

Taped Interview

Dallas Reunion 2006

Darrell Elliott, Co. I 410th

When you made medic what happened next? At a hospital, they taught me various things about compression bandages, stopping bleeding, and pressure points. *What are the pressure points?* It has been a long time; like that was in 1942 and 1943. You know like you have in your elbow and on your neck. *Where the arteries are?* Yes, and you put pressure on those to control the bleeding. You have them in your groin. You know if you had a leg injury, then you used that particular one. Different points around the body. And, like I said, it has been a long time. I never stayed in it so I don't remember.

What medicines did they use? Basically, sulfa drugs and penicillin. Penicillin was one of the big ones that they used at that time. Lots of sulfa drugs. *Was it in powder?* As far as I can remember, powder and they had some sulfa tablets that we used. *How about a painkiller, what was that, morphine?* Yes, our packets had Morphine syringes in them that we used. *Where did you draw your water to keep the wounds clean?* M'an, that is a

hard problem. You know, you had a hard time keeping enough water to drink let alone using it to clean up wounds and stuff.

But like I say, I was not on the front lines very long. So, I did not have that experience. I was only on the front lines 18 days before a sniper hit me and then it took me almost a year in the hospital to get home. *Where were you shot? What part of the body?* Went right through my left elbow and broke two ribs, one round. It paralyzed my hand. I still do not have use of my hand. And, I was left handed. So, it was quite a deal.

You were in the hospital in Europe? Then they sent you back to the States?

They sent me to England and I was in one of the, I think it was the 49th General Hospital in England that they had set up at that time. From there I came to Fitzsimmons in Denver. Then I went on furlough. After the furlough or whatever they was preparing a rehabilitation hospital in Fort Lewis, Washington. When they got that facility ready to go they told me my furlough was over and I had to report to Fort Lewis. I was in Fort Lewis and I don't remember how long, but quite a little while. Then they sent me to Brigham City, Utah, Brigham General Hospital. From there I got my discharge. *What therapy if any did they give you?* One of the biggest things that they did was a paraffin bath. You would go in and they would have this tub of paraffin, melted you know. It would be hot. You would put your arm

down in that. First, of all they would massage the area with oil and get it all loosened up. Then you would dip it in this paraffin, take it out, and let it cool a little bit. Then you would go back in it and when they would get about ½ inch of that all the way around, it got pretty doggone warm, Well then, they would let you sit there for 30 minutes or so. Then they would peel that all off. Then they went to work, exercising, moving my arm. At that time, I couldn't wiggle a finger on this hand. It was completely paralyzed because the bullet when it went through my arm nicked the median nerve that comes down to your hand. And so, when I got into the hospital, they operated on that nerve. I was still there in France somewhere. They operated on that nerve, stretched it, and glued it back together. They put a lot of Tallun foil around that nerve which was right in the joint and bent it thousands of times. I had to go in and they tried to clean that stuff all up. They called the foil tallum. It was foil made out of tallum. That is what they put around the nerve to keep the scar tissue from growing back to the nerve. It has never been right.

Years after that I developed a lot of arthritis in that elbow. It is not much good. *Did they get the bullet out of your ribs?* I didn't stop it. That bullet is "still going" as far as I know. *How did you happen to get shot by a sniper? Were you in the woods?* We were moving. The company was

advancing or moving from one place to another and we got into a machine gun ambush type thing. We were following L Company. Two soldiers from L Company were hit by machine gun fire. Of course, they started screaming “Medic”. I went up to see what I could do for them. One of them had flesh wounds and the other one had a broken leg. He had been hit three places in the leg and the leg was all broke. They were everywhere hollering and raising Cain. As soon as I got the one patched up and got the blood stopped, I told him to go back to the rest of the guys in the company. I went to work on the one with the broken bones. He couldn’t walk. I splinted them the best I could. *What did you use for a splint?* Just whatever I could find. It was a wooded area. And I used the bandages and stuff that I had and splinted him. Then I got him up over my back and I was carrying him when the sniper hit me. We went down. *Then somebody came, got you, and got him?* I do not know what happened to him. I know they came up on a jeep from battalion, put me across the hood, and strapped me down. Then we started out of there. There were mortar shells hitting forty yards behind us as we was going down this road. Finally, we got back to the battalion. That is the last thing I remember until the next morning and I was in the hospital. They had operated on this arm and cased me. Most of my upper body was in a cast except for my arm. One big body cast. Quite an experience. *How*

many medics were attached to a company? Just one. So, they had to replace you. They finally replaced me. The injury occurred on the 28th day of November and I understood that they did not get another medic until April. I don't know that for sure. Don't quote me on that. They lost a lot of people in-between there.

They had a big ole woman there in the hospital who weighed a couple hundred pounds. She would come in and work that arm all over. She put her towel under my elbow and bear down on that thing. Tears would run it hurt so badly. After that, they would take a bucket with sand in it and tape it to my wrist. I was to carry that eight hours a day stretching that arm. They told me they were going to make my arm work. When the doctors operated on me the first time they said, "If you had been conscious we would have told you we could remove that arm. But since you weren't we left it on for cosmetic purposes. You will have a fixed joint and it will just be there for looks." Somebody must have had His hand on my shoulder. I went on the line on the 10th and I got hit on the 28th, 7o'clock in the morning. It was still almost dark. My citation for my Bronze Star said that I advanced within 20 feet of a machine gun nest, rescued these two soldiers and got them back to the company lines.

Here I did not think I had anything to say! I was discharged from the service in Brigham City, Utah on 18th of October. When I got home there was a contractor waiting for me and said, "I got a job for you. I want you to go to work. I said there is not a lot I can do but I did. I went to work and I became an operator, and spent several years as an operator. I learned how to operate a crane. One day this guy I was working for came by and he said, "Come here, you are not an operator anymore." I said, "What did I do wrong?" He said, "Nothing." He said I was going to stay on the ground. He said, "You are too valuable to sit in that crane." He said, "I could get anyone to sit in there." He said, "I need a good superintendent or foreman to oversee pouring curb and gutter." So I worked.

Beginning to end

From the farm to the induction center and into the U.S.ARMV Infantry at Camp Claiborne Louisiana. This was a real change from farm life. Tar paper shacks and bunk beds in December 1942, where I began my basic training as a medic to be attached to I Company 410th Infantry. Yes life was very different from that day on. I went through basics with the medics while spending a lot of time with the rifle Company doing their basics. When I entered the service I weighed 130 lbs. but with regular hours and a very good diet and heavy exercise, by the end of the first year I weighed in at 175 lb. So you see the Army was good for me.

Some time during this year the Company was on a field maneuver. It was late at night and it was raining very hard when our chow arrived. There was no way to get out of the rain to eat, so as I was eating, my mess kits filled with water, I just kept on eating the solids, when there were no more solids, I dumped the rest and called it a feast. Oh it could have been much worse; we could have been under fire. Another field maneuver that we were on it managed to rain again and our chow was late arriving and while waiting, I developed the worst stomach ache that you could imagine. This time I was taken to the hospital and it turned out to be appendicitis. I underwent the operation and spent seven days in the hospital, then a seven day convalescent leave and back to training. The first day back with the company they were scheduled a twenty-five mile hike with a full field pack. With the assistance of a couple squad leaders and practically dragging me we made the hike in less than eight hours. That's a great experience.

Another maneuver that we were on, the situation was tactical and we were all dug in and one of the boys needed to smoke so he crawled into a slit trench and pulled his shelter half over his head to block the light and was bitten on the wrist by a timber rattler snake so I applied a tourniquet, slit the wound and sucked out the poison and sent him to the hospital. Following these maneuvers, the Division was sent Camp Howse Texas. After arriving there, several of the soldiers were shipped over seas as replacements and were replaced in the Division with boys from the army specialized training units to train with the Company until the division shipped over to France as a unit. On the 12th of September, my wife gave birth to our first son in Salina Kansas and I did not want to go over seas without meeting him, so I got a three day pass and went to Salina Ks. On my return to camp at Lawton Oklahoma, my pass was checked by the S.P.S. The pass was only good for a fifty mile radius of camp and Lawton is much further than that so I AWOL. Being a pretty good talker, I was able to get them to let me to continue on to camp so that I could answer reverie the next morning, which I did. So you see I have not always been the perfect one.

Upon arriving in France my time with the Company was short lived. On the eighteenth day on the battle front, I was called upon to treat a couple of soldiers that were hit by machine gun fire and return them to safety, I was hit by sniper fire in the left elbow and left chest. That was my last day with Company I. I was sent to a field hospital and then on to England. From there, it was back to the United States of America. I was sent to Fitzsimmons hospital, then to Mt. Rainer general Hospital Ft. Lewis Washington for rehabilitation for several months and then on to Brigham Young General Hospital Brigham City Utah for more

rehabilitation. There on the 18th. Day of October 1945 I received my discharge from the service. I am very proud to have given two years eleven months and eighteen days service for our country.

Some forty-five years later Bill Alpern located and contacted me and I became a member of the 103rd Infantry Division reunion.

Signed Darrell D. Elliott

The Tribune

Serving
northern Colorado
since 1870.

18 days of war: Medic who took bullet rescuing soldier spent almost a year in hospital

To hear Darrell Elliott talk about earning the Bronze Star, click on the Web Extras link to the right.

**Andrew Villegas, (Bio) avillegas@greeleytribune.com
November 18, 2007**

Darrell Elliott knew it was a German sniper. He saw the flash. He felt the bullet hit him as he carried a wounded soldier with a broken leg on his back through a ditch in a small town in France.

The bullet entered his left elbow, breaking all three bones in it, and entered his chest, breaking two ribs.

After his unit inside the 103rd Division came under heavy machine-gun fire in a small town in France and two of his comrades were wounded, Elliott, a medic, was Johnny-on-the-spot administering aid. It was a far cry from the farm he grew up on in Gypsum, Kan., but Elliott did his duty and took a bullet for it.

Now 87, Elliott spent the better part of the year after he was shot recovering from his wounds in the hospital. The wound left his left arm disabled. For his bravery, Elliott received the Bronze Star with an oak leaf cluster. Elliott also received the Purple Heart and the Good Conduct Medal.

He never saw combat or the front lines again. His tenure with his unit in the European theater was 18 days.

"There was something to do all the time," Elliott said. "Army life wasn't boring to me."

These days, Elliott enjoys gardening at his son's 10-acre farm near his own east Greeley home. Elliott and his wife moved to Greeley from Arvada in 2001.

This year, Elliott said, he grew a tomato that was 18 inches around and made 60 quarts of tomato juice and 22 pints of pickled beets. Last year, he grew a 77-pound pumpkin.

As state commander of the Colorado Veterans of Foreign Wars from 1986-87, Elliott was sent to Germany to revisit the theater where he spent just 18 days fighting Germans.

For one of 10 children of a Kansas farming family, Elliott knows where his priorities lay. He liked Europe, but his work and his family are in America.

After Elliott received a discharge, he took a job doing construction work on state highways. He took the same approach to his construction job as he did to the Army.

"I enjoyed my work," Elliott said, clearly giving away his optimistic nature. "I never hated my work. I missed very few days."



Darrell Elliott's tenure in the European theater of World War II


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lasted only 18 days. He was struck by a sniper bullet while rescuing a wounded soldier, an act that got him a stay in the hospital for almost a year in recovery.

Photo illustration by JIM RYDBOM / jrydbom@greeleyt.com

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WEB EXTRAS

 [WWII vet: Darrell Elliott earns bronze star.](#)

DARRELL ELLIOTT

«AGE: 87

«HOMETOWN: Gypsum, Kan.

«CURRENT RESIDENCE: Greeley

«OCCUPATION: Retired from heavy and highway construction.

«BRANCH OF SERVICE: Army

«SERVED WHERE DURING THE WAR: European theater France/Germany

«ASSIGNMENT/MOS: Medic, 103rd Division, 410 Infantry, Company I

«MEDALS EARNED: Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart, Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster.

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