

# Viewpoints

## I didn't know

They didn't know that the explosives used in the mines planted by the engineers was known by chemists and engineers to explode spontaneously if it became cold.

The planners, who did know, had no intention of using these particular mines in a cold climate. They thought the war in Europe would be over before the winter of 1944.

They didn't know, did they, that the war would last long enough for the temperatures to drop.

They also didn't know, couldn't predict, that on this particular day — January 11, 1945 — 24 members of Company A, 312 Engineers, would be huddled inside a building receiving instruction about placing the mines, the ones that didn't appreciate being cold.

They should have realized that it had, at last, gotten too cold. But apparently they didn't know.

So the mines exploded.

The explosion destroyed the building they were in and two adjacent buildings.

The people who heard it? From seven miles away? They didn't



Private First-Class William Linsley Bradwell, who I didn't know.

know what had happened at first.

Eventually, though, they did know.

Loren R. Harding — Mike R. Vasquez — Jesse B. Miller — Robert D. Sanders — Leroy B. Nichols — Lawrence G. Bonnani — Cecil M. Edwards — Willard G. Meek

— William J. Merrick — Norman Schwartz — William L. Bradwell — Thomas S. Durham — Clint G. Elswick — Robert H. Fisher — Leon D. Herzog — Roy H. Hilliard — Stanley A. King — Donald W. Seal — James O. Williams — Grover D. Crews — John Paronish — Roy E. Turner — Bernard L. Williams.

They didn't know they would die that day.

My mother, who was a little girl, didn't know she had lost her oldest brother.

Private First-Class William Linsley Bradwell, who was born January 21, 1917, in Angus, didn't know he would also die in January.

He died at Libramont, Belgium, 19 miles west southwest of Bastogne.

As if that matters.

On that January day, Company A, 312 Engineers, sustained the greatest loss of life in one day of any company in the 87th Division during five months of combat.

He'd had two years of high school and was married when he was assigned to the 312 Combat Engineers Battalion of the 87th Infantry Division.

PFC Bradwell was the son of Harold LeRoy and Winnie M. (Reed) Bradwell of Grand Junction. He left a wife, Mary, and a daughter, Rita, 6.

She didn't know she would lose her father.

He's buried at Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial, Hamm, Canton de Luxembourg.

Although a history of the 87th Infantry Division shows more pictures of the 312 Engineers than any other unit, there are no reports, and no pictures of this disaster.

And, so, I didn't know until I inherited his flag. It's just to the right of me now, in my home office. I guard it, and I revere it.

Even though, of course, I didn't know him.

Jane Curtis is interim editor of the Daily Freeman-Journal.



Jane Curtis

### Share Your Views

Send your letters: "To the Editor," Daily Freeman-Journal; P.O. Box 490, Webster City, IA 50595 Or email to: [jcurtis@freemanjournal.net](mailto:jcurtis@freemanjournal.net)

Letters should be 350 words or less and must be the original work of the author.

We reserve the right to edit for length, taste and possible libel, as well as personal attacks and inflammatory

statements about businesses, groups or individuals. Letters must be signed and include a full address, plus a phone number for verification purposes.

One submission per month per writer.



### The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."*



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### How to Reach Federal Officials

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**Sen. Charles Grassley**  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-1501  
(202) 224-3744  
<https://www.grassley.senate.gov>

**Sen. Joni Ernst**  
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Washington, DC 20510-0001  
(202) 224-3254  
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### How to Reach Your City Council members

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City Council meetings are held the first and third Mondays of the month at 6 p.m. at the Council Chambers in City Hall. For more information, contact the City Manager's office, 832-9151