

Bulge

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Magrowski, 87, is from Reading, Pa., and now lives in Villas. He was a messenger with the 310th Signal Battalion of the 9th Army.

"It was a very dangerous job," Magrowski said.

Magrowski said he traveled day or night, regardless of the weather conditions, and he was always on the go, sometimes traveling 200 to 300 miles at a clip.

"I had one three-day pass the entire time I was in Europe," he said.

Magrowski said he normally traveled by jeep, which everyone thought was a wonderful machine, but he thought it was terrible. The vehicle had no heater, and the windshield wipers had to be operated by hand. He described layers of clothing he wore: long underwear, with two pair of pants, a wool shirt, his regular shirt, a sweater and his jacket. On his feet he had two pair of socks, boots, and galoshes. He wore a ski mask cap, two other caps and his helmet.

"And I was still cold," Magrowski said.

Magrowski was at Bastogne, Belgium, where he stopped to ask directions from a Military Policeman. He said he drove to the next intersection where he was stopped because vehicles were backed up. He heard an explosion, and looked back to see an explosive round had hit where he had spoken to the MP.

Magrowski recalled another mission where he had to get an urgent message to a paratrooper unit on the other side of the Rhine River. He said the Germans had destroyed

all the bridges crossing the Rhine, meaning he couldn't drive there.

"They left it up to the messenger to figure out how to get his messages delivered," Magrowski said.

He found American engineers working to install a



87th Infantry Division

pontoon bridge, and he asked if someone could take him across the river in a small boat. They refused, and he found the pilot of a Piper Cub, the type of plane used for reconnaissance. The pilot was only 18, but not much younger than Magrowski. He agreed to fly the messenger over the river, and while they were in flight, over the din of the engine, he asked Magrowski if he had a parachute.

"I didn't have a parachute," Magrowski said. "He pointed out the window and I could see the wing was all tattered. That's where I learned about duct tape."

They were able to land safely, and Magrowski delivered the message to the paratroopers. When he returned he found the young pilot had mended the wing with duct

tape. Magrowski said on one of his runs, he and his sidekick came across three German soldiers kneeling in the road. He said they were holding up pictures of family members, indicating they had family and would like to go back.

"At that time," Magrowski said, "there were only two things you were supposed to do with enemy soldiers: avoid them, or shoot them."

The sidekick searched the Germans for weapons, and finding none, asked Magrowski what they should do with them. He said he had them get in the back of the jeep and he delivered them to Belgian police officers. On the way back, he told his sidekick not to say a word about what they did.

"So as soon as we got back he



4th Infantry Division

told everybody," Magrowski said.

The commander called Magrowski in and told him it was a good thing he didn't bring them back with him.

Magrowski said he still remembers Christmas Eve 1944, when he was delivering

messages in the night, driving along without lights. He said he stopped at one point and was able to look at a newspaper the military provided. There on page one was an article saying Congress was going on vacation.

"I cried," Magrowski said.



7th Army

"All I could think of was 'What the hell are we doing here?'"

After all his harrowing experiences in Europe, the ship bringing Magrowski home went through a hurricane.

Cosentino, 92, still goes by Rocky. He grew up at 15th and Tasker in South Philly, and is a member of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Battle of the Bulge Veterans. He was assigned to the 773rd Field Artillery Battalion during the Battle of the Bulge. Cosentino, spoke less about his experiences in the war, only saying his unit was sent into battle by Gen. George Patton. He said he liked trying to speak to the children in Europe, and he enjoys speaking to them in American schools today, mainly because they teach little about the war.

"In schools they don't give them one line about the war," he said.

Epple, 86, was originally from Patterson and he grew up in Somerset County. For the past 20 years he has lived in Cape May Court House. He served with the 87th Infantry Division in places like the Saar Basin, the Ardennes Forest, and was in the fighting that broke through the Siegfried Line - a line of defensive forts and tank defenses.

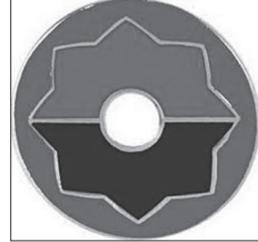
"We were in the Saar Basin, and went from Metz in Southern France and fought our way to Germany," he said.

Epple said on Christmas Eve 1944 they were on the road heading to Belgium.

"Every vehicle by then was heading to Belgium," he said. "We left behind the mud of the Saar Basin."

Epple said he would never forget the number of trucks and troops moving toward the front...nor the weather conditions.

"We were cold, cold, cold,"



9th Army

he said. When they finally arrived in Belgium, the rain that had been falling turned to snow. During the night, he said, the snow began to pile up on its way to building up two or three feet deep.

"We had guard duty one hour on and one hour off. When it was time to find your relief, sometimes you had to look for him under the snow," Epple said.

Epple said it was relatively warm sleeping under a blanket of snow.

He said Bastogne was successfully defended by the 101st Airborne and the 28th Infantry. He said it was near there that Allied and Nazi soldiers met head on without knowing the other was there. He said the ensuing battle was fought through the night. It was outside Bastogne he saw the battlefield littered with U.S. tanks.

Epple said he walked by a foxhole and saw a GI there with an empty stare in his eyes.

"Hey," he said, "I guess you guys had it pretty rough going."

"You'll find out," was the GI's reply.

Epple said they never really found out because of the U.S. advances in the war.

Crosby, 88, is from Greensburg, Pa., was raised in Florida, and now lives in Ewing. He was a signal operator in the 250th Signal Operation Company, attached to the 7th Army Headquarters.

Like Magrowski, Crosby worked in communications, in his case between the 7th Army and the corps. He said he was on the road one day when he met four GIs with rifles, who asked him for the password. He gave the password and they said, "No, that's not it."

"Immediately I had four rifles pointed at my head," he said.

Crosby said prior to the Battle of the Bulge the Germans had sent soldiers across the lines in U.S. Army uniforms, and the soldiers who stopped him were very suspicious. He tried to show them his dog tags, but one of the men said, "Aw lieutenant, take him out and shoot him. Anyone can get dog tags."

Crosby said he still remembers the sound of that man's voice.

"They asked me all kinds of questions, and I finally convinced them to take me to their commanding officer," Crosby said.

After about 30 minutes of questioning by the CO, he was finally asked, "Where are you from?"

"Seventh Army," Crosby said.

"That's the problem," the CO said. "We're 3rd Army. We have different passwords."

Crosby said they had four code machines that were so secret at the time he didn't know the names. He said when the machines were moved they military regulations required there be three officers and a sergeant with the machine at all times. The four were to never let the machine out of their sight. However, on one occasion when the machine was being moved, the officers and sergeant stopped to get something to eat and left no one watching the truck. It was stolen, with the code machine in the back.

Crosby said Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower himself came down to investigate and communications for the entire eastern front were shut down due to the breach. The army offered a 30-day furlough in Paris for any MP who located

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Cape May Star & Wave
 (ISSN 519-020), Volume 157 Number 50. Published weekly by Sample Media, Inc., 112 E. 8th St., Ocean City, N.J. 08226. Subscription price in Cape May County \$22; East of the Mississippi \$25; West of the Mississippi \$29. Periodicals Postage at Pleasantville, N.J. and additional mailing offices.
 POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to the Cape May Star and Wave, 600 Park Ave., #28, West Cape May, N.J. 08204.

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