (Kern)
Motorcycle w/sidecar (Markey)
MB, ¼-ton truck (Dolhanczyk)

Registration Issues:

All the registration forms were checked several times to ensure that they were indeed filled out correctly before mailing. The registrations and checks from Big Red One were mailed in to the Federation in a single large envelope. However, when the event website was checked a couple weeks after they were sent in to verify that all our members were registered about 1/3 of those

signed up were not listed. This was later fixed, as it turns out they were overwhelmed with registrations for the event this year.

Flea Market:

Once again there was a good selection in the flea market this year. All of the major vendors of reproductions were in attendance. One vendor did have to set-up in a tent due to the one building being renovated.

Thursday Recon:

Though it was billed as a tactical this was not the case. The purpose of the recon actually gives the unit commanders and the vehicle drivers on both sides the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the training area that will be used for the tacticals during the event. After the initial map reading exercises were over we were given the remainder of the session to further reconnoiter the area either mounted or dismounted. Many of the participants took this as an opportunity for a trail ride.

Despite the fact there was no firing during the recon Company K used the next best thing on the Germans, verbal abuse. Private Hain-Matson assisted in the recovery of a mired jeep by loaning his tow chains. This was the warmest of the three days in the training area at 40°F.

Friday Tactical:

After finding our primary defensive positions Company K settled in and waited in the cold. The temperature had plummeted overnight into the single digits plus wind chill from the day before. Our three supporting vehicles, (the half-track, weapons carrier, and motorcycle w/sidecar), soon joined us. Unfortunately, Dolhanczyk's jeep was not present in the tactical due to some mechanical issue.

We initially were not expecting to see action so soon based on previous Bulge events. The German attack came from the left of the company's position not long after the vehicles arrived. Company K held its position for a time allowing a neighboring unit to withdraw. When it came our turn, the half-track provided mobile cover fire for the company to withdraw. It was pretty much a running battle throughout the day. At one point a German got on the radio and taunted the company commander. It was later found out that Company K was up against one of the better German units, the 2nd Gebirgsjager.

Aside from the frigid temperatures the tactical on Friday went well with few complaints. There was a bit of a concern about ammunition supply for Saturday for some, but that was later fixed.

Saturday Tactical:

The day started as cold as it was on Friday with the exception that the Allied units would be retaking the ground given up to the Germans. The coordination between the company and the vehicles was improved by the placement of a 2-way radio in the half-track. Another improvement over Friday was a supply of hot coffee carried by the half-track.

Company K's initial advance met little resistance up to and including our initial check point. The company then held in our advanced positions until the units on our left flank caught up due to being delayed by terrain and German opposition. The company's advance then resumed after our flank caught up. Resistance stiffened as we approached a wooded area beyond a road that ran perpendicular to our advance. Not long after we gained a foothold in the wooded area a halt was called due to a medical emergency. After the medical emergency was resolved the advance continued. Company K ended the day not only succeeding in retaking the positions held Friday morning, the company also in the process succeeded in turning the Germans' flank and attacking them from behind.

A special tip of the hat to our drivers, vehicle crew members, and their vehicles, they were key on several occasions Saturday. Charlie Kern evacuated several people getting hypothermic to a warming station. There were several occasions the half-track played a role. Those that stick out are: Exposing the positions of approximately 35 Germans, concealing the advance of a squad taking a crossroads, and aiding in the destruction of a self-propelled gun.