

THE SOLDIERS HAD ANGELS
A True Story from W.W.II
as told to Valerie Morra
by her father, Jack Doyle

After only a few short weeks as a replacement infantryman on the front lines, his unit was pinned down in a small German town known as Oggersheim. Other units had already reached their target, the Rhine River. The troops were being accompanied by heavy artillery to ensure the progress of the mission. It is only about a month before the end of the war, and the allies knew they were close to victory. That victory would come at a very high price for some.

There was a lot of rifle fire, shells and mortars were exploding on this spring day, March 22, 1945. The tanks were firing from behind the American lines, but for some reason, they were not reaching the intended target, the German lines. Behind his location, a radio man was frantically calling for the tank command to raise their elevation, screaming frantically that the American GIs were taking the fire, the shells are short of their mark. Suddenly the radio operator is silent, the young replacement is blown into the air and is laying on the thawing ground, his wounded body bleeding.

The firing continued, and he realized that the radio operator was no longer broadcasting his message, and that he had been critically injured by his own army's shrapnel. Knowing that he needed help to survive, he began trying to raise his head so that someone might notice that he was in fact alive. The bullets were everywhere, the fire was too heavy, so he decided it would be safer to lift only his foot. He was having a hard time breathing and was losing a lot of blood. He began bargaining with God, he would do anything if God would just get him out of that place alive.

Time passed and he started to wonder if anyone would find him, the pain was horrific and the situation frightening and seemingly hopeless. When he had been blown up into the air, his rifle had landed a few feet in front of him; he thought if he could just get to it, he could shoot himself and end the pain and fear. Nothing would move, he could not even crawl or drag himself the few short feet to salvation.

A medic did finally find him, it seemed an endless wait, although it probably wasn't. If that much time had passed, he probably would have bled to death. The medic bandaged the gaping hole where the 11th and 12th ribs had been blown away, which closed the sucking wound and made it a little easier to breathe. More bandaging wouldn't have helped since the bleeding was internal and would require surgery; so the medic humorously told him, "don't go away, I'll be right back." He returned a short time later with a litter and another soldier. The soldier asked him, what about the other guy. The medic said, "that one's dead;" he was the radio operator. As they carried him toward that zone of relative safety away from the front line, the firing picked up and the other guy said, let's drop him and get out of here. The medic just said, "no, keep going."

After a triage period, he reached the train depot in town where the field doctor's had set up their equipment to perform the emergency surgeries hoping to get the wounded out alive. By this time, he was drifting in and out of consciousness. Another GI walked past the wounded young replacement and coldly said, "this one's not gonna make it." The bleeding infantryman was sent a Chaplain who would give him the last rites. When the Chaplain came along and asked him could he do anything for him, the brave soldier just told him, "no sir, I'm going to be all right."

On his nineteenth birthday, June 16, 1945, he was airlifted home to the United States. He was discharged from the army on December 3, 1945, after spending almost nine months in various hospitals and receiving too many blood transfusions to count. He was awarded a Purple Heart for his injuries, a Combat Infantry Badge given for front-line riflemen who have engaged in combat (one of the most coveted awards in the army), a Bronze Star for meritorious achievement against the enemy, and two Battle Stars for participating in two separate battle campaigns of the war. He forgot about his bargain with God, and was sure that he had survived because he was tough.

So for many years, he lived like the tough guy he knew he was, but always wanted to know about the medic who had risked his life to save him. One day years later he tried to find him, to thank him for his selfless courage and honor on the battlefield, soldier to soldier. The problem was, the army had little or no records about the battle, not even the history books seemed to notice the battle at Oggersheim. Even after writing an open letter to the 94th Division, that his unit was a part of, asking for any information that anyone might have, nothing was ever found.

Who was it that had saved him on the field of battle, what force wouldn't let him move to reach his rifle a few feet away, what spirit gave him the knowledge that he was going to be okay? What ever force it was, those of us who are part of this soldier's life are grateful for his presence, his wit and wisdom, his love of God and Country, and his stubborn will to survive.

We earthly mortals often try to bargain with God, and sometimes we feel that we have won the bargain. The true bargain, however, is God's prevenient¹ grace, and his infinite mercy and love for his creations (Eph2:4-10). While we have our short time on earth, he provides us with his ministering angels (Heb1:14) to guard and protect us (Isa63:9) until we are prepared to receive his gifts (Ac2:38). So, to the angels on the battlefields, thanks.

Psalm 34:7

His angel guards those who have reverence for the Lord and rescues them from danger.

1944



2003

