

## DOUGLAS H. MERRILL



THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT DOUG, VERNON SWANSON, JIM PRICE AND ZACK SIGLER WERE IN ON DECEMBER 2ND, 1944. THIS PICTURE IS HOW IT APPEARED WHEN D-COMPANY RETURNED TO SELESTAT IN 1985. THOUGH IT HAD BEEN RECONSTRUCTED, SHRAPNEL MARKING WERE STILL VISIBLE ON THE STRUCTURE. DOUG, JIM PRICE AND D-COMPANY VETERANS & FAMILY ARE SHOWN STANDING OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. (Notice the close proximity of the street to the house. The German Tanks were in the street at point blank range.)

DOUG MERRILL ENTERED SERVICE FROM ANN ARBOR, MI. REPORTED FOR BASIC TRAINING AT CAMP CLAIBORNE, LA. ON 11/19/42. WAS ASSIGNED TO 1ST PLATOON, 2ND SECTION OF D-COMPANY MACHINE GUNNERS. PARTICIPATED IN LOUISIANA 3<sup>RD</sup> ARMY MANEUVERS FROM SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH NOVEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> OF 1943. MOTOR MARCHED FROM MERRYVILLE, LA TO CAMP HOWZE IN GAINESVILLE, TX. LEFT CAMP HOWZE, BY TRAIN, ON SEPTEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> AND ARRIVED AT CAMP SHANKS, NY ON SEPT. 28<sup>TH</sup>. BOARDED USS MONTICELLO AND DEPLOYED FOR THE SOUTH OF FRANCE ON OCT. 6<sup>TH</sup>. WEATHERED HURRICANE AND ROUGH SEAS BUT FINALLY ARRIVED AT MARSEILLES, FRANCE ON OCTOBER 20<sup>TH</sup>, 1944. SPENT TWO WEEKS AT STAGING AREA NEAR CALAS. DEPARTED FOR THE FRONT ON NOV. 5<sup>TH</sup>. ARRIVED ON NOVEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> AND RELIEVED THE 3d INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE VICINITY OF EPINAL/CHARMOIS/DOCELLES. COMMITTED TO BATTLE ON NOV. 11<sup>TH</sup> AND FOUGHT WAY THROUGH THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS AS PART OF LT. GENERAL ALEXANDER PATCH'S 7<sup>TH</sup> ARMY. DOUG ACTED HEROICALLY AT SELESTAT IN STAYING BEHIND WITH HIS TWO INJURED COMRADES AND HELPING THEM TO ESCAPE CAPTURE. DOUG IS CREDITED FOR SAVING THE LIFE OF JIM PRICE BY CARRYING HIM TO SAFETY.

DOUG & JIM ARE TWO OF THE SIX THAT AVOIDED CAPTURE AT SELESTAT. DOUG CONTINUED TO FIGHT IN FRANCE AND GERMANY. HE WAS PROMOTED TO STAFF SERGEANT / SECTION LEADER. DOUG RECEIVED WOUND BY MORTAR SHRAPNEL ON 3/22/45 NEAR REISDORF, GERMANY. THIS SAME MORTAR SHELL ALSO WOUNDED AL SODMAN AND JACK DURRANCE.

### **SELESTAT**

AROUND 3:15AM ON DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>, 1944, 3 TO 6 GERMAN TANKS WITH APPROXIMATELY 600 SUPPORTING INFANTRY ROLLED DOWN THE STREET IN FRONT OF THE HOUSES THAT B & D COMPANIES WERE OCCUPYING. THE LEAD TANK WENT PAST THE HOUSES, ONLY TO BLOW THE BRIDGE THAT HAD BEEN VACATED. THE GIs ESCAPE ROUTE WAS GONE AND THEY HAD NO ANTI-TANK WEAPONRY. ONCE THE BRIDGE WAS GONE, THE TANKS FOCUSED ON THE MACHINE GUNS IN THE HOUSES. THEIR JOB WAS TO TAKE OUT THE MACHINE GUNS SO THEIR INFANTRY COULD SWARM THE HOUSES. THIS COULDN'T HAVE BEEN TOO DIFFICULT SINCE THE TANKS WERE AT POINT BLANK RANGE. THE FIRST 88 DESTROYED THEIR MACHINE GUN. THIS SHOT INSTANTLY KILLED SGT. VERNON SWANSON AND SERIOUSLY WOUNDED PFC JIM PRICE AND T/SGT ZACK SIGLER. DOUG WAS ONLY SHAKEN. IT WAS NOW APPARENT THAT THEY WOULD BECOME POWS. THEY KNEW THAT THE GERMAN TROOPS WOULD SOON BE ON THEM. THAT IS WHEN DOUG TOOK OVER. INSTEAD OF MAKING AN ATTEMPT FOR THE RIVER AND POTENTIAL SAFETY, HE CARRIED JIM PRICE TO THE BASEMENT AND THE THREE PLAYED DEAD. WHEN THE GERMANS CAME IN THE HOUSE, THEY SURVEYED THE PREMISES, ASSUMED THE WORST AND LEFT. HOWEVER, THEY REMAINED OUTSIDE THE HOUSE FOR SOME TIME.

AT DAYBREAK, ASSUMED TO BE 3 OR 4 HOURS LATER, THE THREE BATTERED GIs HEADED FOR THE RIVER AND SAFETY. DOUG CARRIED JIM AND ZACK HOBBLING AS BEST HE COULD. ZACK COLLAPSED AT THE RIVER BANK AND DIED FROM SHOCK OR BLOOD LOSS. JIM SURVIVED, THANKS TO DOUG'S HEROICS, BUT LOST A LEG AS A RESULT OF THE TANK BLAST.

## **DOUGLAS MERRIL PROVES A HERO**

The Douglas Merril, mentioned in the following letter, is a brother of Mrs. George Martin of South Ann Arbor street and his wife and child are residents of Ann Arbor:

Percy Jones General Hospital,  
Battle Creek, March 1.  
Co. D Commander 409 Inf.,  
U. S. Army.

Dear Sir:

I am writing you in reference to member of your company, Pfc. Douglas Merril.

On Dec. 2, 1944, I, being a member of Co. D then, was wounded along with four others, two of whom died. The enemy, having over-run our position, took all who could walk as prisoners. Merril without thought of personal safety, hid among the dead in order to not only give us lacking first-aid, but later, having stayed with us for 32 hours despite the fact that the enemy had full control of our position, joined enemy lines as our company attacked and gained again our position. Merril then braved enemy fire to bring medical aid to us.

In short, Sir, due to Merril's fortitude and unselfish acts, I am living today. I am sure that this, also, goes for the other two wounded men who were with me. If ever an American soldier was a credit to his heritage, Douglas Merril is.

Good luck to you always,  
James B. Price.