Weary Soldier Found Guiding Light Amid Storm

As our jeep and quarter-ton truck moved into the small town of Visa, Belgium, I wondered if I would ever see a Christmas in the United States again.

It was a bitter-cold night in December 1944, and we were delivering two tank engines through a blizzard. It would have been foolish to go on in the blinding snow, and through the flurries, we saw a glow of light. It was from a monastery, and the brothers there warmly welcomed us.

As my men bedded down, the father superior asked me to join him over a glass of wine. He spoke En-glish, and we talked about the war and the future.

After a time, the father sensed my weariness and took me to the large room where my men were sleeping. I noticed a door at the far end of the room and asked the father where it led.

“To Heaven,” he replied.

“Mind if I go there?” I asked in keeping with the light conversation.

“Please, by all means,” he answered and turned to leave.

I went to the door and opened it. I found myself standing on a balcony just large enough for one person. Below me was the chapel. The altar light on the right was still burning despite the wind and snow blowing through holes in the stained-glass windows, broken from the vibration of “buzz bombs” slamming the area.

There was a prie-dieu, or prayer desk, on the balcony, and I used it. I don’t know how long I prayed, but it was long enough to give me a sense of hope for peace and a closeness to God that I had never

known and has remained with me.

That altar light gave me hope amid the many horrors of the time. I've had happier Christmases, but never have I had a greater gift.

—Victor I., Rio Rancho, New Mexico