



BATTLE OF THE BULGE:
A Special Thank You to our Veterans and to
Private Calvin Way
Independence Public Library

By Michelle Toale-Burke

"Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened."
—Billy Graham

Calvin Lee Way, Private First Class Rifleman, enlisted in the Army on November 18, 1943 at the age of seventeen. He had three older brothers already in the service upon his arrival to the 75th Infantry Division, which was dubbed the "Diaper Division" due to the young ages of the soldiers in this Division. Calvin did his basic training at Camp Dodge in Des Moines, Iowa and Camp Blanding in Florida. He spent most of his service time in England, France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany.

After being deployed overseas, his first impression was "Oh my God, there was nothing left but a bunch of ruins. A pure hell hole with bodies and blood everywhere!" A day that stands out in Calvin's memory is from World War II shortly after landing on Utah Beach during the Battle of the Bulge. As his Division proceeded into France on Christmas Day 1944 to do battle in the Ardennes Forest, his squad was abruptly attacked by German tanks. Calvin was the first scout out of the barn they were holding up in when he found a tank track where he laid down to hide and protect himself.

Suddenly, he was hit in the lower right back by shrapnel from a German 88 Caliber Tank which rendered him unconscious. As soon as he came to and got his wits about him, he got up and began walking back in the direction of the First Aid Station. His pain was so intense he figured his back was broken. Unable to proceed, he collapsed in a ditch. Calvin lost track of how long he laid there before First Aid found him. At this point, two aides pulled him up and slung both his arms over their shoulders and headed in the direction of the First Aid Station. As the three of them were making their way to the station, Calvin was shot in the right front shoulder by a sniper, who was approximately 100 yards ahead of them positioned on the roof of a shed. Although he was weak and felt pretty much done at this point, they finally made it back to the First Aid Station. Calvin was hospitalized for his injuries but once he was up on his feet he was sent back to continue the battle with his Division.

Calvin returned home on May 31, 1946. He arrived at 1:00 am in Manchester Iowa by train from Chicago. Hoping to get some rest, he asked a local hotel manager if he could sleep in the lobby. He was told no, and that it would be best for him to move on as they didn't let people sleep in the Lobby.

With no other options, Calvin started walking home. He soon fell asleep in a ditch outside of Manchester. Early in the morning, a milk truck driver stopped and gave him a ride to his parents' home in Strawberry Point.

For his bravery and service, Calvin was decorated with two Purple Heart Medals, a European-African-Middle Eastern Medal, and a Good Conduct Medal. Calvin says it best, "I was fortunate to come home, as many of my counterparts and friends, including one brother were not as fortunate. At this point my life began!" Calvin now resides in Independence, Iowa with his daughter Debra.

We thank Calvin for his service and sacrifice, along with his late wife Norma and children Pamela, Donald, Debra, and Lisa. We also thank ALL veterans for their service, especially those who didn't make it back home. Our nation honors and salutes you!

Don't forget to tune in via zoom on November 12 at 6:30pm for Iowa Veteran's Perspective with Sara Maniscalco Robinson, founder of Iowa Veteran's Perspective. She joins the Independence Public Library to share amazing first-hand accounts of Iowa Veterans in their own voices. Connect to the event by going to the library's website at www.independenceia.org/library. This event will not be recorded, so the time of the presentation will be the only opportunity to hear these stories, including accounts from Pearl Harbor, the Twin Towers, and more. Take time to remember Veterans like Calvin and his brothers, and so many others to which we owe a debt of gratitude.

For more information, email iplprograms@gmail.com or call the library at 319-334-2470.