

Bud Spencer and his band of Brothers from Marseilles

After Pearl Harbor, five young men from Marseilles signed up for the draft; Allen "Bud" Spencer, George "Bud" Hougas, Mario Vangelisti, Thomas Lipsey and Clement Hicks. Bud Spencer tried to enlist in the Marines and Navy but was rejected due to color blindness. It was their loss and the Army's gain.

The draft notices soon arrived and all five were sent to Camp Bowie to be part of the new 745th Tank Battalion. Their new Battalion Commander, Lt Col Wallace Nichols was sent to them from the Horse Cavalry.

After training, Bud Spencer and the 745th departed on the Queen Elizabeth for England arriving in August 1943. The Battalion completed training and prepared their tanks for the coming invasion. They took as their motto; "Our Tracks Lead to Victory". In England, Buds 745th was attached to the famous First Infantry Division, The Big Red One. They would go ashore in Normandy with the First Division and stay with it throughout the war. The First Division was the spearhead of the American Army in Europe and the 745th was the spearhead of the First Division.

Sgt Bud Spencer led his tank crew through the hedge row battles and arrived at the city of Saint Lo, France. St Lo was the key to the entire German line. The American 3rd Armored Division attacked and was repelled by the Germans. The First Division and the 745th were given the order to take Saint Lo at any cost. The call sign for the First Division is "Danger Forward" and on that day the danger was real. The First Division and the 745th broke through the German lines and the American Army flowed through and put the Germans to flight.

Thousands of German 7th Army troops and their equipment were destroyed in what is known as the Falaise pocket. The First Division and Bud's 745th were sent ahead to block the Germans trying to escape the pocket. At Mons Belgium the First Division and the 745th killed and captured over 25,000 German troops.

Arriving in Germany, the First Division and the 745th were ordered to take the ancient German city of Aachen, the capital of Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire. The Germans at first agreed to declare Aachen an open city to prevent its

destruction; Hitler disagreed and told the Germans to fight to the last man. The First Division and the 745th Tank Battalion destroyed and captured the ancient city.

The Hurtgen forest, located south of Aachen, was ordered taken by American troops. Three American Divisions were decimated fighting in the forest. They were moved to a quiet section of the front in the Ardennes. The First Division and the 745th were sent into the Hurtgen Forest and defeated the Germans but suffered more casualties than they did during the Normandy Invasion.

On Dec 13th 1944 the First Division and Bud's 745th were sent back to Belgium to rest and recuperate; train replacements and repair their equipment. Three days later; Dec 16th, 24 Mechanized and Armored German Divisions smashed through the Ardennes Forest. Facing them were the three shot up Divisions and one newly arrived Division, the 106th. The three veteran Divisions slowed the onslaught until American units could be sent to stem the flow. Bud Spencer's 745th and the First Division were sent to the Northern shoulder of the bulge and with the rest of the First Army stopped Sep Dietrich's 6th Panzer Army. Bud said that at times the snow was falling so heavily he couldn't see the end of his tank's gun tube. Much of the history of the Battle of the Bulge centers on the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne and Patton's Third Army. However historians credit the First Army and the First Division for the victory. During the battle, Sgt Bud Spencer suffered frostbite on his feet and legs. The winter of 1944-45 was one of the coldest on record. Each year since, as the cold winds of winter descended on Marseilles the pain would return to Bud's feet and legs and his thoughts would return to the battle. I once asked Bud what he thought of at the end of each day's combat. His answer was quick; his thoughts were always of his lovely young wife, Lainie.

Tank Commander Sgt Bud Spencer received a battlefield commission to 2nd Lt. Few enlisted men are so honored during the war. Bud now leads a five tank platoon.

The First Division, with the 2nd "Indian Head" infantry Div on the left and the 82nd "All American" Airborne Division on the right push the German Army back to the Rhineland.

Early 1945; Lt Bud Spencer's tank platoon and an Infantry platoon are sent on a night mission into Bonn Germany on the Rhine River. Lt Bud had one of the new Easy 8 Sherman's with a new 76mm medium velocity gun tube with a muzzle brake. From the side it looked like a German tank. On their way into Bonn, under the cover of darkness, they captured a German outpost. The Germans were disarmed and forced to walk in front of Lt Bud's tank. As they passed through the outskirts of Bonn, German families would look out and saw what appeared to be German soldiers leading German tanks. They closed their blinds and went back to sleep. Bud's platoon made it into Bonn without a shot being fired. A following group of Tanks and infantry was shot up by eight guns guarding the same road Bud's platoon took into Bonn.

Arriving in Bonn Bud's platoon was surprised to see a bridge over the Rhine River still intact. As they were deciding whether to cross or wait for reinforcements a huge explosion lifted the Bonn Bridge and it crashed into the Rhine River.

Lt Bud and his tank crews set about clearing Bonn of German troops and armor.

The First Division and the 745th received a news flash. The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen was still standing. A few American troops had already crossed. The 745th raced to Remagen and crossed the Ludendorff Bridge while under fire from German artillery and dive bombers. A solid bridge head was established and the fate of the German Army was sealed.

Lt Bud and the First Infantry Division took part in the Ruhr Valley Industrial area battle. The American Army captured or killed over 300 thousand German troops.

Military intelligence reported that the Germans were assembling a huge Army in the Harz Mountains. Guess who they send: Lt Bud Spencer with the 745th and the First Infantry Division. The Americans didn't find a vast German army, but at every turn in the mountain roads they encountered German roadblocks. While the 745th laid down fire, the Infantry would flank and clear the roadblocks.

On entering German towns the Americans would inform the Burgomaster that if the town surrendered the Americans would pass through and not destroy it; if they failed to surrender the First Infantry Artillery would flatten the town. Only towns that were guarded by SS Troops refused to surrender. Lt. Bud and the rest of the First Division pushed the German Army across Germany into Czechoslovakia until the Germans were trapped between the Americans and Russians. On May 7th 1945 the German army surrendered and the guns went silent in Europe. First Lt Bud Spencer was asked by his Commander to stay in the Army with him. After a few seconds Bud thanked the Lt Col and then informed him he was going home to his Lainie.

Lt Buds World War II Campaigns were: Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes-Alsace, Rhineland and Central Europe. Buds major battles were: Normandy, St Lo breakthrough, Falaise Pocket, Battle of Mons, Siegfried Line, Battle of Aachen, Hurtgen Forest, Battle of the Bulge, Roer and Rhine Rivers, Remagen Bridgehead, Ruhr Pocket and the Harz Mountains.

For Valor, First Lt Bud Spencer was awarded the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, the Purple Heart, the French Legion of Honor and many battle stars. Lt Bud was the last survivor of his band of brothers from Marseilles.

First Lt Bud Spencer was one of the greatest of the Great Generation, and one of the great heroes of World War II.

Saturday, February 3rd, Lt Bud Spencer went home again to be with his Lainie.

May God bless Lt Allen "Bud" Spencer and his family; and may God Bless America.