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**PEOPLE**

Harvey Lee "Bud" Hicks training at Camp Blanding in Florida 1944. Center photo 1946-47. photos courtesy of Harvey Lee "Bud" Hicks

In the spring of 1944, Harvey Lee "Bud" Hicks labored on his father's tobacco farm in Stokes County, North Carolina. His older brother Luther, like friends and other family members, had gone off to war. In June of that year, Hicks was called to serve too. "Everybody else went," says Hicks, "so I didn't mind going."

Hicks, who had never ventured far from his Stokes County home, soon found himself on the road to Camp Blanding. Located in Clay County, Florida, the Camp was one of the largest training facilities in the United States during World War II. For seventeen weeks, Hicks trained for combat. Assigned to the Army's 1st Infantry Division—"The Big Red One"—he was deemed an expert on rifles and hand grenades. After ten days of leave, Hicks shipped out to England. Once there, he crossed the English Channel, arrived in Le Havre, France, and headed towards Belgium. "It was on from then," he says.

Part of a scout patrol, Hicks' squad checked fields, bridges, and roads, for explosives. As Hicks had grown up on a farm, he could recognize when the land had been altered and alert others

to the danger. When anything suspicious was discovered, it was his squad's job to report it and/or call for artillery.

Hicks' farm experience served him

boys in exchange for a loaf of bread. "That bread," remembers Hicks, "was really good!"

Yet, Hicks' memories are not all



## From Tobacco Field to Battlefield: Harvey Lee "Bud" Hicks and the Battle of the Bulge

*written by Jennifer Bean Bower*

well in other areas of duty too. Strengthened by years of arduous work, Hicks' body was able to endure extended treks and other laborious tasks. "It did help me," he says of his time on the farm, "I guarantee you that."

Hicks progressed through France, he found the French—especially the children—to be very supportive. He and his fellow soldiers often "swapped" candy, or a stick of gum, with French

pleasant. When he arrived in France, the Allies had freed the country and defeated Germany at Normandy. Many thought the war would soon be over; but, Adolf Hitler believed otherwise. Determined to drive the Allies out of Europe, he launched a major counter-attack on December 16, 1944.

More than 200,000 German troops and over 1,000 tanks attacked the Allies. Panzers and deceitful tactics proved dis-

astrous to the American troops. Frigid weather and deep snow was also an obstacle to victory. “The snow was so deep you wouldn’t believe it,” says Hicks. “I had seen snow before, but I didn’t know anything about snow until I saw that.”

When it came time for Hicks and his squad to sleep, they had no choice but to bed down on the frozen earth. “We would get three men together,” says Hicks, “and then lay two shelter halves and one blanket down on top of the snow. Every man had a pack and everyone had a blanket.”

The men pitched a tent and slept close together in an effort to stay warm. “When one wanted to turn over,” says Hicks, “we all had to turn over.”

By mid-December, Hicks and his squad were in Belgium. They had taken abode in an unoccupied three-story home. While there, they watched the area and maintained communication with their company. “We hid and stayed quiet all the time,” he says.

On December 23, the weather was clear, but the day proved fierce. Germans had spotted the squad and waited for them to venture outside. Once exposed, the enemy attacked. The onslaught was fast and men began to fall. To the right of Hicks, a soldier was killed; to his left, one was wounded. When the injured man went down, his rifle launched into the air and struck Hicks in the face. But that was not the worst of it. An artillery shell exploded nearby and blanketed shrapnel across Hicks’ right leg. “I felt something wet,” he says, “and thought I might be bleeding.”

Hicks looked at his leg and saw it lying in the wrong direction. A compound fracture of the femur bone had left him numb and sitting in a pool of blood. Hicks knew he had to get a tourniquet on the leg if he wanted to save it—and his life. In an instant, Hicks removed his belt and wrapped it tight around his leg. To his surprise, the belt held. As men shouted to one another to see who had been hit, Hicks concentrated on loosening and tightening the tourniquet. A call for assistance had gone out and it wasn’t long before help arrived. Hicks and another man were placed on stretchers and loaded onto a jeep. “We cranked up and started to leave,” he says, “but another barrage came in.”

The driver of the jeep took cover underneath the vehicle, while the two wounded soldiers remained on top. Once it was clear, the driver jumped back in and took off. In an attempt to hang on, Hicks and the other man locked arms. When Hicks reached the medics, they cut off his pants, strapped a brace on his leg, and placed him in an ambulance. A long and bumpy ride carried him to a hospital in France. On Christmas Day, Hicks was in a body cast and confined to bed. Yet, despite the circumstances, he enjoyed a small, tasty present. “I got a Coca-Cola for Christmas,” he says with a grin.

The day after Christmas, Hicks was ferried to a hospital in England. Although severely wounded, his spirit was surely raised at the end of January, when he learned the Americans had won the Battle. Hicks remained at the hospital until late March, when he boarded the Queen Mary and headed for home. “It was the prettiest thing I ever saw,” he says of the ship, “and I was glad to get on it.”

On April 4, 1945, Hicks landed in New York. He had arrived home on his birthday. Afterward, Hicks spent the next two years traveling to various Army hospitals where he



Myra and Harvey Lee “Bud” Hicks, look through his World War II Scrapbook. 2016. photo by Larry T. Bower, Jr.

endured fourteen surgeries on his leg. In November 1946—during a period of rest and recovery—Hicks married his hometown sweetheart, Myra King.

The following year, Hicks was discharged from the Army. He received several medals including the WWII Victory Medal; Bronze Star; American Campaign Medal; Good Conduct Medal; and European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal. Recently, in December 2015, Hicks was also awarded a Knight in the Order of the Crown by Johan Verbeke, the Belgium Ambassador to the United States.

After service, Hicks furthered his education, acquired a job, and along with his wife Myra, raised two boys and one girl. Harvey Lee “Bud” Hicks is a humble man who was witness to one of history’s most extraordinary events. Although the Battle of the Bulge has long been over, Hicks still feels the chill of that December and hears the voices of dying men. He and his brother survived the war, but countless others did not. In regard to World War II, Hicks says it should always be remembered that “we won, but it cost.” It is a sentiment he understands all too well.

Please take a moment this Memorial Day to remember the brave men and women who died in service to our country. May they never be forgotten.