

# *Not one lost*

By [Linda Henson](#)

When I was a baby, my father received his draft notice. Family and friends encouraged him to go to the courthouse and claim exemption due to working in a munitions plant and having two small children.

“If the man who went in my place was killed,” he said, “I couldn’t live with myself.”

Dad’s 13 weeks of training led to immediate shipment overseas to fight in World War II.

On the ship all the recruits were assembled and the commander asked if anyone had any experience cutting hair. Dad seemed to be the only one who responded. His only experience consisted of trimming his brother’s and his father’s hair, but that was of little consequence. He was assigned the task of being the company barber for the duration of his military service. Dad says he enjoyed the extra job; it helped to keep his mind off of the loneliness and the horrors of war.

After the Battle of the Bulge, Dad’s 292nd Engineers were given the task of building a bridge across the Ruhr River, which would open the way for the Allied invasion troops. His company set up camp several miles from the river where they rehearsed their plan, prepared their equipment and waited. At any moment the command would come and they would rush to do their job.

Daily, officers reminded the men to write letters home to their families because most of them would not come back from this assignment. Enemy fire was heavy, and the Germans expected some such maneuver. It was not unusual to see a man wiping tears as he wrote, and some even expressed a renewed faith.

My Dad had accepted Christ as Savior when he was 12 years old and served the Lord faithfully. The first Christmas of my parents’ marriage there was not much money, so they decided that they would buy a Bible and that would be their gift to each other.

One night after all the military duties were finished Dad set up his barber shop and began to cut hair. It almost seemed ludicrous that so many men wanted their hair cut when any day could be their last, but maybe it seemed a hopeful thing to do. It seemed everyone in the company needed a haircut; Dad thought the line would never end. The last man got up out of the chair around 3 a.m. Dad was so tired he just fell into his cot.

Around 6 a.m. he awoke with a start. Somehow he felt something was wrong. Immediately he was on his feet. As he looked around, he saw that no one else was in the tent. No one! The next. No one! What had happened? He ran to the cook’s tent and was told the call had come for the engineers to build the bridge.

“Why didn’t someone wake me?” he asked in desperation.

“The colonel said you worked all night, let you sleep.”

It was unheard of for a commander to let a soldier sleep when such an important job had to be done. But that’s what happened. My father was beside himself. Men might die in his place! They were too far away; he’d never catch them.

He did the only thing he knew to do. He ran back to his tent and fell on his knees. He prayed through the morning. He prayed through the noontime. He prayed all afternoon. He never got up. He could hear the shells bursting miles away and feel the tremors as bombs dropped. He kept on praying. Dad prayed all through the night until early the next day he heard sounds of the returning army.

He was so stiff from being on his knees he could hardly walk, but he began to trudge down the trail to meet his companions. Who would be missing? Terrors invaded his mind as he limped toward the advancing men. He could hear shouts, but couldn’t make out what they were saying. Were they angry that he was left asleep? Tears filled his eyes at the thought of a truck loaded with the dead. The closer he got, he heard more shouting and still he couldn’t make out what they were saying. He prepared himself for the worst.

He stopped dead in his tracks when he finally understood the shouts: “Not one was lost! Not one was lost!”

Just a few miles up the river two other companies had been given the same assignment and they were cut to shreds.

I think of Dad’s role that day. He wasn’t in the physical battle to build that bridge, but I know he was fighting. His prayers saved lives.

God has given each of us an assignment in the battle for souls. Many prepare thinking they will be in the forefront of battle, but the Father is looking for men and women who will stay on their knees so that missionaries and pastors and Christian leaders can return and shout, “Not one was lost!”

LINDA HENSON is an Assemblies of God missionary to the Caribbean.

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