THE 106TH
AND THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Members of the 106th Infantry Division inscribed their names on the Southampton D-Day Wall while enroute to the Battle of the Bulge.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Following the success of D-Day the tide was turning against Nazi Germany. Allied troops swept through France. German cities were burned, the Judea concentration camps were liberated, and the Red Army was closing in on the Eastern Front. In order to halt the Allied Army, Hitler planned a major offensive. The Ardennes Counter Offensive was launched on 16 December 1944 with the intention of pushing through the Allied lines to recapture Antwerp.

The area was predominantly occupied by American soldiers; it was previously considered a quiet sector and the majority were drilled with training to complete or battle-wary units using it as a rest area. The early morning snowfall blanketed the area with snow-covered roads, snow drifts, and a thick fog. In the rush to get there, the division had taken with them very little ammunition, no winter clothing, and only a week’s worth of supplies.

On 11 December 1944, the division sailed from Southampton to Le Havre where they were then taken by road through France and Belgium to the Schnee Eifel region in the Ardennes, which was deep in snow with sub-zero temperatures and thick fog. In the rush to get there, the division had taken with them very little ammunition, no winter clothing, and only a week’s worth of supplies.

During the battle, three quarters of the 106th's men (10,671) were killed or captured. Two of those who left their names on the wall were captured during the Battle of the Bulge, but lived until 1994.

Over 600,000 American troops were involved, and it remains the largest and deadliest land battle fought by the US Army, with over 81,000 Americans killed, wounded or missing.

THE 106TH

The 106th Division was an ‘all-draftees’ division formed in March 1943. None of the men or officers had military experience. They trained for eight months at Camp Atterbury in Indiana, before 60% of the division were sent to the Pacific in the spring of 1944.

More men were drafted in to bring the division back up to strength, with many being reassigned from the Army Air Corps, Army Ground Forces and Service Units. In October 1944, the division sailed from Boston to the UK where the men were billeted in villages in the Cotswolds while they paused to take stock of equipment and complete their training.

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During the battle, three quarters of the 106th's men (10,671) were killed or captured. Two of those who left their names on the Southampton wall; Golden and Knight, were captured and held as POWs, though all of those names on the wall traced to the 106th Division.

Of supplies.

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THE 106TH MEMBERS ON THE D-DAY WALL

Delbert W. Smith
Private, 424 Infantry, Missouri

John Curtis Hodges
Private 1st Class, 424 Infantry, Illinois

Ralph Odom
Corporal, 424 Infantry, Alabama

William Nusba
Private 1st Class, 424 Infantry

Robert Golden
Corporal, 423 Infantry, New York

Robert Smith
422 or 424 Infantry

William H. Knight
422 Infantry

Walter Edwin Shirk
Private 1st Class, 424 Infantry, Pennsylvania

Robert Golden
Corporal, 423 Infantry, New York

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