

## **Nightmare at Nuth** by Mr. Robert Schepis

On March 17, 1945 Robert's platoon was told that they were going to be clearing mines on a road in Nuth, Holland. This small Dutch village near the German had not been injured by the war. And Robert Schepis was glad to say that he also had escaped injury thus far. From the picturesque village of Nuth the Ninth Army was planning to cross the Rhine. Robert Schepis had no way of knowing that his next assignment would be to assist in preparation for the biggest river crossing ever attempted. He and his group were to travel nearby roads to clear mines.

Lieutenant Post, Sergeant Knight and PFC Carnags loaded into a jeep and took lead position in front of a 2 ½ ton truck. Robert (Bob) Schepis, Paul Geshwind and another fellow followed in a different jeep about 15 feet behind the lead jeep. It all happened so fast. One minute Robert was looking at the back of the heads of the three guys in the jeep ahead and a microsecond later the jeep blew up. Robert stared at the place in the road where the jeep used to be. In horror, he looked over at Paul Geshwind and the other fellow in the jeep and realized that they were covered in blood and bits and pieces of bone and skin. Robert looked down at his own uniform and realized that he was splattered with the bloody remains of the 3 men in the jeep that had just exploded into smithereens.

Paul Geshwind, who had only just rejoined the group after healing from his injuries at the church incident, jumped off the jeep in shock. He just ran. Disappeared.

Before the day ended Corporal Velestix was injured.

Two days later, on March 19<sup>th</sup>, Robert (Bob) Schepis, Sargeant Parcels, Corporal John Robert, and PFC Warren Schwartz were all injured. Robert Schepis sustained severed burns on his left and left leg. He had eight holes tearing his flesh and muscles caused by an exploding mine that they hit.

Robert ended up being treated at a hospital in Paris. At the hospital he saw Corporal John Robert who had been right next to him on the day they were injured. Burned badly over most of his body, John had lost both legs to the same mine that had injured Robert. Poor John was in a bad way. Arrangements were being made to immediately transfer Corporal Roberts to a hospital in England. Robert never saw him again.

Along with his burns and flesh sounds Robert suffered from what the French nurses then called “***troubles mentaux causés par la tension éprouvée dans une situation de guerre***” or battle exhaustion. Today the diagnosis would be “acute combat stress reaction”. Initially, this reaction

resulted in Bob feeling tremendous fatigue, slowed reaction times, and a feeling of disconnection from his surroundings.

Unfortunately, for Bob along with many other WWII veterans, especially those who were in the Army (where there was greater exposure to combat), this condition became a lifelong battle. To this day Robert Schepis fights PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), an anxiety disorder that results from exposure to a traumatic event.

Though Mr. Schepis has had to deal with flashbacks, nightmares and difficulty sleeping he has taken a big step in sharing his story on the website of the 167<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineering Battalion website. Maybe, getting this story down on paper will cause the incident to leave his dreams.