

John F. McBurney

Attorney

15 Arlington Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860
(401) 725-4730 - (401) 722-5190

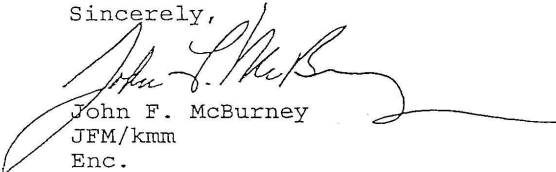
April 1, 1996

Mr. Luke Martin
45 Salty Way East
Selbyville, Delaware 19975

Dear Mr. Martin:

In accordance with the instructions from secretary, Betty Elsworth, I hereby submit the following experience December 10th and 11th, 1944 of three individuals from Company E 411th regiment in the town of Woerth-Alsace, France.

Sincerely,



John F. McBurney
JFM/kmm
Enc.

John F. McBurney
EXPERIENCE - 1944

At daybreak, December 10, 1944, after an all night patrol of Company E 411th Regiment of the 103rd Division a fire fight erupted with the enemy outpost one mile south west of Woerth-Alsace, France.

Suddenly and surprisingly the enemy bolted from his fortifications and retreated into the town.

BAR man, William Chick, Private Harold Spinner and Private John McBurney gave chase.

As it turned out they were being led into a trap as the Town was still enemy occupied.

When McBurney reached the main street he was met with a demand to surrender by several of the enemy. Without responding, McBurney ducked back into the courtyard and bolted the door of a high wooden fence.

McBurney then hid in the house of the mayor where he joined up with Chick and Spinner.

The trio took up positions on the second floor giving them an unlimited field of fire.

Although surrounded, Chick killed the enemy commander with a burst of the BAR.

His body lay in the street for the remainder of the day, but was removed under cover of darkness.

That night no one slept in the small room. The sounds of enemy activity could be heard through most of the night.

Before dawn, loud hob nail boots could be heard coming up the stairs and believing this to be the enemy, firing positions were assumed. However, it only turned out to be the mayor himself. He came with the news that the "Boche" had moved out during the night.

5/25/96

John F. McBurney

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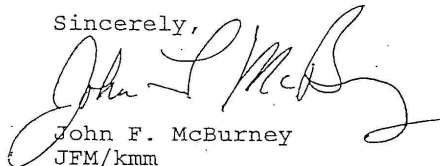
May 23, 1996

Mr. Luke Martin
45 Salty Way East
Selbyville, Delaware 19975

Dear Mr Martin:

In accordance with the instructions from secretary, Betty Elsworth, I hereby submit the following incident of December 7, 1944 between E Company 411th Regiment and the enemy in the vicinity of Griesbach, Alsace, France.

Sincerely,



John F. McBurney
JFM/kmm
Enc.

A MEMORABLE INCIDENT

At noon, December 7, 1944 E Company of the 411 regiment of the 103rd division, under the command of Lt. William Kasper, was in a North easterly advance in Alsace toward the German border. After crossing the Zintzel River in Griesbach, a unit of the enemy was observed in an open field about one half mile away.

Lt. Kasper believed they were Roumanians because of their uniform colors and believed they wanted to surrender.

Lt. Kasper took the rifle from Private John McBurney and ordered him to go out and take the surrender. When McBurney met with the with three of them at the middle of the field they were armed and had no intention of surrender, and thought instead the Americans were surrendering.

One of them raised his rifle and fired point blank at McBurney and missed. At that point a heavy weapons platoon machine gunner opened fire and Lt. Kasper, Sgt. Ralph McManus and Private Conrad Hermann rushed out.

The enemy retreated and that was the only shot they fired that day.

John F. McBurney

Attorney

15 Arlington Street
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March 5, 2001

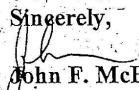
Lucas Martin
75 Salty Way East
Selbyville, DE 19975

Dear Luke:

This is a record which was recently mailed to me 55 years later by Alonzo Bryant of 10 days that the three of us, Alonzo Bryant, Anthony C. Hranek and myself, from Company E, 2nd platoon, 411th. We were in enemy territory when we got separated during the attack on St. Die.

I thought you would be interested.

Sincerely,


John F. McBurney

jfm

Started on Dec. 27 2000 / *Finished Jun 25 02*

Francis!:

That's how I knew you, and it was my Grandfather's name, and I loved him dearly, so if you don't care, I'll go that way.

We had just taken a little village on the slopes of the Vosges overlooking the Rhine Plain, and were standing around waiting for further orders. A medical unit had caught up with us and orders were given for the outfit to form a line and get checked out. Now that it's over, it might have been typhus they were looking for. You and I were at the end of that line formed by soldiers going into a typical French whorehouse. I went in just before you, and the Major in charge, standing beside a collapsible steel table, told me to get out of my raincoat, combat jacket, sweater, woolen shirt, and upper woolen underwear. I shed it all and got on the table. The Major was listening to my heart while probing under my chin and arms, when a medic ran in and said, "Fold up! We're moving out." The Major ordered me off the table, told me to get my clothes on, folded his table, closed his numerous medical chests, and with the help of his staff, carried everything out. I got dressed, stepped outside, and the only soldier I could spot was Francis McBurney. The big red cross on the back of a meat wagon was disappearing in the distance. Shortly, a few other soldiers showed, and after much discussion it was determined that the Company had mounted into 2 1/2 ton trucks and ridden off into the wild blue yonder, supposedly moving on Strasbourg. You and I elected to go after them while the others preferred to wait in the village.

We headed north, following the cobblestone road that intersected a two lane highway. The world was empty but for you and me, and a cold night was coming on fast. We went to a house on the east side of the road, and it was deserted. We did not go in, but chose to try a secluded farmhouse to the west side. It was the last building in view. We beat on the door, and you talked to the Frenchman that answered. In a few minutes we were eating potato peeling soup, and drinking warm liquid. It was good for two hungry GIs without food. We traded cigarettes for the favors, and after eating we went through a side door into the barn, and climbed into a frozen loft and buried ourselves in the hay. I remember taking my boot packs off and putting on dry socks before I went under. I looked but couldn't see you.

We left in the early morning. I don't remember saying "Goodbye," to the people there. The road had filled with two and a half ton trucks loaded with troops, all going north toward Strasbourg. It was not the 103rd. Faintly I recall the ~~103rd~~ Division. We walked quite awhile, and because we

3RB

were walking faster than the trucks were rolling, we occasionally had words with the soldiers, and eventually climbed into one of the carriers to share their rations and ride. This slow roll went on for hours, and the sun moved into the west. Then it happened. Trucks, loaded with infantry, drove past us, going south. Same trucks, same men, that had previously gone north. In an hour or so, we too reached the point of Lurnback. MPs were signaling like George Scott, playing Patton, as they turned the convoy around and back to the south. You and I got off. We talked to an MP and learned that their move on Strasbourg had been cancelled. He did not know if the 103rd was in an attack, and encouraged us to go south. The road from that point to the city hidden in the hazy distance was empty, and it was afternoon. We chose to continue north with everyone else turning south. Alone in a hostile world we walked and walked, passing lonely looking habitats, searching the river plain on one side and the mountains on the other in an eiry silence that made you think there was no war. Finally the distant sound of explosions proved that the fighting was still going on. We eventually reached a brewery where a few American Vehicles were parked, and stood by, watching P47s dive bomb a monstrous bunker built on the face of a cliff overlooking the plain. The outfit there was coordinating the bombing attack, and it wasn't too long before word came down that seventy or eighty Germans had waved the white flag. You and I got something to eat and continued our lonely trek to the north. Night was just a stone's throw away.

We came upon the railyards south of the city. They seemed vast and unending, but as we crossed them, we discovered, in the fading light of day two, a quiet tree lined street with a Cathedral facing the tracks. We went in and in a few moments a Priest approached us. You, with your fluent French, and a few cigarettes, achieved two successes. Food and permission to sleep in the church. The Priest made it clear that no American troops were in Strasbourg. We were the liberators.

On the third day, we roamed the small cobblestoned allys and went through streets where you could shake hands from opposite balconies. All on the outskirts of the larger city. No sign of other soldiers. Especially 103rd troops. Gunfire was isolated and rare, but as we cautiously entered a large boulevard lined with small shops, we spotted a tank sitting against the curb. It was not manned, and strapped to the rear deck was a couple of cardboard boxes labeled "10 in 1." At that time we figured it was American, but it turned out to be American in the hands of the French. Unexpectedly, automatic fire broke out along the street in front of us, and we ducked into a narrow allyway close by. The ally ended in a small courtyard at the rear doors of the streetside shops. Behind the blackout of one place we heard voices singing, and recognized French. We knocked at the door and it was opened by a nice looking guy, dressed in civies, holding a glass of

fizz and we were invited to come in. You did all the talking, but it turned out that they were having a party. About eight or nine Frenchmen and women were celebrating the liberation of Strasbourg, which hadn't yet taken place. We had drinks with them, and they sang the French National Anthem. The fizz must have gone to our heads, and we sang it in English. The French applauded and cried. They were dumbfounded that American soldiers could sing their Anthem. I had learned it in school before I reached the sixth grade. Filled the Marseillaise, the anthem was written in Strasbourg. We had a couple of drinks and they crowded the door, waving goodbye to us. Back to the tank, we used bayonets to break the steel strap to the Ten in ones and helped ourselves, cigarettes and all, and went along the boulevard, carrying what we could. A few civilians were on the walks and somehow you struck up a conversation with a middle aged French woman, and we ended up in her room, sharing the food with her, and giving her cigarettes to parley for other food on the black market. We spent the evening with you and her talking about things that I did not understand, and then we went off to sleep to the sound of sporadic and sometimes close gunfire.

We had a breakfast on the goodwill of the American Army and went into the streets on day four hoping once more to find another American soldier. In the heart of the city we stood on the perimeter of a large Plaza split by a canal running through, and watched French women, on the lower waterside level, pound their clothing with large wooden clubs. Over at the northeast corner of the Plaza, the Notre Dame du Strasbourg was standing like it had a twin in Paris. We went there and you walked around it like a realtor about to buy. The rear had been hit by the war, and there was damage, though not extensive. While we were conducting our inspection, a couple of German shells landed in the Plaza, and all the civilians went in different directions. We later discovered that the Germans shelled each day at the same time, as if to let everyone know that they had not yet given anyone the keys to the city. We also discovered that the neighborhood fighting was between the Free French Maquis and a few German rear guards. In the early part of the night, we had entered what appeared to be large school, having hallways bordered with multiple doorways that seemed to open into what could have been classrooms. We were looking for a secure place to spend the night. I remember going into a huge office labeled Administrator and looting a genuine copy of "Mein Kampf," bearing Hitler's personal signature. I also took a pewter pitcher with the Swastika. It was surprising that the place was totally unsecured. Just about that time we heard the heavy clatter of tank treads, and taking cover we waited for the first to appear. A bearded French soldier was sitting on the front of an American made Sherman, and pulling on a very large bottle of wine. It was the first of the French First Army. The Americans had been turned back by

Churchhill and Ike, to let the glory of liberation go to the French. We didn't know this at the time, but it was a good thing to see the tanks with the French emblem on them.

Day five was an experience. The city was at peace except for shelling from across the Rhine which came promptly at five PM. On this day we met our first American soldier. He was an officer of the 79th Division, who incidentally had as his patch, the cross of Lorraine which in turn was the emblem of some of the French Forces. He invited us to his apartment where we cleaned up and made ourselves more presentable. After cleaning up we watched him candle dope in a saucer and put it in a drink and at that time we left.

Somehow we got the information that the Third Division had located headquarters quite some distance south, and we headed in that direction along the same highway that we had traveled coming north. It was at this time that General Patch came along in his jeep, sporting a thirty caliber machine gun at his right hand. He stopped to give us a lift. He asked us how we were doing, how our boot-pacs were doing, and talked like a father all the way to Third Division. He pulled up, and we got out in a hurry so we could salute him. He gave us directions to the communications department, wished us luck, and returned our salutes. After the troops of Third Division recovered from the shock, they got a jeep and hauled us south for quite some distance. We finally turned east toward the Rhine and on the road above a sawmill, they unloaded us and said the front was straight ahead. Then they hauled ass. We walked the remaining distance to Dambach, passing dead German soldiers, in the road, where they had been gunned down as they retreated to the Colmar pocket. Above the road embankment and toward the forest, soldiers were looting a small nylon factory of stockings to send home to their loved ones. The enemy, with their backs to the wall, and making nylons for their sweethearts? We walked through the ancient wall gate of Dambach, went to Headquarters and reported to Lt. Kasper. He was washing his feet and was glad to see us, and asked where we had been. We gave him an accounting and in a few hours we were in the attack on Selestat which is another story all together.

This has been quite an experience, reliving that time we were together, the only two American soldiers in Strasbourg. A welcoming committee for the French forces. Maybe the French Government would like to know about it. I hear they are looking for American vets who fought on French soil.

There may be a day when I will see you again. I remember a minute with you at the Miami terminal when I took a break and we had a drink. I also remember a time at Camp Howze when you hid a camera in the coal bin. Other things come to mind, and it would be an interesting night with a couple of drinks and time to talk.

We are in the midst of a record breaking drought, and one of the most miserably aggravating winters I have seen in a long time for Florida, but it can never compare with the cold foxholes filling with water, slowly but steadily rising as the heat robbed from our bodies defrosted the frozen earth. But we endured and it had to be for a reason, which may not be quite clear until our vision of things and events is much better than it has been to date. I will call you in a matter of time, but meanwhile let me know what you are doing and how you feel. There's an old saying that men who fight together, comrades or enemies, become brothers. Maybe it's true.

Deep Affection.

al

PS Thanks for all the pics and the book etc. Do you want them returned? If so and if not - please write and let me know what's going on.

The guys look the same in the pics. All of them good men, better than me!

I've traveled a lot, and been to a lot of places, including the old battlegrounds. Found a helmet at Ft. Die, and didn't have sense enough to keep it (the canal was dry when Sherman and others gave the map.)

Do you remember the first night after action. We slept under a tarp pulled over a jeep, after we delivered the wounded. Memories!

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT
3A

HEADQUARTERS 103d INFANTRY DIVISION
Office of the Commanding General

APO 470, U. S. Army
1 June 1945

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER - 159)

AWARD OF BRONZE STAR MEDAL

Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, the Bronze Star Medal is awarded following named individuals:

* * * * *

Private First Class John F. McBurney, Jr., 31385085, Infantry, Headquarters Company, Second Battalion, 411th Infantry Regiment. For heroism in action. On 11 December 1944 in a village near Woerth, France, Private McBurney moved to the side entrance of a courtyard adjoining a house while a comrade covered the rear entrance in an attempt to locate an enemy machine gun emplacement. Observing two enemy soldiers dash across the street and hide behind the house, Private McBurney attempted to run across the courtyard only to be forced to take cover from hostile machine gun fire. He then crawled the remainder of the distance to the house and, discovering the enemy about to shoot his comrade, fired his weapon, killing one of the enemy and forcing the other to surrender. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. Residence: Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

* * * * *

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER GENERAL PIERCE:

G. S. MELOY, JR.,
Colonel, G.S.C.,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

/s/ A W Croll
A. W. CROLL
Lt. Col., A.G.D.,
Adjutant General.

Paul Carter

Dec 11, 1944