

97-year-old World War II veteran returns to Belgium, retraces painful steps from battle

February 03, 2022 at 4:03 pm CSTBy [Julia Gorman, FOX23 News](#)

TULSA, Okla. — A local World War II veteran recently took a trip back to Belgium to retrace his steps from battle 80 years later.

[FOX23's Julia Gorman first told you about 2-time Purple Heart recipient Bill Parker and his heroic service in November 2021.](#) In her first story on Parker, he rehashed the gory details he remembers from Omaha Beach on D-Day in June 1944.

In December 2021, Parker went back to Belgium where he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. This was his first time returning in 77 years. Parker told Gorman, "There's no way you can compare it."

The last time he stepped foot in Belgium, Parker was basically still a kid himself. Now, he has great-grandchildren.

He explained even though decades have passed, the memories are still engrained in his mind and so is the pain.

Fighting back tears, Parker explained, "Seeing wounded soldiers sit down beside a tree and freeze to death, anyway that's what Belgium was like when we went through it the first time."

While these memories were grueling to relive, Parker told FOX23 the trip also made him *extremely* happy.

"Everything I did over there with those Belgian people made you feel good," he said.

Fellow Tulsa veteran David Rule has made it his mission to garner Parker the recognition he deserves. He is his right-hand man and escorted him to Belgium. Rule took photos as Parker visited museums, restaurants, and stayed with a local family.

The mayor of Bastogne, Belgium even honored him with the *World War II Battle of the Bulge Commemorative Medal*.

Bill at Luxembourg American Cemetery

At the Luxembourg American cemetery, Parker saw 5,000 crosses. Under each one, an American soldier is buried who was killed in World War II. Most of them were killed in the Battle of the Bulge. "There's no way that a human could keep from crying," said Parker in response to the cemetery. Parker was barely able to take in all the attractions because people in Belgium treated him like a celebrity. He said they even asked for his autograph.

The reason Belgians are so obsessed with Parker and American veterans like him is because they were essential in protecting Belgium from the Germans during WWII. This never-ending appreciation was a welcome surprise for Parker. He also said the Belgian peoples reaction stood out compared to how he has been treated by people back home in the United States. "There was no comparison, nobody ever told me that you did a good job," he explained.

When Gorman asked if Parker had a message for the American people, he said, "I would tell them how much those people think of us, how much that they appreciate what we did, we saved their lives twice, and yes, I would work on that."

This year, Parker is set to receive the French Legion of Honor. The award compares to the Congressional Medal of Honor, which is the highest award a soldier can receive in the United States.

Bill with 3 generations of General George Patton's family

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Friday, January 28th 2022, 12:00 pm

By: [Mallory Thomas](#), News On 6

Friday, a Tulsa World War II veteran shared his experience after being honored for his service during a recent trip to Belgium.

Sergeant Bill Parker met with the mayor of Bastogne in December and received a medal to honor his service in the Battle of the Bulge. Parker was part of the 116 Infantry 29th Division and was one of the first men on the Omaha Beach in Normandy on D-Day.

He said last month was his second time to be back in Belgium and said he was surprised to receive the medal.

“Every time we went in I had to start signing my name on different things. I signed old helmets, and old uniforms and sometimes it wouldn’t be nothing more than a napkin," said Parker.