

“Krauts Yield Stronghold to Yanks with Their Legs Encased in Ice”

The following story was provided by Sgt. Edward Fitzel, son of Mary Fitzel of Alger, and who is a member of the 84th division. Men with their legs encased in ice have taken the village of Marcouray-- men who rose up from the attack from the snow -banked foxholes in a freezing hell where the Germans were only half the enemy. The battle ended yesterday afternoon and it only took 40 minutes to get it over with. But that only tells the start of what the men went through to fight it. The night before the attack on Marcouray, the battalion which was assigned to the job had no sleep but had to fight from fox-holes as the snow continued to drift down them. They successfully defended their territory. They had won it the hard way, for 11 hours through mines, through woods, and through ice and they fought till 4:00 am at 4:00 o'clock the order came up for Marcouray and up they came, shaking snow from backs and pulling equipment with frost - numbed fingers. And just before they reached the jump-off line they waded knee-deep through a stream. Half an hour later, their pants legs and shoes were solid blocks of ice. The battalion commander, Magor Roland L. Kolb, sent them in led by companies under Capt. Sam J. Adams of Columbus, Ga., and Capt. Earl L. Jackson of Carbondale, Ill. Before them were 150 Germans, plus tanks, plus machine guns and the Nazi version of the bazooka. The Jerris got a rain of fire from the American artillery for five minutes with every divisional gun, plus the corps batteries, zeroed in on the village. The barrage ended, the companies went in through the pine forest and out into the windswept, open ground around the village itself and reports came back that the Germans were losing heavily from the gunfire and were ready to get out. Most of them didn't. The village was taken all right and this afternoon with the night ahead and a lowering sky-- with mortars and German artillery laying them in-- the men of this battalion from the old “Railsplitter” Division dug in as the snow fell to hold on to what they had taken yesterday --” –

“Stars and Stripes” January 12