

From Normandy to the Battle of the Bulge

by Jay M. Jones

Seventy Five Years ago marked the concluding events of World War II. This is the second in a series of articles highlighting some of the contributions of people from Iron County to the successful termination of the war.



U. S. postage stamp commemorating the march of American troops through the Arch of Triumph after the Liberation of Paris. The Germans surrendered Paris on August 25, 1944.

Much attention has been given to the D-Day landing on Normandy Beach on June 6, 1944 by the Allied forces seeking to release continental Europe from the death grip held by Adolf Hitler of Germany. The successful D-Day landing was just the beginning of eleven months of fierce battles.

While news of the initial success of the invasion at Normandy spread quickly, news from individual soldiers involved in the attack trickled home slowly. It took about three weeks for the first letters to reach Iron County families from husbands, sons, and brothers involved. Most of the letters did not give much detail, and the serious dangers they faced continued for the duration of the war.

Sergeant Norris Bradfield of Cedar City joined the Army in 1940 and was assigned to the Tank Corps. In a letter to his family dated July 4, 1944 from “somewhere in France,” he indicated that he had participated in the entire invasion, and stated that he was fine at that time. On July 13 he was killed in action in Normandy.

First Lieutenant Henry Wendell Jones of Cedar City was in command of a Tank Battalion when the invasion opened. He was with the first assault troops on D-Day and participated in almost constant battle until he was injured on July 10th.

Pfc. Phil Walker of Summit was also wounded during the conflict. His parents did not receive any official word from the war department, but a letter from Phil indicated that he was in a hospital in England recovering from wounds received in battle.

Fireman First Class Bill Bowen participated in the Normandy invasion as a crew member of a Navy LST landing ship that completed its mission and returned safely to its base in England.

Before the invasion, Stewart Leigh of Cedar City was stationed in England in the same vicinity as his brother Forrest, who was with a unit which included 26 Cedar City National Guardsmen. In a letter dated July 8th, Stewart wrote home from Normandy that “one of the boys says he saw Forrest today.” This was one of the early indications to local families that the 26 Cedar City men were in France.

As the army advanced, casualties continued. Sergeant Lester Ernest Smith of Cedar City was killed in action in Belgium on October 26th, 1944.

On October 28th, Pfc. Chadwick Dalley Fife died in action in Germany. Chad had participated in the American First Army’s attack on the garrison at Aachen, Germany, which was the first German city to surrender to Allied forces on October 21st. Chad had written his parents on October 8th, saying that he was feeling fine, and asking his mother to send him some candy.

From December 16, 1944 to January 25, 1945, the Germans launched a fierce attack that became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Although the Germans were stopped short of their objectives, numerous casualties resulted on both sides.

Two Cedar City men were killed in action during this time. Sergeant John W. Seaman was serving with a heavy guns unit of the infantry and was initially reported as missing in action in Belgium on December 31, 1944. That status was later changed to killed in action. Sergeant Bryce Albertson died in action in France on January 4, 1945.