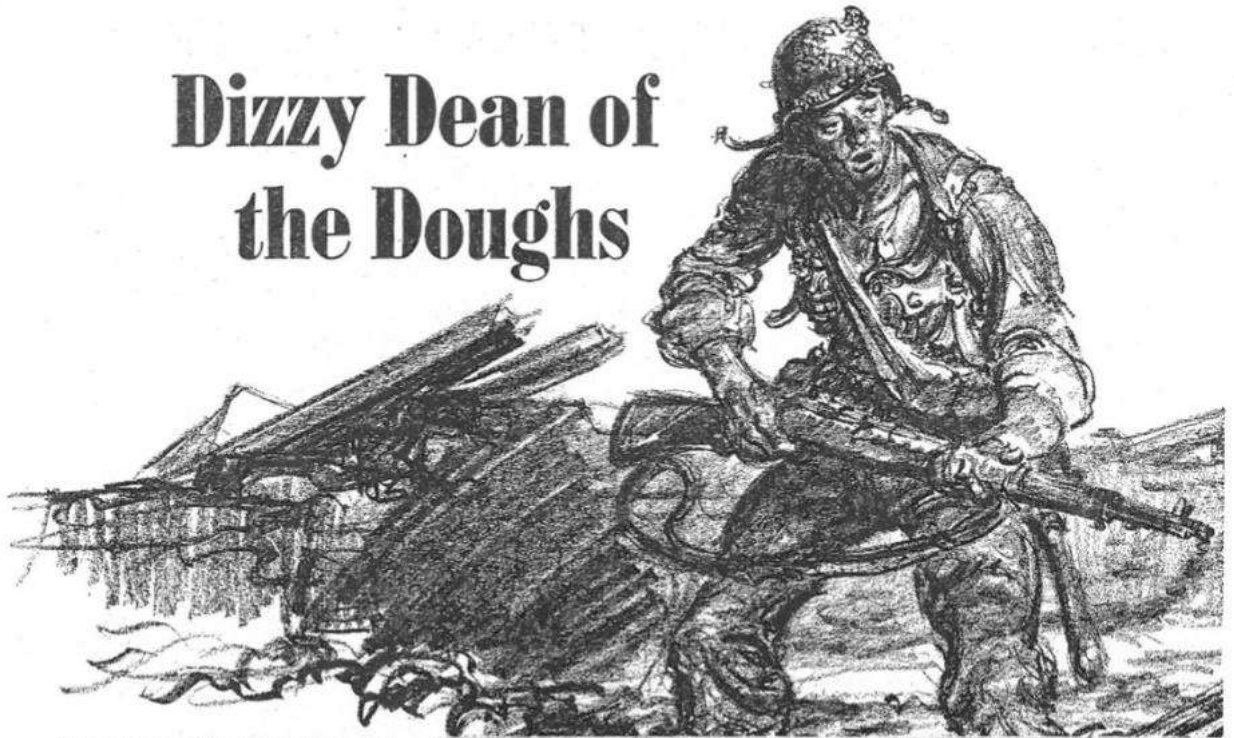


Dizzy Dean of the Doughs



The story of S/Sgt. James J. Spurrier, Jr., a one-man task force who specialized in all sorts of fantastic exploits, including the taking of a town all by himself

By **ROBERT EUNSON**

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD BRODIE

WHENEVER VETERANS get together around a warm comfortable fireplace or a brass rail where small chunks of ice tinkle in short glasses of scotch and soda, talk sooner or later gets around to who was the toughest, fightin'est soldier they ever knew.

After spending three years following doughs, paratroopers, engineers and hot pilots in both the Pacific and Europe and reporting the exploits of at least a thousand men, you might think a reporter would not have an opinion.

With all due respect to the 32nd Division's magnificent Botcher whose gallantry brought him a promotion in the fields of Buna from sergeant to captain, the late Nathan Van Noy, 2nd amphibs Pfc who kept killing Japs even after they'd blown off both his legs at Finschhafen and the late celebrated



The sergeant hangs one on the President—the 35th Division pin

Major Dick Bong who shot down more than 40 Japanese planes, I would like to order another round of the same and tell you about Junior Spurrier.

S/Sgt. James J. Spurrier, Jr., of the 35th Infantry Division was the meanest, toughest, orneriest and wackiest soldier I ever knew. Little known, although he won the Congressional Medal for taking a town all by himself, the DSC,

various foreign decorations and two Purple Hearts, Spurrier in his time killed more than a hundred Germans and captured that many more.

Ernie Lieser of Stars and Stripes dubbed him "Task Force Spurrier" and he lived up to the name at all times. In fact it was such a task to keep him out of trouble when company G of the 13th Regiment wasn't in action that



Spurrier shot three Nazis with his M-1, then cleaned out the town with BAR's, bazookas and hand grenades

Lt. Col. Frederick Roecker, battalion CO, had to take personal charge of him during the time between the winning and the awarding of the CMH.

He wasn't as bad as he was unpredictable. To me he was always a Dizzy Dean. Antics such as picking up a telephone and putting the whole battalion on "alert" while it was in rest area, of going AWOL to help bring another

outfit up on the line of attack were commonplace.

Red tape delayed getting the Congressional Medal formally pinned on. As Spurrier captured Achain as a staff sergeant, it would have been not a little embarrassing to present the medal to him as a buck private. It wasn't so difficult keeping Spurrier interested in something during the Roer crossing

and the 35th's capture of Venlo and Rheinburg on the way to Wesel and the Rhine, but during the lull waiting for the Rhine crossing there were more than a few who suggested the colonel should have been given a medal too.

Some Congressional Medals are awarded to a one-shot hero, a guy that comes through gloriously when the chips are (Continued on page 42)

DIZZY DEAN OF THE DOUGHS

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down and never is called upon to face the odds again. Not so with Spurrier.

The tall, shuffling mountain lad from Bluefield, W. Va., fought like a tiger all the way from St. Lo to the Rhine, and was one of the few Dog Faces I have ever known who actually seemed to enjoy the life. The more fantastic an exploit the greater became his legend with the 35th and the harder he tried to improve on it. When there was a river to cross, Spurrier wanted to lead the first squad, when there was a town to enter, Spurrier was right there whether it was his battalion, regiment or (in one instance) his division.

Spurrier won the DSC for his single-handed capture of a hill at Lay St. Christopher, near Nancy. Riding on the top of a tank he broke through a Kraut MLR and, shooting from the rear with a BAR, mowed down an uncounted number of Germans and then accepted the surrender of 22. Those killed in this exploit have been variously estimated from 20 to 50.

A couple months later, the day he won the Congressional Medal he arrived late to formation because he was in the kitchen eating canned peaches.

The Second Battalion was bivouacked outside the town and attacked on a company front. Spurrier arrived after Company G had pushed off and rear said, "They are going in from the east."

Spurrier walked on down the hill and then swung out around to the west.

There are three schools of thought on how he happened to "hit" the town by himself. One is that he misunderstood rear and thought he said "west." Another is that he got mixed up himself and thought west was east. The third school,

of which I am a member, is that Spurrier, his tummy full of canned peaches that he had swiped from the mess sergeant, was feeling so good he just had to fight somebody. That when he heard it said that the attack was going in from the east side to Achain, he swung around to the west, secretly hoping there were enough Germans in the place to give him a fight.

Company G ran into some opposition and held up. Then from down on the other side of town the captain could hear

Out again. In again

After Achain, Spurrier launched an attack on hometown Bluefield, W. Va., where he went into the auto business and joined the local American Legion post. But things were slow, especially finding a decent place to live for himself and wife Kathleen—so Junior's back in the army now.

In photo, he signs re-enlistment papers at Charlestown, W. Va., as Major Joel Bunch and S/Sgt. Robert Douglas look on. After 22 months in the Pacific infantry (wounded and DSC) and a rough time in Europe—all with the foot army, he is now tech sergeant at Langley Field with the Army Air Forces.

rifle fire, hand grenades and then bazookas. The captain messaged back to find out what the other attack was. Rear sent word down that it must be Spurrier hitting the town all by himself from the wrong side.

The information got back to Colonel Roecker and he issued his now famous order:

"Attack Achain! Company G from the east and Spurrier from the west."

He wasn't kidding either because the cold-eyed, shuffling mountaineer that could shoot the eye out of a possum at

50 yards was already battering his way into Achain.

The 35th Division history records the incident:

"Spurrier shot the first three Nazis with his M-1. Then picking up BARs, Yank and German bazookas and grenades wherever he found them, he systematically began to clean out the town. He crumbled one stronghold with bazooka shells, killed three more Nazis with a BAR, captured a garrison commander, a lieutenant



and 14 men. Another defense point was silenced when he killed its two occupants. Out of ammunition and under fire from four Nazis, Spurrier hurled a Nazi grenade into the house, killing the four Germans.

"That night, the one-man army had charge of an outpost. While checking security, he heard four Germans talking in a barn. He set fire to a supply of oil and hay, capturing the four as they ran out. Later he spotted a Kraut crawling toward a sentry, killed him when there was no reply to his challenge."

During this one episode which took place on November 14, 1944, Spurrier was officially credited with killing 25 enemy soldiers and capturing 20 men and one town.

On March 6, 1945, while his division was in the rest area after cleaning out the nasty Wesel pocket in preparation for the Rhine crossing, Spurrier was called to Roecker's CP. Standing at attention in a tiny German village in the heart of the Rhineland, he felt the Congressional Medal of Honor pinned to the shirt front of his doughboy greens by Lieut. Gen. William H. Simpson, commanding general of the United States Ninth Army. This ceremony almost didn't come off.

During the interim from November to March Spurrier had picked up his second Purple Heart while fighting to hammer back the bulge in Belgium. A mortar shell left him unconscious in the snow and for a time it looked as if there'd be no need for a CMH ceremony.

That Spurrier was absolutely fearless cannot be doubted. That he was a kid



and loved horseplay and playing pranks may partially be due to the fact that he was only 22 years old when he jumped off with the spearhead that cracked through St. Lo. He joined the army at 16.

It is true that he liked to create the impression that he was sort of a Dizzy Dean of the Doughboys, but like the Great Diz was good out there on the mound with the horsehide in his hand, so was Spurrier good out there on the battlefield with a weapon in his hand.

The great secret of his success was his knowledge of weapons and their fire power. He had absorbed this knowledge during six years of soldiering. He would be standing facing a house holding a handful of Krauts. He'd canvass the place swiftly, then, say, he'd decide to go in through the door. He'd turn to a companion and calmly say, "Bring me a bazooka." Or maybe he'd decide to lob in a mortar and riddle the windows with a BAR. He knew the capabilities of not only Allied but German weapons. This saved his life in Achain by keeping him in the fight long after his own ammunition was exhausted.

Riding in a jeep with him one day I listened attentively for two hours as he explained the difference between comparable American and German weapons.

Spurrier was a doughboy's doughboy in every sense of the word. A few days after he received his CMH Major Bob White of the 35th brought him down to Maastricht, Holland, where a special press conference

had been arranged at Ninth Army HQ the last minute an RAF colonel showed up and got himself on the program. Spurrier was saved for last. Sitting in back row listening to the Colonel expound with charts and figures and in a very thick British accent how the RAF was winning the war, Spurrier suddenly rose to his feet and announced, "I've had all this — I can stand," and walked

It took a great deal of explaining to everybody concerned, especially Spurrier.

The last time I saw him, the Ninth Army press camp was located in a castle across the Rhine just south of Wehr. Hank Wales of the Chicago Tribune came home late one night and I saw a light through a crack in the shade of my window. Going up the rickety castle's stairs, I found Spurrier stretched out on my bed.

He and one of his pals were just turning from an unofficial two-man patrol — to Paris.

We all sat up and listened to his last conquests and from what I gathered he took Paris just like he took Achain.

La meme chose all around and I hear about your hero. Spurrier was m

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