

# Short Rounds

*The monthly newsletter of the Scott Hosier WW2 Roundtable*

Season 7, Issue 1

January 2011

## Welcome to the January program of the *Scott Hosier WW2 Roundtable*.

Our program for this month is *“From the Battle of the Bulge...and Beyond.”* We are honored to have three veterans appearing, all of whom were in action during the German Ardennes offensive of 1944. **Ed Albrecht** was with the 242<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (“Rainbow”) Division. **Bob Erickson** was with the 509 Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) and **Mel Dahlbergh** was with the 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Combat Regimental Team (PCRT), both with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Tom Hosier, Program Chairman, will conduct the interview with these veterans and Dave Allen, President, will provide a short historical background.

The program starts promptly at 7PM on January 10, 2011 at the Assembly of God Church, 4240 18<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, Rochester, MN.

## What’s New?

Yes, *this* is new! This is the first issue of “Short Rounds,” the monthly newsletter of the Scott Hosier WW2 roundtable. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide advance information to the public about upcoming programs, and to provide additional information for those attending the roundtable programs.

If you were wondering about the name of the newsletter, it is a military term, meaning “a projectile which fails to travel the expected distance or range.” Well, that is appropriate, because the newsletter falls short in providing the entire experience of the Scott Hosier WW2 Roundtable. In order to hear first-person accounts from the veterans themselves, you’ll have to attend the programs! *Short Rounds* will, however, be *short* and about the *roundtable*.

## The Battle of the Bulge

The German Ardennes offensive of 1944, more popularly known as the “Battle of the Bulge,” was the largest battle ever fought by the United States Army. Conceived by Hitler as a way to drive a wedge, both physically and politically, between the Allies, the German offensive began at 5:30am on December 16, 1944 when 30 German divisions crashed into the thinly held American lines in the Ardennes forest.



*American soldiers in the Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge.*

Hitler’s plan, dubbed *Wacht am Rhein* (“watch on the Rhine”) depended on six factors. First, he needed complete surprise. This he achieved, not only because of secrecy on the part of the Germans in assembling their forces, but because no one on the Allied side believed that the Germans still had the resources, or motivation, to attack by this point in the war. Second, Hitler needed overwhelming superiority of arms at the point of attack. This he achieved also by moving forces from the Eastern Front to the Western Front, and positioning them where American forces were the weakest. Third, Hitler needed bad weather to neutralize the Allied air power that he knew could otherwise shatter the concentrations of German armor needed for his attack. This he achieved, not by guesswork, but because he had stationed weather

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stations near the Arctic Circle for months before the attack and knew the last two weeks of December would be “*Führer weather*” (that is, overcast and foggy). Fourth, Hitler expected the Americans he would be attacking to be weak and cowardly. He believed that the German soldier was superior in motivation and skill because many of them had been trained for over a decade in the Hitler Youth for just this moment. He thought that the Americans defending against his attack, who grew up not as Hitler Youth, but were raised instead as Boy Scouts, would retreat at the first sign of danger. He was wrong. Fifth, Hitler expected the Allies to react sluggishly to his attack. He thought that the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, would have to seek and gain permission from Churchill and Roosevelt before he would be allowed to divert British and American forces away from their positions and use them to defend against the attack. Hitler assumed this because Hitler himself would have required his own generals to ask permission from him in this case, and expected Ike to take three or four days to react. He was wrong again. Eisenhower acted on his own volition, without seeking permission from Churchill, Roosevelt, or even his own immediate superiors, the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Within two days Eisenhower had sent 60,000 more Americans into the battle and within a week he had placed another *quarter of a million* US soldiers to fight against the German offensive. Eisenhower’s swift and proper actions during the Battle of the Bulge is perhaps his highest achievement and finest hour as a commanding general. Finally, to succeed, Hitler’s plan needed to follow a strict timetable which relied on a speedy advance through weak American forces. Instead, Hitler’s troops ran into stiff opposition from green, but brave and resourceful, GIs. In crossroads towns like St. Vith and Bastogne, the “Boy Scouts” held their own against the attacking “Hitler Youth” and Hitler’s delicate timetable was in shambles almost even before the battle began.

## ...and Beyond

Sensing the failure of the Ardennes offensive, Hitler opted for a smaller, yet still vicious, offensive against the Allies. At nearly midnight of New Years Eve 1944, Hitler launched Operation *Nordwind* (“north wind”) against American and Free French Forces in the Alsace region of France. The attacks were intended to destroy Allied forces in that region and relieve pressure on the German forces withdrawing from the Ardennes. It failed, ending on January 25, 1945. Operations *Nordwind* was the last German offensive on the Western Front.

## Further Reading

Dupuy, Trevor N., *Hitler’s Last Gamble* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994)

Breuer, William B., *Bloody Clash at Sadzot* (St. Louis: Zeus, 1981) (the 509<sup>th</sup> PIR during the battle)

Astor, Gerald, *Battling Buzzards* (New York: Dell, 1993) (about the 517<sup>th</sup> PCRT)

Lynch, Dan, *Into the Dragon’s Teeth* (New York: Whitston, 2006) (about the 42<sup>nd</sup> ID)

Zaloga, Steven J., *Operation Nordwind* (Oxford: Osprey, 2010)

## *Need a ride to the Scott Hosier WW2 Roundtable?*

**Contact:**

**Janet Wollin**

**Meadow Lakes Senior Living**

**(507) 252-5069**

**Video Recording of the Program by**

**Mike Pruett, CEO**

**MLT Group, Inc.**

**DVDs available for pre-order in the lobby –**

**See Penny Schroeder or Vanessa Tesch.**

**For more information on the Scott Hosier WW2 Roundtable, call Sergeant-at Arms Ken Thamert at**

**(507) 289-0836 or visit**

**www.ww2roundtable-rochester.org**

## NEXT MONTH

### **“Destroyers in the Pacific”**

**7PM, Monday, February 14, 2011**

**Speakers: Phil Henoeh, Everett Humke,  
Dave Adams, Asa Kendall**

