

FORT MYERS FLORIDA WEEKLY™

YOUR NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT SOURCE

WEEK OF DECEMBER 17-23, 2008

www.FloridaWeekly.com

Vol. II, No. 38 • FREE



The Battle of the Bulge – Dec. 17, 1944, remembered

BY ROBERT HILLIARD
Special to Florida Weekly

The haze that covered the Meuse River at Givet, a town at one of the northern tips of France, lifted by late morning on Dec. 16, 1944. I stopped my work unloading Army supplies at the waterfront to stare at the long line of the 106th Infantry Division as it made its way along a road in Belgium across the river.

“Just over from the States,” the soldier working next to me decided.

“Yeah,” another GI offered. “You can tell by the way they march. Like in basic training.”

From the distance across the Meuse the line seemed to move slowly, but one could tell it was with a briskness, a snap of energy, a perverse kind of eagerness to finally test one’s manliness in the great adventure of war.

“They got nothing to worry about,” the GI next to me said. “Everything’s quiet out there. The Krauts have been sitting in their bunkers.”

I hoped so. A recent letter from home told me that two of my cousins were in the 106th.

“Yeah, I was up with the Second Division in Monschau Forest, near the German border,” another GI told us. “We spent our time shooting deer and having barbecues. No war going on.”

I had heard that things were so quiet that one of the U.S.’s top outfits, the battle-hardened Second Infantry Division, which had been through Africa, Italy, D-Day-plus-1, and fighting through France and Belgium, had been pulled back for some R&R, and raw troops like the

SEE BULGE, A14 ►

ON A WINNING STREAK

Seminole Immokalee Casino is flourishing with a \$22-million expansion project under way



BY BILL CORNWELL
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RONNIE LEE ALMOND’S WALLET WAS \$113 lighter after two hours at the Seminole Immokalee Casino, but he had no complaints.

Of his monetary setback, Mr. Almond, a 32-year-old plumber’s assistant from Detroit who had come south to visit relatives, said: “Big deal. Hell, you can drop that much on drinks and dinner with friends. Either way, you don’t got much to show for it afterwards. I said I would quit when I lost a hundred bucks, and I just went a little over that. No regrets at all. It was fun.”

As visitors to the casino go, the genial Mr. Almond, who had fed slot machines while



Gambling at the Seminole Immokalee Casino.

SEE WINNING, A8 ►

INSIDE



Christmas tunes

Florida Weekly takes a look at just a small sample of new Christmas CDs that were released this season. **C1** ►



Holiday carol sing

See who’s out and about in Fort Myers’ society. **C27, 28 & 30** ►



Should I buy or sell?

Psychics say their business is booming from people seeking financial advice. **B1** ►



A cozy hearth

Signs of the season emanate from this historic Fort Myers home. **D1** ►

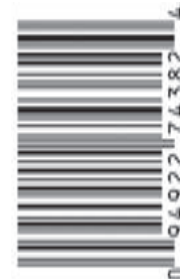
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OPINION	A4	ARTS	C1	CUISINE	C35
15 MINUTES	A6	EVENTS	C6&7	HOMESCAPES	D1-8
ON THE MOVE	B4	NANCY STETSON	C8	REAL ESTATE	E1-8

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