

**Joseph A. Minto, Chevalier**  
**M Co., 71st Inf. Reg., 44th Div.**



I was a replacement the day after Christmas. I was made a machine gunner, 30 caliber liquid cooled. Four days later, on New Year's Eve, the Germans attacked. They were all dressed in white. This was my first introduction to combat, and it was the Battle of

the Bulge. We did not lose one inch of territory, but the Germans lost plenty. We recaptured the Maginot Line, crossed the Iller River, the Danube and the Rhine.

We were crossing the Iller River when the Germans sent in an armor piercing shell that landed about 20 feet from our assault boat. Our boat capsized and I had to swim in the icy water to the German side. It was so cold that if I took off my pants they would have stood up by themselves. Later that night, the engineers, with the help of a tank, put a tree across a blown out bridge two miles down from where we were. Some riflemen came and got us. Then we had to inch across the tree using our arms and legs, holding on for dear life until we reached our side again. I was immediately taken to a field hospital for about ten days. While in the hospital, our battalion was caught in the Fern Pass in the Alps, and we lost half our men. When I got out of the hospital, I rejoined my company in the Brenner Pass. We went into Italy and linked up with the 10th Mountain Division, which ended the war for us. We were then told to go to Otz, Austria, until we were sent home.

We were scheduled to go to Japan for the invasion there, but the atomic bomb was dropped, thus ending the war. The 44th Division was deactivated and I was discharged.

*Joseph Minto was decorated November 10, 2006, at the French Consulate in New York. He lives in Bridgeport, CT.*