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## History of the 157th Infantry Regiment (Rifle), 4 June 1943-8 May 1945

United States Army

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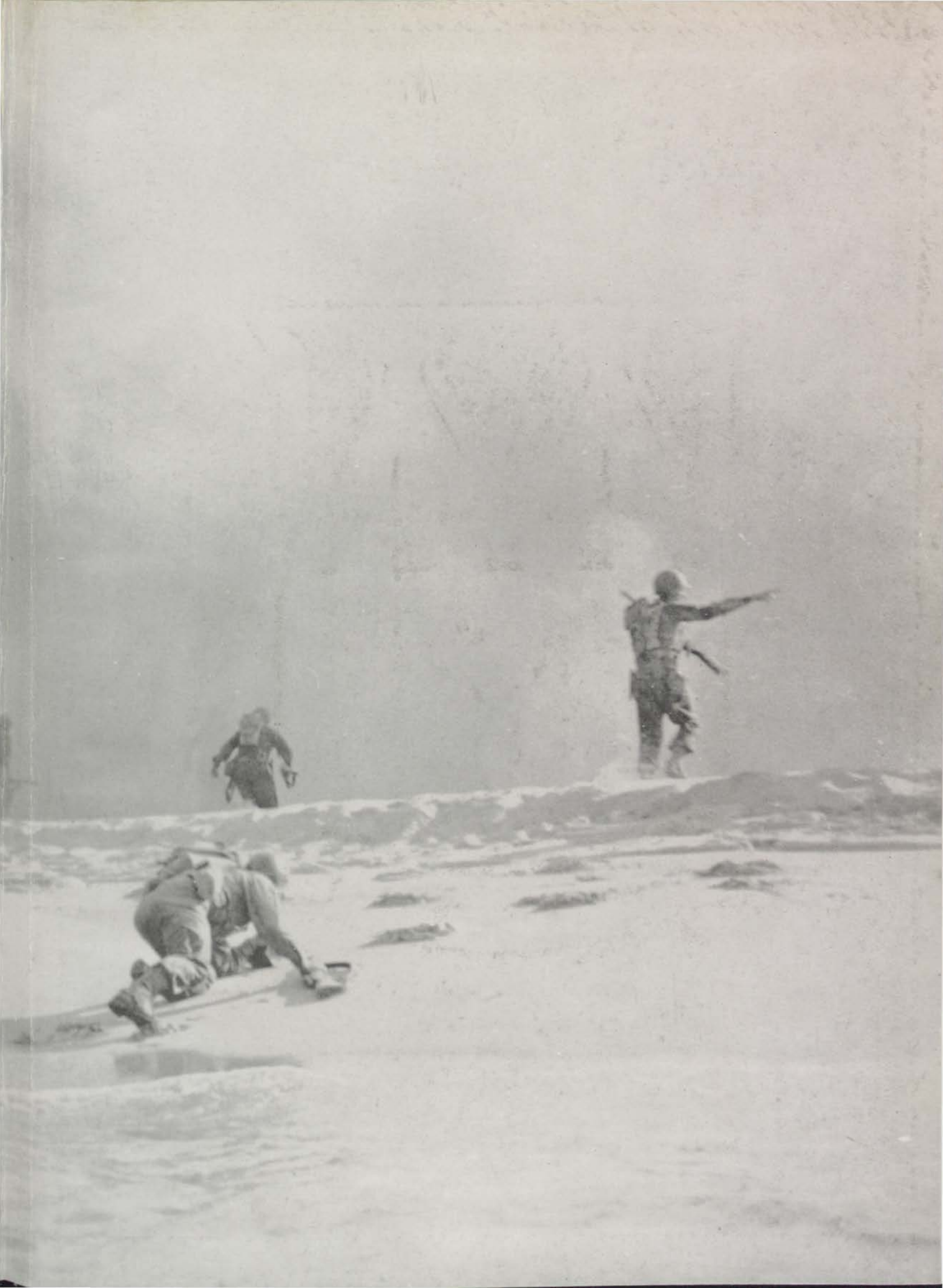
United States Army, "History of the 157th Infantry Regiment (Rifle), 4 June 1943-8 May 1945" (1946). *World War Regimental Histories*. 223.  
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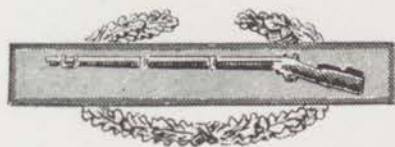


*"All we know is what we see  
from our worm's eye view. . . ."*

ERNIE PYLE.



**H I S T O R Y**  
**O F   T H E**  
**1 5 7 t h   I N F A N T R Y**  
**R E G I M E N T**  
**(Rifle)**



**4   J U N E   ' 4 3 — 8   M A Y   ' 4 5**

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*A story of fighting men  
dedicated in victory  
to the fallen  
Whose bold deaths  
made this victory possible*





COLONEL WALTER P. O'BRIEN



BRIG. GENERAL JOHN H. CHURCH

**157TH  
COMBAT  
WORLD**



BRIG. GENERAL CHARLES M. ANKORN

**INFANTRY  
COMMANDERS  
WAR II**

LT. COL. CHESTER JAMES

LT. COL. LAWRENCE C. BROWN





# FOREWORD



HIS is an informal story of the travels and battles of an infantry regiment in World War II. Like most stories of war, it is difficult to tell, for it is about groups—squads, platoons, companies, battalions—while the real story of war, to every soldier who fought, is the story of the part HE played in it. But to tell the full story of any one soldier in this war, to tell of the grimness and the humor, the nausea and the dignity, the terror and the heroism which marked his fighting days would fill this whole book and many more. Even in this simple story of a single regiment we can only outline the major facts of endless battle. For greater detail we refer you to the men for whom this book was written, the men of the 157th Infantry.

To the best of our knowledge, the facts in this book are accurate. Yet remember, the actions spoken of are not the calm, deliberate movements of history in its normal stride, but the frenzied, semi-chaos of men killing each other. No reporters stood by while these killings took place and the men present were too busy with the killing to note, at all times, which squad went where. So while we may place you at the bottom of a hill at a time when you know full well your squad was at the top of the hill, bear with us, for in the main you'll find us accurate.

This book does not give the full flavor, the full feeling of what happened to the members of the 157th Infantry in World War II. It was written by fighting infantrymen, who well know that there are no words to convey a sense of what happens to the infantry in combat. You can say that men were afraid; but you who walked through the waves to the beaches of Sicily, Italy, France—does that tell your feelings as you went into the unknown where each step might be your last? You can say that men were tense; but you men of Anzio, does that tell your feeling through the long months when each hour took its toll of dead, and the question in every mind was “who’s next?” You can say that men were cold, but you men of the Vosges, what meaning have such words to tell of strong men crying in the night because their numbed feet were slowly freezing?

No, the full feeling is not here, just the simple, factual, narrative.

Naturally, in a history of this regiment, the story of the 157th Infantry will be told to the exclusion of other organizations. But men of the 157th are the first to give credit to the fine outfits that fought beside them. We pay particular tribute to the 179th and the 180th Infantries, which, with the 157th, made up the 45th Division. As for the 158th Field Artillery, the 120th Medics, and the 120th Engineers, we consider them part of us, one with us, our own.

So here is your book, men of the 157th. May the mention of events, invasions of Sicily, Italy, France, crossing the Rhine and the Danube, V-E Day—and its mention of places; Bloody Ridge, Comiso Airport, the Caves, Rambervillers, the Vosges, the Siegfried, Aschaffenburg, Dachau, Munich—may these remind you of the many brave and fine men who fought with you.

And may they remind you, too, of the horrible thing that is war.

**REGIMENTAL INSIGNIA** shown on the cover is symbolic of the great traditions behind the 157th Infantry. The segment of wall shown at the top of the insignia represents the wall around the city of Manila where the 157th saw action in the Spanish-American War in 1898. Tepees recall the Indian Wars in which original elements of the regiment were active.



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*There he stands, a rifleman in the Army of the United States. He's wisecracking to cover up his nervousness, for he's off to war and that's a nervous business. But his is a cocky nervousness. He has trained for two years and he's sick of training. He knows his job, the men with him know theirs, so the chorus is: "Let's get the damned thing over with."*

*This boy is the heart of the Infantry just as the Infantry is the heart of the army, and if you think differently don't say so where he can hear you. Around him are scenes from his training days, from the months and years that gave him reason for that cocky grin on his face. He has marched in cadence on endless parade grounds but his teamwork is beautiful to see in many things besides close-order drill. He can do magical things with that M-1 he's carrying, and if you expose a foot to his fire from a range of 300 yards you had better have crutches handy.*

*He's a fighter and he knows it.*

*But other fighters are waiting for him; fighters who have been training for ten, fifteen, twenty years preparing for the meeting. Even now, while he waits to board the ship, slave laborers are building defenses against him on the shores of Europe.*

*The issues are clear, the battle is joined, the riflemen leave.*

*Good luck to you, soldier. . . .*



*It was June third, 1943.*

*The St. Louis Cardinals and the New York Yankees were leading the Major Leagues. "This Is The Army," Irving Berlin's all-soldier show, was the big hit on Broadway. Girls were swooning as Frank Sinatra sang, "She's Funny That Way," and juke boxes from coast to coast were grabbing nickels with a new ballad called "That Old Black Magic." Humphrey Bogart, the tough, world-weary hero of "Casablanca," was the matinee idol of the year. The up-sweep hair-do was the vogue of the season. Franklin Roosevelt had just finished his fifth war conference with Prime Minister Churchill in Washington.*

*War news was good on June third, 1943. Organized axis resistance had ceased in North Africa with the capture of General Von Arnheim and surrender of the German 15th Armored Division. But all this was half a world away, and to the average U. S. citizen the war was still something unreal. In the bars and barber shops, in the grocery stores, on the street corners across America, the people were saying:*

*"The war's all over but the shouting. . . . We beat hell out of them in Africa, and the way I figure it, the whole thing's just gonna collapse. We did all our fighting at Oran. . . . Sure, we'll send some troops across, but only a token force. . . . The way I figure, the damn war's over right now."*

*So the people were saying, on June Third, 1943. . . .*





## 1. AFRICA BOUND

**I**T WAS June Third, 1943.

In the harbor at Hampton Roads, Virginia, five ships rode at anchor in the night: The USS CHARLES CARROLL, the USS THOMAS JEFFERSON, the USS WILLIAM P. BIDDLE, the USS SUSAN B. ANTHONY, and the USS PROCYON. In the holds and on the blacked out decks of these ships were the men of the 157th Infantry. They played cards, listened to radios, roamed the ships, talked to the sailors—or sat quietly looking down into the dark waters of the bay. They were restless, for already there was tension on those five ships. Beating inwardly with the pulse of every man was the phrase of the hour:

"This is it . . . this is it . . . this is it . . ."

For four days the ships remained in the harbor, together with others carrying equipment and personnel of the Forty-Fifth "Thunderbird" Division. Days were hot, sweltering hot, the water quiet, the sky cloudless. In the distance the coastline was dull through the haze. Men sweated. Every morning and every night they had boat drill, scrambling down the cargo nets with full field equipment into waiting launches which took them to the other side of the boat where

they scrambled up the cargo nets again. "Like a bunch of damn monkeys!" was the constant bitch. Men grew more restless. They said good-bye to America every night and awoke the next morning to find it still there. Rumors flew from "unusually reliable latrine sources." The 45th was going to open the second front in France . . . the 45th was going to make a direct invasion of Italy . . . the 45th was going to sail through the Panama Canal and go to the South Pacific. A few said the 45th was heading for Africa. But from everyone: "Wherever we're going, I wish to hell we'd start."

Tension grew tighter, for these men were trained to a fine edge, and theirs was the tradition of a distinguished regiment. Behind them were maneuvers in Texas and Louisiana, winter training in upstate New York, amphibious training at Cape Cod, and mountain training in Virginia's Blue Ridges. These months of training did what Hitler said could never be done; transformed a group of clerks and barbers and farmers and truck drivers and salesmen into a disciplined line regiment that would meet and destroy the finest fighters in Germany. In the holds of their ships were the best in arms and equipment that American ingenuity could produce, and these men were ready to use them. They were ready for anything except the sitting and the waiting.

So tension grew.

At 0800 hours on June 8 there was the rattle of anchor at Hampton Roads. Whistles blew, sailors moved briskly, and slowly an armada got under way towards the open sea. There was a rush to the railing for a last look at the





shadowy shore that was America. There was excitement and noise and a strange empty feeling in men's hearts. The 157th was off to the wars.

Officially, the crossing was uneventful, but not many of these men had crossed an ocean before, and it was eventful to them from the time that land disappeared and they first became conscious of the endless expanse of the sea.

Navy destroyers joined the convoy, casually cutting in and out of the changing ship formations. They were a comforting sight but they and the anti-aircraft balloons floating above decks brought with them an added realization of danger.

From the first day out, men trained. They listened to lectures on malaria (beware of the *Anopheles* mosquito), lectures on purifying water (use halozone tablets), lectures on chemical mortars, a secret weapon of war being brought over for its first combat use. They stood rifle inspections and found what salt air does to barrels of weapons. They saw training films and they did calisthenics on deck, where the roll of the ship added strange variations to deep knee-bends and push-ups.

At night there was darkness, complete and absolute. The first nights out, an occasional match flared from an absent-minded smoker, but soon the absent-minded were in the brig.

Schools of flying fish were sighted. Dirty clothes were tied to lines, dangled into the deep Atlantic for cleaning and frequently lost. Amateur navigators continually "shot" the sun or the stars and plotted the ship's course. Even to the dullest it became apparent that the general route was far to the south and somewhat east. Men talked more and more of Africa.

The convoy was not attacked, but aboard there was the continual uneasiness of wartime travel. Maybe no subs were sighted but it will be hard to prove that to many of the 157th. Frequent depth charges dropped by the accompanying destroyers and the erratic zig-zag of the ships' course added weight to rumors of underwater attack.

Days passed and restlessness set in again. The ocean was monotonous, the boats were crowded, things remained static from hour to hour. Men shot craps and played poker and blackjack, hurriedly scooping all money off the board when officers approached. Nub haircuts were the vogue and at fifteen cents a head, barbers who never had barbered before found fame and fortune in a steady stream of customers.

Long hours were spent sharpening bayonets and trench knives in the sun on the open decks. And even longer hours waiting in line for ice cream and synthetic Coca-Cola from the ships' PX below.

Details were numerous. Heavy weapons men manned the ships' anti-aircraft guns, riflemen stood guard throughout the ship, while to others fell the tiresome



task of sorting heavy boxes of ammunition deep in the holds. And with chow call sounding three times a day, there was always KP.

Boat drill was a nightly occurrence. In jet darkness the men answered the droning calls from the ship loudspeakers. "Boat team 24, go to your stations. Boat team 24, go to your stations. Boat team 25, go to your stations. Boat team 25, go to your stations. . ." Carrying their weapons the infantrymen filed up from the holds and tripped over the taut greasy wires on deck to the nets.

Forerunners, these drills, of grim events to come.

June 21 was cloudless and the regiment was provided a spectacular view of the Great Rock of Gibraltar as the convoy filed through the famous straits. The men refused to be more than casually impressed. They leaned against the rails, ate ice cream and wondered what it would be like to attack the great fortress from the sea. The sight of land and of new vessels became common now and on June 22 the convoy entered the harbor at Oran. The 157th had arrived in Africa.

For three days the men remained on the ships enviously watching the sailors in laundered togs climb into landing boats which took them into Oran on shore leave. The infantry finally went ashore on June 25th but not quite as expected. In the early morning after putting out to sea once more, the troops carried their full field equipment down the now familiar chain ladders hanging from the sides of the ships, climbed into LSVPs and headed for the beaches near St. Cloud, Algeria. They were opposed in their landing by men of the 36th "Texas" Division (an outfit they came to know well in the months ahead), who were then stationed in Africa to train incoming combat organizations. For some it was realistic opposition. Flares revealed the men lurching out of boats and bunching together trying to get through the barbed wire that lined the beaches. Then suddenly machine gun bullets whipped overhead and the green dough-boys flattened out on the sand. Dynamite charges roared and splattered the shaken men with dirt as platoon and squad leaders finally calmed down enough to begin issuing orders. Gradually reorganizing, the companies pushed inland toward the African plains that lay ahead. Dawn found them wearily sprawled out in furrows and ditches, soaking wet, cold and thoroughly disheartened. If this was practice they wanted no part of actual beachlandings.

The landing was declared successful but there were those who differed. "If this damn outfit ever makes a landing," they said, "none of us will ever live to tell about it."

Thus, for the first time since 1918, the 157th Infantry stood on foreign soil. With it were elements of the 158th Field Artillery, the 120th Engineers, the 120th Medics, and the 441st Anti-Aircraft that were to share so closely in the sufferings and the victories of the following months.



For five days men worked off the stiffness and softness of the ocean crossing, gradually regaining their land legs. Weapons were unlimbered, tactics practiced. In the heat of the African sun the tempo of the training stepped up, for everyone was conscious that this was the last rehearsal, a dress rehearsal for terror. They made long hikes. They attended mine and demolitions schools. They heard lectures about malaria. They practiced hand to hand combat. They ran obstacle courses. They learned village fighting. They tried to get the begging African kids to eat atabrine tablets and found that the kids already had been initiated.

Once they went swimming in the nude for several hours and became sorely sunburned. Nightfall found most of them exhausted but a few hiked into nearby villages for wine. Some got drunk, but the medics curbed that with their announcement that the wine contained germs of athletes foot and gonorrhea!

The troops walked wearily back to their ships on the first day of July.

They relaxed for four days in the harbor at Oran once more. They stripped and got tan. At last they were allowed to write that they were in Africa and the mail went out in ton-loads. Chaplains held services and noted that all attendance records were broken. The Fourth of July passed quietly and the men remembered Fourths of former years.

At 1630 on July 5 the convoy set sail again. Booklets were issued and destination bets were paid off for the destination was no longer a mystery. In the holds and on the decks hundreds of absorbed infantrymen were reading "The Soldier's Guide Book to Sicily."



*This was the Battle of Blisters.*

*This was war, stripped of its fancy, flag-waving slogans.*

*This was the promised "Blood, Sweat, and Tears."*

*This was Comiso and Bloody Ridge, the beginning of a tradition. It was heat and sand and all night marches. It was hand to hand fighting in hills and mountains.*

*It was tired infantrymen, marching down a road and dirty faced Sicilian kids marching alongside, smiling wide, toothy smiles and asking the questions that would be a sound track to the trek through the Mediterranean countries:*

*"Caramelli Joe-"*

*"Cigarette For Papa?"*

*It was the first laugh, when the serious faced little boy of six or seven walked up and down the advancing column calling out to each doughboy,*

*"Hello Joe. . . . You sonabitch."*

*This was Sicily.*

*And this was the beginning.*





## 2. BAPTISM IN SICILY

**A**BOARD THE attacking convoy, men drew ammunition, and for the first time loaded their weapons for death. They had trained often with live ammunition, but this was the first time they could expect their own fire to be answered by fire. It made a difference. It made one hell of a difference.

The general invasion plan called for the assault waves of the 157th to go in behind a naval bombardment, secure the beach, and push inland to the area around San Croce Camerina. At midnight of that July 9th, a storm had just passed over, and the decks were heaving. In the darkness men stumbled and cursed as they groped to the rail and swung over the side, down the chain ladders to the bobbing, pitching, boats below. Several fell to serious injury. One drowned.

Loaded, the landing crafts bucked their way through the chopping waves to the rendezvous point off shore and began circling, massing for the attack. Men got sick, prayed, cursed, and got sick again, as the small boats circled and reared and swayed in the night.

H Hour was originally set for 0245, July 10, but the wild sea caused delay, so the hour was put back to 0345. Briefed and rebriefed, the men knew the big picture but now the plan narrowed down to their personal jobs, and the question in their minds was whether or not they'd be able to do them. For this was no

\*Unfold map from page 30.

battle-hungry group of military fanatics. It was a regiment made up of United States citizens who were facing their first combat, pretty damned scared of what was coming, but determined to do the best they could. What they wanted most of all just then was to get off those damnable, bouncing, weaving boats.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, a hell of sound and sight erupted as the naval guns thundered salvo after salvo at the Sicilian beaches. Eardrums throbbed with the roar of cannon, and sickness was forgotten at the spectacle of a naval barrage at night. Great fires started on shore, and other fires could be seen inland as the air corps bombed distant targets. For ten, twenty, thirty minutes the pounding continued, then at 0345 the waiting assault boats dispersed into a huge V, pointed for the beaches of Sicily, and went in under supporting fire.

The sector allotted the 157th Infantry apparently had been considered impregnable because of its reefs and rocks. Only in occasional areas had these natural obstacles been supplemented by barbed wire and gun emplacements. Actual enemy resistance was light in the initial landing, but the sea took its toll. Twenty-seven men drowned as boats collided and upset in the swirling water, or were pounded to pieces on the hidden rocks. Here, even before the regiment set foot on enemy soil, it made a down payment on the bitter price of victory.

*Typical pre-invasion as naval guns pound coast and fight off heavy air attacks. (Signal Corps Photo)*



But despite the sea, despite the rocks, despite the fitful opposition of the Italian garrison, the landing was successful. With the support of the 158th Field Artillery, the regiment moved inland toward its objectives against scattered resistance. By 1300, July 10, First Battalion occupied commanding terrain above San Croce, Camerina. There was a half hearted attempt at defense by the Italians, but at 1545 the town fell before artillery pressure and without the loss of an American life. By night the regiment occupied positions in and around the town. The first day's objective had been secured.

A green regiment attacked the Sicilian coast that morning, but an experienced outfit dug in that night, for combat makes a man a veteran or a casualty



# Under Fire!



*High tension is apparent as infantry hits the beach under enemy artillery barrage. Photo by Press Assn.*

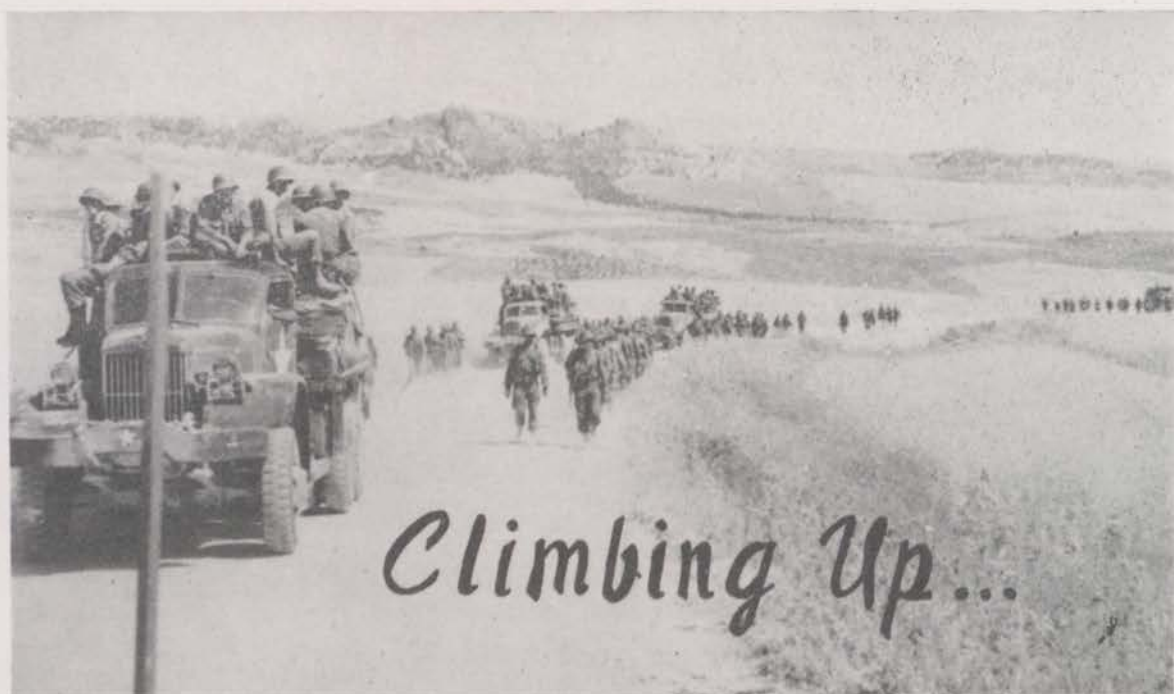
in a few hours and with little formality. Men of this outfit had taken their first town, captured their first prisoners, suffered their first casualties. And they were tired as they never had been tired before. They had stripped down to bare essentials and littered the road from the beach with discarded equipment, as their slogan became, "Travel light, freeze at night."

Their next objective was Comiso Airport, twenty miles away.

In the early morning hours of July 11, Second and Third Battalions moved toward the town of Comiso, while the First Battalion went to the right to take Ragusa. Ragusa fell at 1240, and an enemy battery of artillery fell intact. Second and Third Battalions continued their attacks and by noon Third had Comiso, and Second was on the high ground beyond, overlooking the airport. At 1500 came the jolting artillery barrage from the 158th Field Artillery, the first of many that opened the way for countless attacks by the infantry in the months to come. Third Battalion jumped off at 1540 and for the first time ran into the bitter German resistance that was to oppose the regiment until V-E Day. Fighting was fierce, but by 1700 the airport was in American hands, together with large ammunition and bomb dumps, 200,000 gallons of aviation gasoline, and 450 prisoners. More than 120 planes were captured or destroyed, including one that was shot down by a BAR man as it attempted to get off the ground. Tactics employed by the regiment in this fight were so smoothly successful that officers dubbed it the "Fort Benning Attack."

Captured with the other equipment at Comiso was a nickel-plated bicycle which some of the men presented to Chaplain Leland L. Loy as a gag. But it wasn't a gag to the chaplain for he had no transportation at the time and he promptly put it to use. The chaplain and his bike became a familiar figure on





*Dust, dirt, sweat, heat were key words as fighters shuttled through desolate Sicily. Press Assn. photo.*

the roads and hills of Sicily and the cry of "Hi yo Chappie" became part of regimental tradition.

There was little pause after the fall of Comiso Airport. At 2300 the same day, Second Battalion began moving toward Charamonte to the north while the enemy concentrated an artillery barrage on the beach. It was during this bombardment that Airborne troops of the 82nd Division were dropped on the front lines. Warned to "Watch out for paratroopers," the Infantry cut loose on the low flying transports and the descending chutists. In the darkness there was considerable confusion on both sides before things were straightened out. It was long afterward before the "Thunderbirds" and the 82nd Airborne Division could tolerate each others' company.

On July 12 the regiment was ordered into rest for reorganization near Comiso but Second Battalion had pushed ahead and cleared Charamonte by 1030 so the other two battalions were brought forward as well. They moved east to Ragusa and then north to Charamonte. The day's "rest" consisted of a strafing by enemy aircraft in the morning, and a 15-mile sweaty march to Charamonte in the afternoon.

Next morning the regiment jumped off again, taking the garrisons at Elmo and Monterosa. The advance continued towards Licodia, where the Germans struck back vigorously with flame throwers, heavy artillery, and massed automatic weapons. Third Battalion, in the attack, suffered sixty casualties but it

took the town and on July 14 the entire regiment assembled near Licodia.

During July 14 and 15, elements of the British 51st Highland Division and the First Canadian Division passed through the 157th to take Vizzini and Gremichele. Thus, for the first time, from the high ground surrounding Licodia, men of the regiment saw the famous British Eighth Army in action as elements of it attacked the German strong point, Vizzini. Here Colonel Charles M. Ankorn, commanding the 157th, issued one of the orders which were to become legend throughout the organization. Informed by the British liaison officer that the Tommies needed assistance, the colonel reached up to the side of a near railroad box car, casually tore loose a shipping ticket, made a brief notation on it and sent it to Lt. Colonel Preston C. Murphy, commanding First Battalion. Typically brief and to the point the order read simply,

"Murphy, go help the British."

Murphy did.

On the morning of July 16, the regiment left the Licodia area and moved to an assembly area two miles east of Riesa. There the various unit commanders were orientated on the next phase of the attack; driving across the island and cutting the Palermo-Messina Highway.

After a static day, the 157th led the Division's attack northward to Pietraperzie, covering thirty-two miles against sporadic fire from 75's and 88's. Piertraperzie fell swiftly and by nightfall of July 18, the regiment was established

*The road down was usually as rough as the road up for the tired, tired infantry. Press Assn. photo.*







*Scout slinks cautiously down a slope towards farmhouse under artillery fire in Sicily. (Life Photo)*

near San Caterina, in almost the exact center of the island of Sicily. Here it was relieved on July 19 by the 180th Infantry.

So ended the first phase of the campaign in Sicily. In eight days, the regimental command had marched 130 miles, facing in its first days of combat opposition from the Italians, the Germans, and the weather. For throughout these days, the broiling tropical sun was as formidable as enemy guns. Three thousand prisoners were in stockades, every objective had been taken and the 157th had been identified by the Krauts as an unwelcome foe. But during two day's relaxation it went down to inglorious defeat before an unofficial diet of grapes, peaches, watermelons and figs . . . all of which led to a widespread epidemic of an occupational disease known as the "GI'S."

The two-day breather came to an end on July 22 and the Regiment moved out under cover of darkness for the long march to Cerda where it was to establish road blocks at a rail junction. Elements of the regiment were shuttled by motor, but a blown bridge near Caltavutro made a difficult march to the flank necessary. In the early hours of the morning of July 23 within a mile of Cerda, Second Battalion was ambushed on an open road. Enemy machine guns and mortars, zeroed in hours before, opened up with deadly fire from the surrounding slopes. The advancing column took what cover it could in the shallow swells of the ground and sweated out fifty minutes of hell. Tracers, ack-ack and mortar shells shredded the area. Then in the midst of the nightmare, the Germans blew up a large bridge, hurling chunks of cement into the prostrate men.



Relief came when the 158th Field Artillery dropped a barrage that pinned the enemy down and allowed the battalion to withdraw, reorganize, and outflank the ambush, which by that time consisted mostly of empty fortifications and some Italian civilians. The Germans had made their usual masterful withdrawal.

They were exhausted men who occupied Cefalu next morning, July 24, where they were again relieved by the 180th Infantry.

Rested, the 157th again went into the attack on July 27 moving along the coast line from Cefalu toward the objective, San Stefano. Between these two towns lie a series of ridges, one of which was to gain an evil name in the history of the regiment. First Battalion led the advance, with Second and Third in direct support. Castle De Tuca fell to First Battalion, and the regiment pointed for tiny Motta D'afformo located on a high ridge overlooking the newly-captured town. Then hell broke loose. Mortar fire pounded the men as they surged forward through lemon and olive groves. Machine guns spat at them from the surrounding slopes. Artillery screamed in from behind the ridges. First and Third Battalions finally won possession of the high ground northwest



*Man's best friend was his mule as they brought ammo and rations over rugged Sicilian ridges. Life Photo.*

### FIRST U.S.O. SHOW

No one questioned Bob Hope's being a comedian. He had to be or he never could have taken GI attention from Frances Langford, whose bare midriff excited even more comment than her singing did. Frances sang and danced in the heat of the broiling Sicilian sun while Hope wisecracked that he heard rumors Errol Flynn was campaigning to be mayor of the Virgin Islands. He kidded about his nose and he joked about how scared he was when he was caught in a night bombing raid at Palermo. The GIs had seen that raid from a distance and they were certain Bob had been scared all right.

After the show Hope and Frances signed autographs for enthusiastic GI fans. Hope said he thought he should be asking for autographs, rather than signing them and although the GIs accepted that as a professional remark, they liked it. They liked Frances too. She was the first

woman they'd seen since they had set sail from Hampton Roads two months before and she was a touch of home, even if she was from Hollywood. The Hope-Langford show, the Langford shape and the Hope jokes were common topics for five days after the performance.





of the objective only after battling until nightfall through small arms, heavy weapons, artillery fire. They were partially disorganized and their ammunition was low. Casualties for the day totaled 108, highest yet scored against the regiment.

That night the men went back to the tactics of the Indian wars and set up a circular guard; each man not more than ten feet away from another. For the first time, supplies were brought up by pack-mules, and so steep was the route that many of the animals died from the exertion. Their burdens were transferred to the backs of weary soldiers.

Next morning the direct assault on this "Bloody Ridge" began. Troops of the First Battalion continued the attack and repulsed strong counter-attacks despite mounting casualties. It was close, almost disorganized fighting. Typical was the advance of the Second platoon of A Company which attacked up the left slope of the hill to join with the First platoon attacking up the right. The Second reached its objective at dark and encountered small arms fire which the men believed might have come from the First Platoon mistaking them for the enemy. Radio communication failed. In the morning, Second Platoon troops captured Germans still asleep, who had passed the night within yards of them. And one officer awoke to find that the "buddy" with whom he'd been sleeping was a dead Kraut.

That day the Germans counter-attacked but the Second Platoon held its fire, still believing the advancing troops to be the First Platoon coming forward as support. A terrific fire-fight developed and the attacking Germans suffered heavily, but their numerical superiority forced an American withdrawal. Four machine gunners, Pfc. William B. Olsen, Pfc. George A. McGee, Pfc. Wesley F. Howe and Pvt. Luis Blanco, held their positions to cover the troops as they pulled back. All four died at their guns.

During the day the enemy withdrew from Motta D'afformo to Retina and the battalions of the regiment consolidated to continue the attack. Late that night the Second Battalion moved east across-country to Retina Ridge and gained control of the coastal road to San Stefano. The victory was in sight but there was hard, bitter, bloody fighting ahead. Naval destroyers fired into the German position from the coast as the troops pushed wearily forward up and across the ridges. Bayonet fighting occurred and the two forces frequently were within hand-grenade range of each other. This day's fighting cost the regiment a heavy toll in casualties. Here a visiting general gave the ridge its name when he surveyed the scene and made the cryptic comment: "What a bloody ridge this was!"

At 0715 July 31 the Second Battalion occupied San Stefano. Bloody Ridge



had been taken but not without a final sacrifice. Attacking from its reverse slopes, regimental troops walked into their first mine field and found what the German "Bouncin' Betty" could do to a human. That night the 45th Division was relieved by the Third Division of the American Seventh Army and the regiment moved to a rest area three miles east of Termini Immerge.

That was the end of the 157th Infantry's first twenty-one days of combat in World War II and the end of its first costly engagement, "Bloody Ridge." The men were no longer battle virgins. They had met a tough enemy and a tough terrain and had beaten them both. They had suffered 163 casualties, captured 4223 prisoners. No official tally of the "Supermen" they had killed was made. So now they rested and drank the wine of Sicily, "Purple Death." And while they rested and drank and washed in streams and raided watermelon patches, ships gathered in the harbor.

During the two-week rest in the bivouac area, schools operated. Men ran combat problems, putting into practice all the lessons they had learned in the Sicilian campaign. There were endless bull sessions for their pride in their outfit was bursting at the seams. But a battle doesn't win a war, they knew, and they were sweating. The chaplains conducting open air church services in dry dusty olive groves found attendance rapidly increasing.

On August 14 the regiment moved out to assist in the final assault on Messina, now being threatened by the British and by the Third Division which had made successful beach landings in the rear of the retreating Germans, cutting off strong enemy elements. On August 15 regimental troops moved to Termini Immerge, loaded on LCT's and LCI's and shoved off under orders to land on the beach two miles west of Spadafora, behind the enemy lines. In the early morning hours of August 16 the landing point was changed because of the swift advance of the Third Division. Landing finally two miles northwest of Termini Bagni, the 157th found the beach heavily mined but the area in friendly hands. The "End Run" had turned into a "Dry Run." But the regiment's operation was not without loss, for a cable on which an assault boat loaded with men from Company C was being lowered, suddenly snapped and the occupants were plunged into the sea. Several drowned and some were killed when the boat fell on top of the struggling group.

As representative of the 45th Division, so it was said, First Battalion, took part in the assault upon Messina August 18. Ducking shellfire from the coast of Italy it made its way forward in a prolonged march. Patrols from the unit were the first to enter Sicily's famous seaport and the souvenirs they found there—pistols, daggers, bayonets—repayed them in part for the tiring hike they made. The battalion rejoined its parent organization in the area near Spadafora, then



the main body of the regiment moved by boat to Palermo and from there by truck and freight train to rest in the vicinity of Trabia.

The battle for Sicily was over. The enemy had retreated across the straits to the Italian mainland and as the men sat and listened to Commanding General George S. Patton, congratulate them on their part in this first assault on the road to Berlin, they knew they soon would follow.

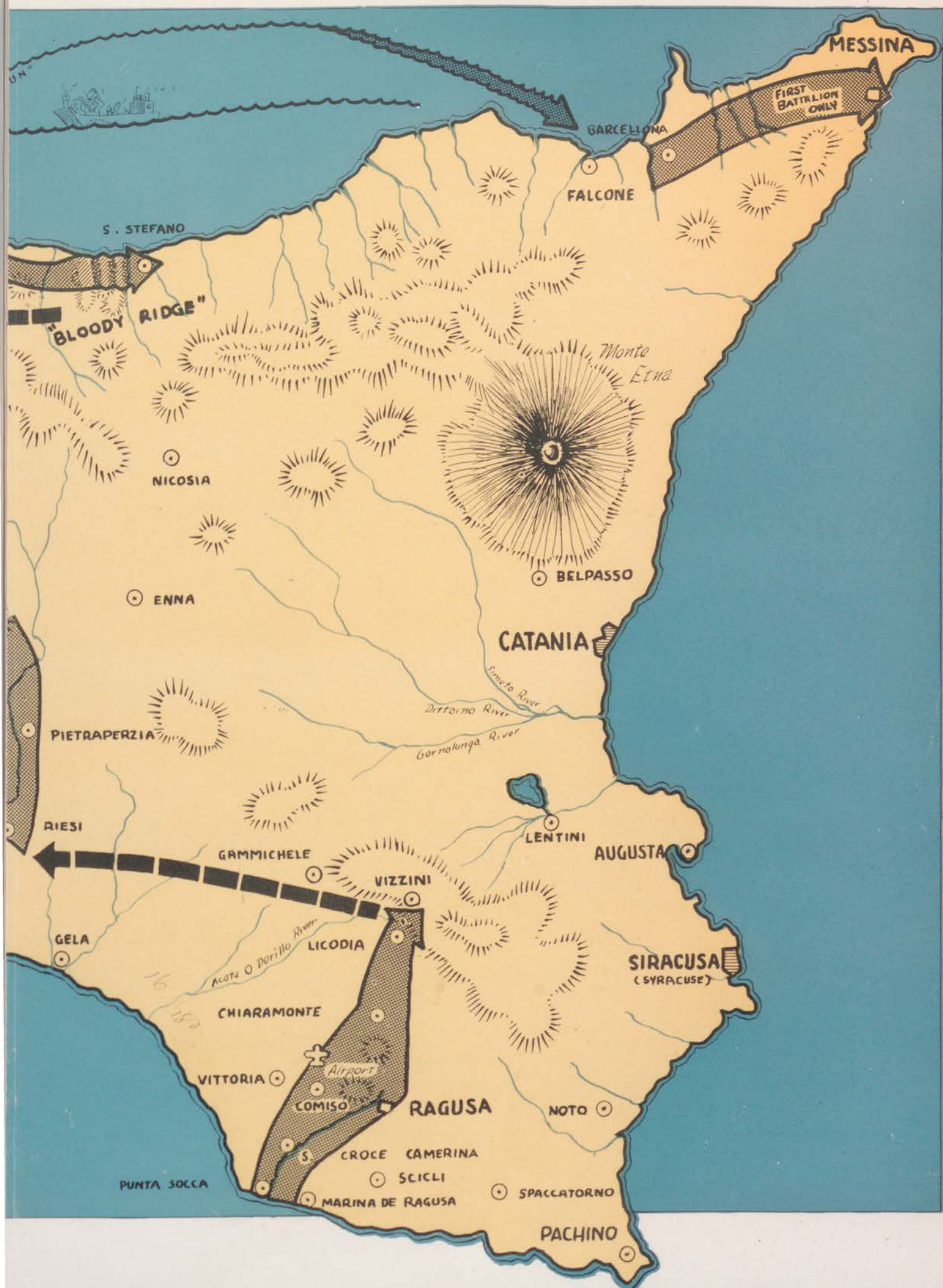
The passing months and more sensational victories have dimmed the importance of the fighting on the island of Sicily. \* But those responsible for waging global war knew well its tremendous military value. Sicily in Allied hands meant that supplies for Russia, for Yugoslavia, for Greece, and for our allies in the Pacific could sail the short route through the Mediterranean. The victory here was far greater than the size of the island indicated.

But to the 157th Infantry troops who fought there, Sicily was significant as the first step towards home . . . the hard way.

*The wounded come aboard while replacements wait to go ashore to fill up the ranks. Press Assn. photo.*





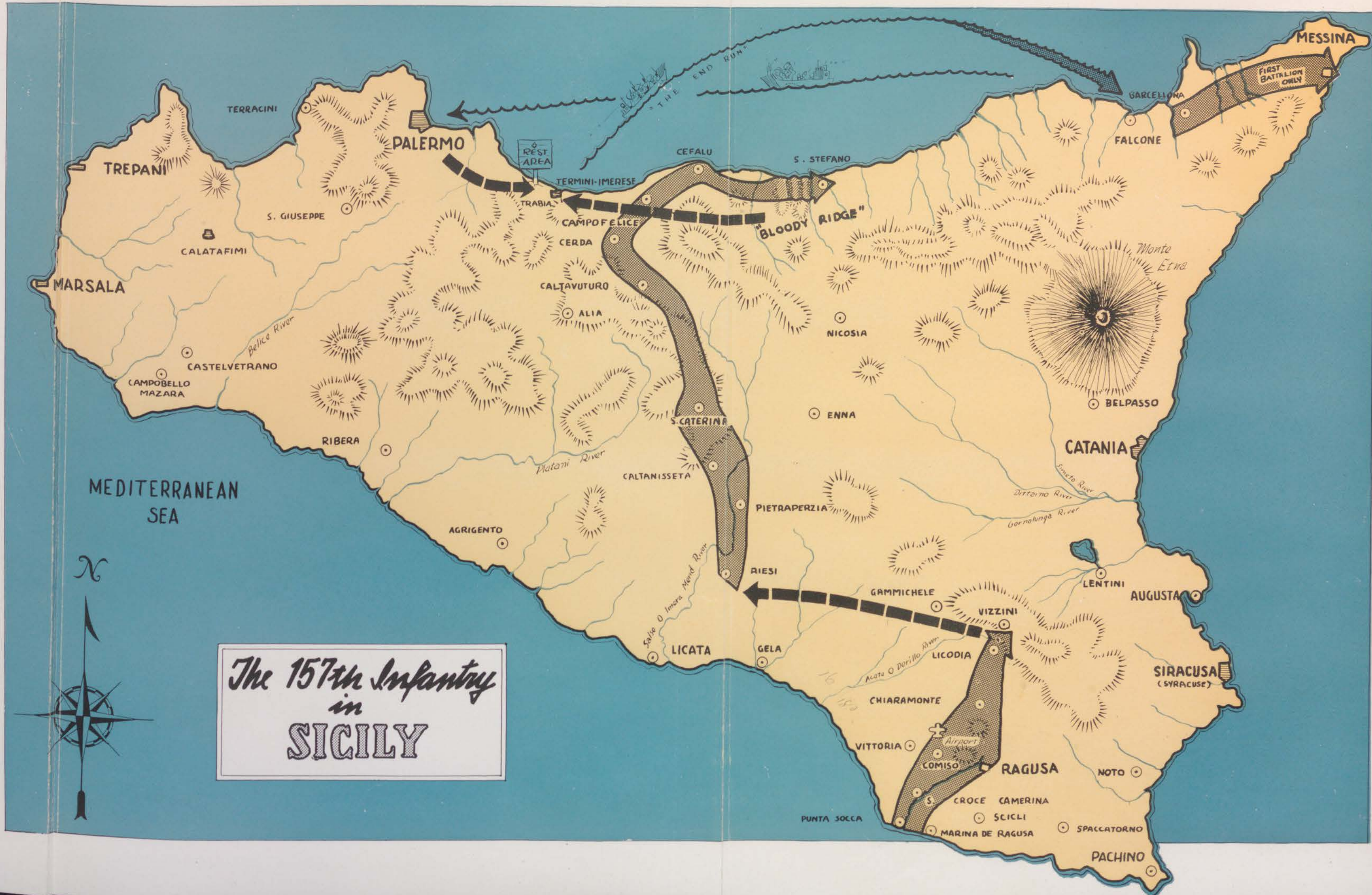






*The 157th Infantry*  
in  
**SICILY**







*Towards evening, with the attacking ships nearing the coast of Italy, radios flashed the report: "Premier Marshall Badoglio's Italian government has surrendered unconditionally to the allies!"*

*Troops went wild!*

*"What did I tell you," shouted the Nebraskan, pounding the man next to him.*

*"Curtis Street . . ." sighed the Denverite.*

*Then over the loudspeakers came warnings: "Remember, Germany hasn't surrendered. The attack must still be made. The war isn't over. There's tough fighting ahead."*

*But men were too busy celebrating to pay much attention to that. "It's going to be a snap" was the theme song of the majority, and no amount of reasoning could sober that song.*

*Then came Salerno. . . .*





### 3. SALERNO

**T**HE MEDITERRANEAN was placid as the convoy pulled away from the beaches near Trabia on September 8. Behind were the mountains and the deserts, the blisters, the thirst, and the "Bloody Ridge" of Sicily. Ahead was Italy and the first American invasion of the European mainland.

The British Eighth Army had crossed the Messina Straits to the Italian mainland near Reggio di Calabria a few days earlier. Its objectives were the airfields at Foggia to the north. Now, the United States Fifth Army, under Lt. General Mark Clark, was to lead somewhere on the western beaches of Italy and strike eastward. If a junction with the British Eighth could be effected swiftly enough, enemy forces to the south would be trapped.

The Fifth Army consisted of two corps; the British Tenth and the U. S. Sixth. In the Sixth Corps sector, the 36th Infantry Division was assigned the initial assault mission, with two regimental combat teams of the 45th Division in floating reserve. Making up one combat team with the 157th Infantry (less the Second Battalion, left in Sicily as regimental reserve) were the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, Company A of the 120th Engineers, and Company A of

\*Fold out map from page 40.



*Bulldozers follow infantry closely to shore to prepare beaches for heavy equipment. Press Assn. photo.*

the 120th Medics. These were to remain aboard ship until the beachhead was established.

P-38 fighter planes formed an aerial umbrella over the convoy as it moved slowly northward in the autumn sunshine. Men cleaned their weapons and talked of the Sicily that was past and of the Italy that was to come. They lined the rails watching the waves of the Tyrrhenian Sea lap against the sides of the ships and disappear in the white foam astern.

"Ya know," said one, "this damn ocean ain't any different from any other."

They read "Guide Book to Italy" and in the quiet of the long summer day, "Une, duo, tres" and "signorina" echoed from the decks.

They spoke of home: "The way I see it" said the boy from Nebraska, "this war shouldn't last too long. We'll be home for Christmas."

"I sure would like to see the World Series" dreamed the boy from the Bronx, aloud.

Towards evening, with ships nearing their destination, radios flashed the report: "Premier Marshall Badoglio's Italian Government has surrendered unconditionally to the Allies!"

Troops went wild!

"What did I tell you" shouted the Nebraskan, pounding the man next to him.

"Curtis Street . . ." sighed the Denverite. But over the loudspeakers came

*Advancing past famous ruins near Paestum after invasion of Italian mainland, Press Assn. photo.*





warnings, such as the one from Col. Preston Murphy, commanding First Battalion: "... remember Germany hasn't surrendered. The landings must still be made. The war isn't over and there's a lot of tough fighting ahead." But men were too busy celebrating to pay much attention.

"It's going to be a snap" was the theme of the majority, and no amount of reasoning could sober the song. So began a series of "total surrender" rumors that would spread and die out in the heartbreaking months to come.

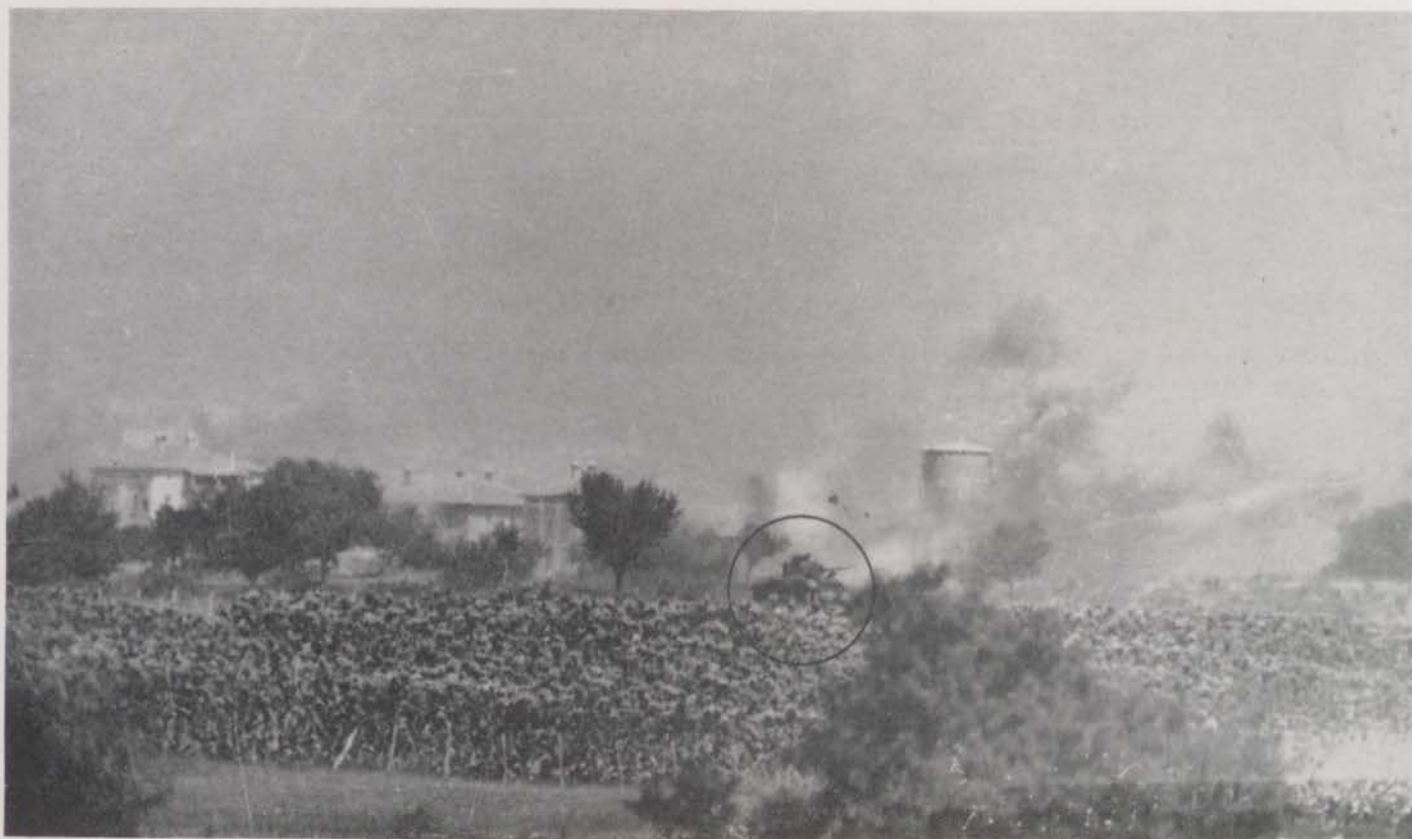
Late that night the convoy reached its rendezvous and at 0330 September 9 the first assault wave of the 36th Division, now seeing its first combat, landed on the beaches of Italy near Paestum. Second and third waves followed at eight-minute intervals meeting intense tank and artillery fire from point-blank range. At dawn German tanks assaulted the beach. Naval guns, off shore and hastily dug in howitzers played their part in stopping this attack, but it was largely infantry that fought for the beachhead. Despite heavy casualties, confusion, and partial disorganization, the 36th pushed on to its initial objectives.

Fifth Army had its beachhead.

At sea, while this battle was in progress, fifty men from Third Battalion of the 157th Infantry boarded the destroyer USS KNIGHT in Salerno Bay and

*On the road passing to the right of Tobacco Factory weary troops wait order to advance. Time, Inc. photo.*





*Allied tank moves to support infantry during the fierce fighting in Sele-Calore corridor. (Time Inc.)*

sailed for the island of Ventotene, forty miles west of Naples. Their mission was to support a detachment of Rangers that had been left there the night before. The force, commanded by Lt. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., of the U. S. Navy, landed on Ventotene the night of September 9, only to find German radar and radio installations had been destroyed by a raiding party from the 82nd Airborne Division. The following day, the USS KNIGHT returned to the fleet and the men of the 157th joined their parent organization.

The 179th and part of the 157th Infantry landed September 10, with the 179th advancing towards Ponte Sele and the hills near Serre to the northeast. This regiment launched its main attack that evening and fought through heavy artillery to reach its objective near Persano at dawn, September 11.

Activity of the Luftwaffe stepped up on the night of the 10th as the main body of the 157th waited offshore, to land in the morning. All through the night the waves of Heinie planes came over to bomb and strafe the harbor in spite of the Spitfires A-36s and P-38s guarding the airways. But the only hit scored in the 120 sorties flown by the enemy that night was on the cruiser USS SAVANNAH.

Weary troops of the 179th were struck by Kraut infantry and tanks early on



September 11. The enemy had crossed the Sele River in the night and his drive was so powerful that the 179th was forced back, giving the Germans high ground from which they could observe all possible routes of supply and advance. Gaining momentum, the German infantry drove seaward. The 179th was in serious trouble and the threat to the entire beachhead was distinct.

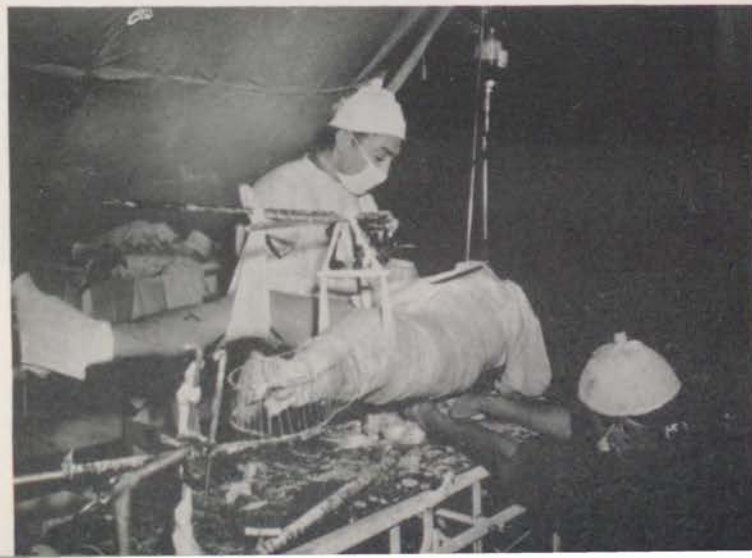
Key to the critical situation in this sector was the river plain of Grataglia (See map). Whoever controlled the Grataglia also controlled the river crossings and movement in the Sele-Calore corridor towards Point Sele and Highways 19 and 91. These were vital supply and escape routes. Not far from the Sele River were five stone buildings used for storing tobacco. They were situated on a ground swell providing all-around observation of the Grataglia and comprised the "Tobacco Warehouse," long to be remembered by men of the 157th. Their capture would expose the flank of the attacking Germans. So the orders given the 157th at this time were: "Capture the warehouse."

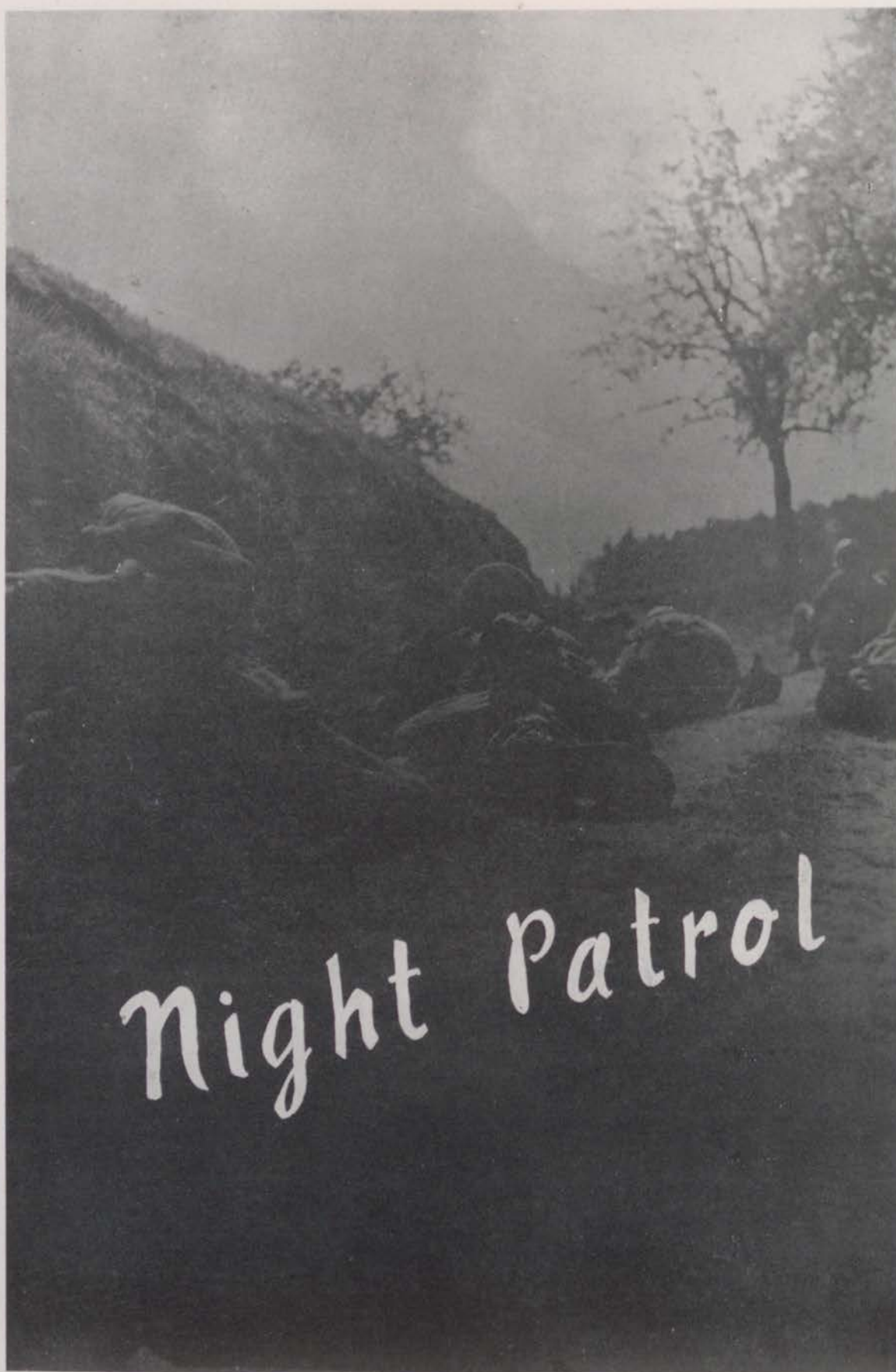
By September 11 the main body of the 157th had landed, organized, and moved to the attack at the river crossings. C Company advanced parallel to Highway 18, reached the road junction at Bivio Cioffi and established road-blocks to the north and east. Some fire came from Torre Palladino, a mile to the northeast. A and B Companies pushed on towards the Tobacco Warehouse in the northwest. They were pinned to the ground by machine gun and tank fire, but each time pressure was relieved by close artillery support. By midnight the infantry was 500 yards from the buildings.

A Company attempted a flanking movement in the direction of the river at dawn on September 12 to open the battle for the warehouse. It came under fire not only from the warehouse but also from tanks operating on the Grataglia and from positions across the Sele. Only the concealment given by tall grass and corn patches saved it from disaster. One company of American tanks was committed and the fight for the buildings continued. For two hours the combined tank and infantry teams slugged. Tanks alone pounded two hundred rounds into the warehouse from close range; the Infantry fired everything it had in the way of mortars, machine guns, bazookas and rifles; and the ever-reliable 158th Field Artillery threw shells like hail storms into the buildings.

But the German fought back. He dove for the cellars when the artillery came in, but he was back at his position to cut down the attacking infantry as it attempted to cross the open spaces in front of the warehouse. Men fell.

*Medics worked night and day close behind lines as casualties mounted. Signal Corps.*







wounded and were evacuated. Men fell to die in the dust and the dirt around those scattered buildings on the Salerno plains. The battle raged.

In the meantime, pressure against the 179th across the Sele River lightened and a counter attack by that regiment succeeded in clearing Persano and removing a dangerous threat to the 157th flank. Then C Company, relieved on the roadblocks at Bivio Cioffi by the 36th Engineers, advanced to the support of A and B Companies. This added power was seemingly too much for the German defenders. They withdrew, leaving the warehouse in American hands.

Victory, exhaustive and costly as it had been, was short-lived. At 1300 the Germans counterattacked in battalion strength supported by tanks. In the bitter fight that followed, German troops sprang from the lofts of the buildings where they had been hidden for hours. Again the 158th laid down heavy fire, but the attacking strength was too much for the infantry. First Battalion withdrew from the warehouse area.

The German victory was to be as brief as the American, for the warehouse was too strategic a position to lose. K Company moved in to support First Battalion. The Navy and the 189th Field Artillery swung their guns to join the 158th in the bombardment of the buildings. Then, with companies of the 191st Tank Battalion in support, First Battalion jumped off again against the warehouse. The expected fight failed to develop for the Germans had quietly withdrawn and the vital buildings again fell to American attacking forces.

That evening while the men were digging in, the Luftwaffe came over in force to attack the beachhead. The enemy ME-109s were intercepted by Spitfires and P-38s and a battle royal began. It was a short engagement. After losing their first planes, the Luftwaffe turned for home and safety while the digging infantry stopped long enough to cheer and jeer.

Meanwhile, a five mile gap had developed between the Sixth and 10th Corps, for the British had been pushed from Battipaglia by German counter attacks. As this area between the corps was a grave threat, a huge shifting of the Sixth Corps was ordered.

The 179th retired from the east bank of the Sele River and went into position to the left of the 157th. The Second Battalion of the 143rd replaced the 179th and dug in two and one-half miles northeast of Persano. Third Battalion, moving forward to strengthen the weak left flank, passed through the tobacco factory area and moved to the North. Meeting light resistance, the men advanced to positions south and east of Torre Palladino. As the 143rd's Second Battalion was now exposed to the enemy on the point of a salient, First Battalion of the 157th was ordered to advance abreast of the other units. Its attempts to move up that night were stopped, but on the following morning, September 13, it pushed forward once more.

That was the beginning of "Black Monday."

Throughout the morning the battalion made steady progress but artillery observers reported enemy tank movement to the front. German artillery was heavy and reports of infantry movement came more frequently.

At 1530 the Germans struck!

Six tanks hit at the left front of First Battalion, fifteen more smashed at the right flank, hitting close behind their own artillery barrage. The initial assault drove the battalion back and the Germans followed up swiftly, outflanking A Company and battering the others with direct tank fire. To the east, a heavy enemy force struck at the exposed flanks of the 143rd's Second Battalion. Other enemy tanks crossed the Sele River near Persano and struck at the battalion rear, completely surrounding the unit. Then the enemy diverted some of its armor in a drive southward down the Sele-Calore corridor.

I Company rushed to the aid of A Company but found itself threatened with encirclement. Slowly the men withdrew toward the south and west and a gap developed in the allied line. Through this gap, the enemy poured the main body of its tanks southward down the road from Persano towards a burned out bridge. Only the 158th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions stood between the Germans and rear areas of command and supply. The security of the entire beachhead lay with the artillerymen.

Gun crews in the two battalions were stripped to a minimum as all available men were rushed forward to set up a defensive line south of the bridge. Those left at the guns were drenched in sweat as they loaded, fired, and reloaded without stopping. For hours the rumble of this artillery echoed over the beachhead. Fire concentrated at the southernmost part of the Sele-Calore corridor made it a living hell as 3,650 rounds pulverized the area.

The enemy withdrew.

Hurriedly, American forces retired to defensive positions in preparation

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### FIRST FOREIGN DECORATION

Sgt. John D. Coffey of Company L was given the mission of crossing into enemy territory during the daylight hours and securing a prisoner for intelligence purposes. He crossed the Sele River near its junction with the Calore and successfully ambushed a German soldier. He then returned to the American side of the Sele with his prisoner.

On the 16th he was ordered to recross the Sele with four men on a Corps reconnaissance mission. Carrying a radio they successfully penetrated deep into German territory and called for artillery fire on various targets. The patrol, less Coffey and another man returned. Coffey was captured but escaped on the 26th of September. He returned to the American lines on October 10th.

He was awarded the Order of Patriotic War, First Degree by the U.S.S.R. as well as the Silver Star.





## BREAK THROUGH

The sketch at the left shows the relative position of beachhead forces on 14 September 1943 when the Germans made their tremendous all-day effort to break through to the beach. As can be seen by the center arrows, the great brunt of this counter-attack hit directly at positions of the 157th Infantry which first beat off a frontal tank attack, later fought back two infantry assaults down the Sele River. The fierce defensive battling of the 45th and 36th Divisions throughout this hectic day undoubtedly prevented the Germans from wiping out the entire Salerno beachhead. What could have been a rout of Allied forces was turned into one of the most severe setbacks the Nazis had suffered in a single day since Africa.

for the renewal of the German attack. The 157th and 179th dug in along the Sele River, one battalion of the 179th moving to relieve the artillery by the burned out bridge. The A&P Platoon of First Battalion, under the direction of Lt. Kenneth "Kayo" Stemmons, placed 500 mines in front of the battalion's position.

That night Colonel Ankorn drew a line on a map for his officers. "This is as far back as we go" he told them calmly.

Next morning, the 14th of September, the Germans relaunched their attack in an all-day effort to break through to the beach. They were met by the coordinated resistance of infantry, artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers. In their initial drive they sent eight tanks and two half-tracks into "Kayo's Tank Trap" and destruction. The enemy's frantic efforts to advance frontally failed and their infantry withdrew.

At 1305 German infantry attacked again, this time down the Sele River towards A Company. Trapped by artillery fire, they fell back. An hour later they came on in force against First and Third Battalions but again their attack failed.

Finally they had had enough. They had been beaten decisively with all the odds in their favor; and the Allies were firmly established in Italy.

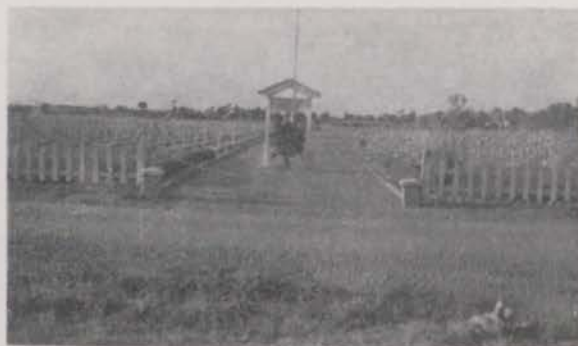
On the Salerno beachhead, by the tobacco factory, along the Sele River, men of the 157th met the German Infantry and stopped it cold. That German Infantry on which Adolph Hitler based his dreams of world conquest had the advantages of terrain and supply, but failed in an all-out attempt to drive



*Well earned awards are presented at Salerno after the beachhead was definitely established. (Signal Corps)*

through the lines of clerks and barbers and farmers and truckdrivers and salesmen opposing it. These hard, bitter days solidified the pride of a regiment and marked it, in German estimation, as an elite organization.

The Nazi tentacles that had spread over Europe were finally beginning to withdraw, but that withdrawal was to be agonizing in its slowness and terrible in the cost of Allied lives.



*Allied Military Cemetery near Salerno, Italy, 1943*





*The story turns now to the mountains of Italy and the first combat winter.*

*To Benevento and Faicchio and Piedmonte d'Alife and Venafro where a man's best friend was a mule and a cup of hot coffee outranked champagne.*

*To Hill 1010, Mount Cavalla, and "Purple Heart Valley" where casualties from enemy fire took second place to casualties from the weather.*

*To the mud and the snow and the trench foot and the rheumatism that will make that winter live forever in the memories of those who survived it.*

*To the Valley Forge of '43.*





## 4. WINTER LINE

**M**EWSPAPERS said that German resistance on the plains of Salerno had broken and that Allied forces were hurtling forward. Hearing this, the Infantry laughed, but it was harsh laughter. True, the Germans did withdraw, evidently conceding the establishment of the beach-head, but they withdrew with the deadly efficiency developed in their years of war. Their withdrawal was as lethal as their attack, and there was no hurtling forward against it.

On September 19 the regiment dug in on the heights around Eboli, having passed through Persano in an advance across the wreckage and horror that was the Salerno battlefield. American equipment lay strewn along the roads and ditches. Gas masks were everywhere and full machine gun boxes lay where ammunition carriers had dropped them. And everywhere, too, were the German dead sprawled under the sickening odor of rot. Stupid talk of a quick enemy surrender stopped among the survivors of Salerno, for here was visible proof that the enemy, too, was ready to pay a stiff price in the bid for victory.

High Command plans called for a push northward to clear Naples and the nearby airfields, driving the enemy north of the Volturno River. Field Order

\*Fold out map from page 50.



No. 4 from Headquarters of the Fifth Army directed that the main assault be made by the Tenth Corps. Paragraph 3 (a) of this order read: "On Army orders the Sixth Corps . . . will move, with the 45th Division on the right, via roads within its zone of action to seize the line Teora-Montemarano-Avellino. The Sixth Corps is responsible for the protection of the right flank of the Fifth Army and for maintaining contact with the Eighth Army."

Thus, the regiment advanced up Highway 91 into the mountain country. Being on the right flank of the Division made the 157th Infantry the right flank unit of the entire Fifth Army, a position of great tactical responsibility. The regiment took Contursi and Oliveto after a stiff fight. It occupied Colliano, September 23rd, then Quaqlietta and Valva on the 24th, two days that brought pride and sorrow to the regiment, giving it its first Congressional Medal of Honor winner and taking from it an inspired leader.

In the battle for Colliano, Cpl. James D. Slaton of K Company was lead scout of a squad advancing against machine guns that were holding up two attacking platoons. Slaton worked his way toward one of the machine gun nests. Springing to his feet he charged the nest and bayoneted the gunner. A quick shot killed the assistant gunner. Another machine gun fired from his left. Slaton crossed a stretch of open ground and knocked out the second gun and crew with hand grenades. Yet a third machine gun opened fire 100 yards to the front. It too was silenced this time by Slaton's rifle fire. His action, rewarded with the C.M.H., was one of the outstanding individual battlefield accomplishments of World War II.

Early on the morning of September 24th, a jeep carrying Colonel Charles Ankcorn, commanding the regiment, struck a mine near the front lines. Neither the driver, Sgt. Jay Roseberry, nor the colonel's bodyguard, Pfc. Ray Jones, was seriously injured, but Colonel Ankcorn was thrown to the road, his leg badly mangled. He was evacuated, and although first reports said that his injury was not too serious, it was later necessary to amputate his right leg. His loss was a sad blow, for more than any other man he had built up the fighting qualities of this regiment. Colonel John Church, formerly Division Chief of Staff assumed command of the 157th.

Then rain changed the terrain. Streams became rivers, fields became lakes and everything else became mud. Men suffered through the wet and cold as the 157th slogged on. Northward through Laviona and Santomenno and Castelnuova and Lioni; through S. Andrea di Conza and Andetta and S. Giorgi. The enemy, using the mountainous terrain to advantage, exacted a heavy toll from the advancing infantry. Paths were mined, bridges destroyed and roads blocked. Casualties grew.

On October 1, the city of Naples fell to the Tenth Corps. That same day, the Germans withdrew from Benevento, allowing a patrol from the 45th Division Reconnaissance Troop to enter. Soon after, the 34th Division occupied the town and secured a bridgehead across the Calore River to the north. The 45th Division was then called upon to expand this bridgehead, and by driving to the





*A good trail for infantry—  
plenty of cover, plenty of  
concealment. (Signal Corps)*

north and the west, clear the upper Volturno Valley, thus outflanking the German forces facing the Third Division and part of the 34th on the left flank. It was a large order.

Slowly the 157th pushed the enemy into the rolling hill country. On October 6th, while First Battalion drove him from position north of Fragnetto,

Second and Third Battalions attempted to trap the German in the Ponte Area.

E Company, pointing Second Battalion's advance, moved forward through an early morning fog towards its objective, high ground on a sloping mountain-side. The men had covered a short distance when the fog lifted, exposing them to enemy machine guns. As heavy fire swept the area the company withdrew and attempted to circle a bald hill to the left. Halfway up the slope the men rested while a patrol continued on ahead. Suddenly enemy tanks attacked from the left flank, firing from a range of 400 yards. The screams of the wounded and the dying filled the air as the men retired to defensive positions on a ridge 1500 yards to the rear.

That afternoon under flak and shellfire, the battalion aid men evacuated the wounded. Later, a patrol recovered lost equipment. Shocked and battered E Company, with a strength of 45 men, rejoined Second Battalion's attack.

By October 9th, a sufficient area had been cleared north of the Calore River to allow the 45th Division to swing to the west, where the Calore made its junction with the Volturno River. Here the 157th went into Division reserve.

To the left, the Third and 34th Divisions were preparing to assault the Volturno River line. If the 45th Division could clear its sector and reach the Volturno, it would threaten from the flank the enemy forces facing the 34th Division.

*Through the mud of a winter in Italy come stringers carrying precious communication wire. (Signal Corps)*







*"Home Sweet Home" were these holes in the rock for many of the 157th on the Winter Line. (Signal Photo)*

Terrain was rugged. The path of the 45th lay over rocky hills and open fields with the Matese Mountain range looking down from the north. To the south lay the Mt. Taburno hill mass. A small stream, the Titerno Creek, flowed westward at the base of the Matese Mountain range through a mountain gorge bounded by Mt. Monace and Mt. Acero. Here it dipped sharply to the south and then west again to a point north of Amorosi where it emptied into the Volturno River.

With the 157th still in reserve, the 179th moved west down the Titerno Creek Valley while the 180th followed the road just north of the Calore River.

Gun flashes lighted the western horizon during the early morning of October 13. A low distant rumble was continuous.

"Damn it" said one doughboy from a half sleep, "more rain."

But it wasn't rain, nor was it thunder. It was the artillery barrage that preceded the costly crossing of the Volturno by the Third and 34th Divisions.

Daily it became clearer that, according to plan, the advance of the 45th was threatening the flank of the German army defending the Volturno River. The enemy fought a tough delaying action, trying to establish and retreat to a new line of resistance just north of the Volturno. Attackers, on the other hand, slugged forward hoping to strike this line before it was secure and push on into the Matese Mountain Range, thus outflanking the enemy west of the Volturno.

Late on the 13th, the 157th was alerted for an attack. There were the usual preparations for a return to the line: the endless bitching, the silent praying.

Letters were written.

"It may seem like hard going now," wrote one man to his wife, "but the Germans will crack wide open some day soon and I'll be home with you again."

"Sunny Italy," complained another, "looks good on travel posters but where I am it hasn't stopped raining for days." Yet another: "You wouldn't believe it but while I was in one of these towns a man came up and said he had been a barber in Brooklyn for ten years and wanted to meet someone from there."

And so the letters went, most injected with a bright note to hide the tenseness before the attack.

A light drizzle greeted men in the dark morning hours of the 14th. They "saddled up" drearily, and moved through the 180th's muddy positions.

First Battalion advanced on Facchio from the west of Mt. Acero while the 179th Regiment attacked from the east. At the same time, K Company moved rapidly westward to Amorosi, cleared it, and pushed on to Puglianello in the



north. That afternoon the 179th took Mt. Acero, giving it a valuable OP.

A heavy rain set in.

As a bridge across the Titerno Creek had been blown, First Battalion had to ford the swollen stream, with Third Battalion following in close support. The crossing was effected before dawn, October 15. Enemy resistance was bitter but the men made small gains in brief skirmishes.

Then a heavy air raid stalled the attack. German tanks suddenly ripped into the 179th on the right, stopping its advance. Third Battalion passed through First but was hit by heavy artillery and "Screaming Meemies," the new German six-barreled mortar that was to pile up Allied dead and wounded for the remainder of the war, giving rise to the phrase: "Six Barrel Organ playing the Purple Heart Blues." But Third Battalion pushed on, occupying Facchio by 1315. Tanks and tank destroyers aided Second Battalion in seizing the high ground north of Gioia. By the 19th the regiment had possession of Piedmonte d'Alife, where the Division was placed in Corps Reserve.

A rest period in Italy was a new experience for the regiment. Since D-Day plus one it had either been on the line or following the other regiments in active support. The number of days actually spent off the lines could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

There were three days of rest before combat problems were practiced in the mountains around Piedmonte. There were the first hot showers, the first change of clothes on Italian soil. There was the "liberation" of a few chickens and an occasional hog or cow to vary the diet of "C" rations on which the men had lived since invasion. Some of these variations were strange. One Italian woman found small white bags of "American spaghetti" which she brought home and cooked in the Italian manner for a few of the infantry. But when she set a huge plateful in front of the hungry fighters they excused themselves hurriedly. The "spaghetti" had been made of discarded powder charges from artillery shells.

It was a good rest period, but a short one. And while the men of the 157th had rested, the Third and 34th Divisions had pushed ahead to the north. The 34th forded the Volturno River for the second time and reached Raviscanina. The Third cleared Mount Degli Angeli and Mount Monaco.

On the 3rd of November the 45th Division returned to action. With the 157th in reserve, the 179th and 180th crossed the Volturno River and pushed into the Appenine mountain ridge north of Venafrò. The 180th reached Mt. San Croce and the 179th, after clearing Venafrò, reached the slopes north of Poz-



*Just as glad to be up ahead is this infantryman as rear areas take an artillery pounding. Press Photo*





*"Cavemen" of the Winter Line in Italy.*

zilli. On the 7th of November the 157th moved through Venafro and bivouacked on the side of a steep mountain.

First to move into line in the mountains was First Battalion, which threaded its way high into the Appenines on November 9th to assist American paratroopers who were stalemated there. Climbing steeper ridges than most of them had ever seen before, the men encountered sporadic small arms fire from dug in positions virtually impossible to locate. Enemy mortars were effective, but the strangest feeling was being shot at by American ack-ack. When German planes raided the front lines, not only the planes, but also the men on the line came under the fire of the anti-aircraft guns firing from the valley far below.

"Now I've seen everything" said a boy, diving for his hole, "strafed by my own ack-ack. Hell of a war. . ."

Where names of towns had marked the regiment's advances previously, now hill numbers identified locations.

November 11, First Battalion with Company E attached, attacked Hill 759. In an all night battle, Companies C and E captured the ridge and repulsed three strong counter attacks, but not without heavy casualties. Third Battalion attacked Hill 640, but in crossing Hill 460 was battered by enemy occupying 769 and forced to withdraw. First Battalion established position on Hill 759 and received daily shellings there until relieved by Second Battalion which took over First Battalion's holes and shellfire.





So it went. First Battalion's Hill 1010, Second Battalion's Mount Cavalla, Third Battalion's "Purple Heart Valley" all became familiar to the regiment as it went through its first winter overseas.

And there began the siege of the Winter Line. On November 15, General Clark issued an order stopping the advance, deciding that more strength was needed to break through the enemy defense. As the front became stalemated there was little fighting but much suffering. Trench foot, something few knew how to treat, took heavy toll, and the mule trains that brought up the supplies, carried back men who could no longer walk. Knees stiffened, shoulders ached, hands swelled from exposure. Few men died, but many didn't care whether they did or not. And this, the best clothed front line army in the world had insufficient winter equipment. It was December when warm clothing reached the front. For some this was too late.

In this Valley Forge of 1943, men and mules lived together in abject misery.

It rained continually, aside from those rare nights when a cold moon fought through the clouds to cast a weird glow over the mountains. On the higher peaks, it snowed. Men were soaked to the skin and they stayed that way for eight days, then came back to dry out for what was called a four day rest period. Eight days on the line, four days off is an easy schedule in combat, perhaps, but not in mountain combat in the dead of winter. Not according to the men who were there.

*Back breaking job, bringing the wounded down steep slopes. Mules brought the dead. (Press Assn. photo)*





"Four days off, Hell; it took us over two days of mountain-goat climbing coming off and getting back to those damned rocks. If we had one full day to thaw out we were lucky. You ever try standing in water for eight days with icicles for bones and ice-water for blood? Shoe Pacs? Overshoes? Yeah, we got 'em alright. We got 'em next summer. All we did that winter was hear about

'em in rumors coming up from the rear. I guess our big production schedule was still 'gearing up' because many of the big boys on the line couldn't even get overcoats to fit them. Lots of them fixed up Heinie shelter halves to use as capes. Dry feet? Sure we had dry feet. We had dry feet like we had electric toasters and blondes to sing us to sleep. Dry feet were something we dreamed about when we weren't too damn cold to dream."

Yes, many men were more miserable that winter than they will ever be again, in spite of the fighting efforts of supply elements to bring up what was needed.

As the motorized equipment designed to bring supplies to front line troops was useless in these mountains, mule teams again brought up the rations and ammunition that are as necessary as oxygen to fighting men. Trails were narrow and fell away to sickening depths. They were always wet, sometimes coated with ice. Usually the patient mules were loaded in the late afternoon at supply and ammunition dumps and led up the trails in darkness. It was slow, nerve-wracking business, inching up the mountains in the black of night. Occasionally, mules fell to their deaths, kicking and screaming through the air to the rocks hundreds of feet below. Supply men too fought a rough war that winter.

Kitchens did their best to get at least hot coffee to the men on the line, but they fought a losing battle against the weather. In desperation, some men built fires to heat their food but this was suicide, for the enemy never failed to lob shells into the tell-tale smoke, and his marksmanship was good. Too good. Soon it was found that a few strips torn from a K ration box, if lighted and watched carefully, would warm coffee smokelessly.

Thus passed the months on the Winter Line. There was sharp patrol action and constant artillery duels, but the lines remained nearly stable.

Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's passed; days that once were high marks of every year. At the front they were



"Dead Man's Corner" on road leading to Winter Line, usually under artillery fire. (Photo by Major Fisher)



A tie for Christmas! Just what he needs!!! Signal Corps photo.



just three more days of hell. They brought such things as turkey and chicken sandwiches and many a grim exchange of holiday greeting, but most of all they brought more rain, mud, and cold. A few men had real cause for thanksgiving however, for they were sent back to the Fifth Army rest camp in Naples.

On the tenth of January, after 72 days of continuous combat the 157th was relieved by elements of a French Division. Some of the French Moroccans in this outfit amazed the American by kicking off their shoes and walking barefoot in the snow. Said one frost bitten doughfoot on his way back:

"That's a habit they'll get out of in a hell of a hurry."

In rest, the regiment was entertained by such big names as Joe E. Brown and Humphrey Bogart. There were moving pictures and sports of all kinds, the most popular of which was sleeping, just plain sleeping.

In late January the Third Division, with British and other American troops established an unopposed beachhead near two Italian resort towns, Anzio and Nettuno. In late January, also, the 157th Infantry moved to a staging area near Naples, Anzio bound.

This regiment had written four chapters of war and its men were sickened to death of war. They had fought their battles well but they were soul-weary of fighting. What they wanted above all things was to end the war and go home.

So they cleaned their weapons and wondered about Anzio.

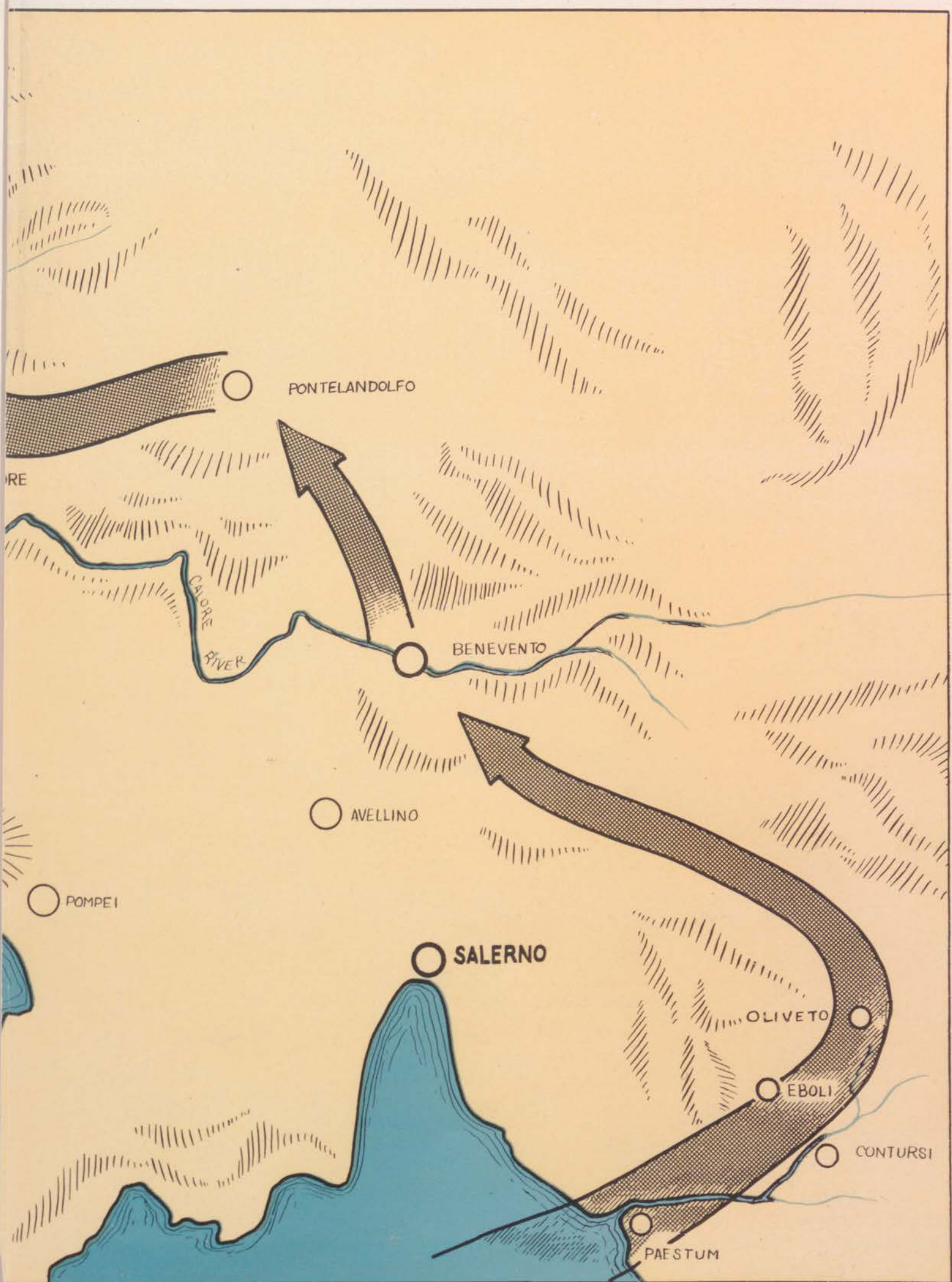


*There were times when mules and men did not seem to agree on issues of the day. (Signal)*

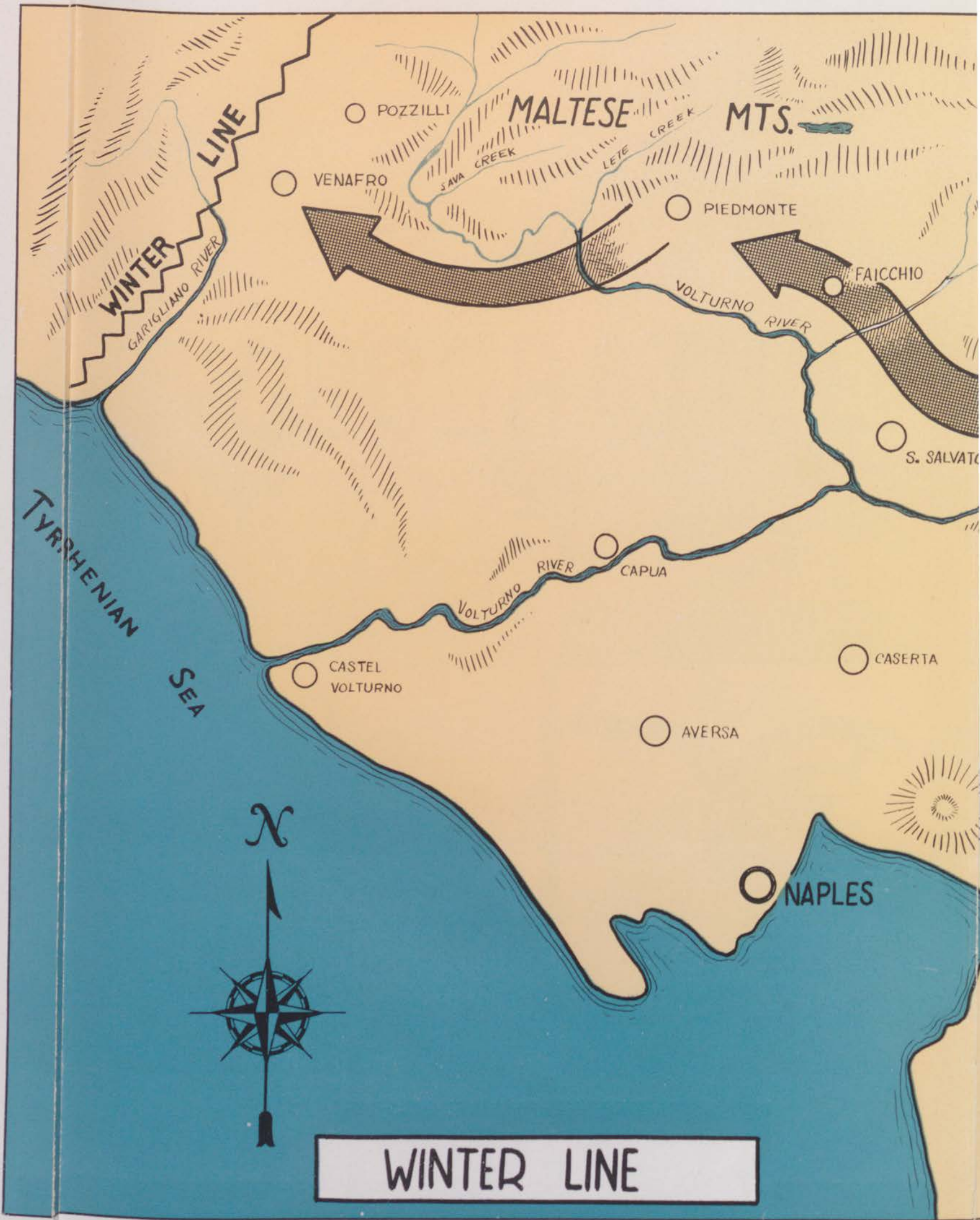
*Mine detectors sweep way enabling men to recover body of fallen comrade, killed by mine. (Press Assn.)*



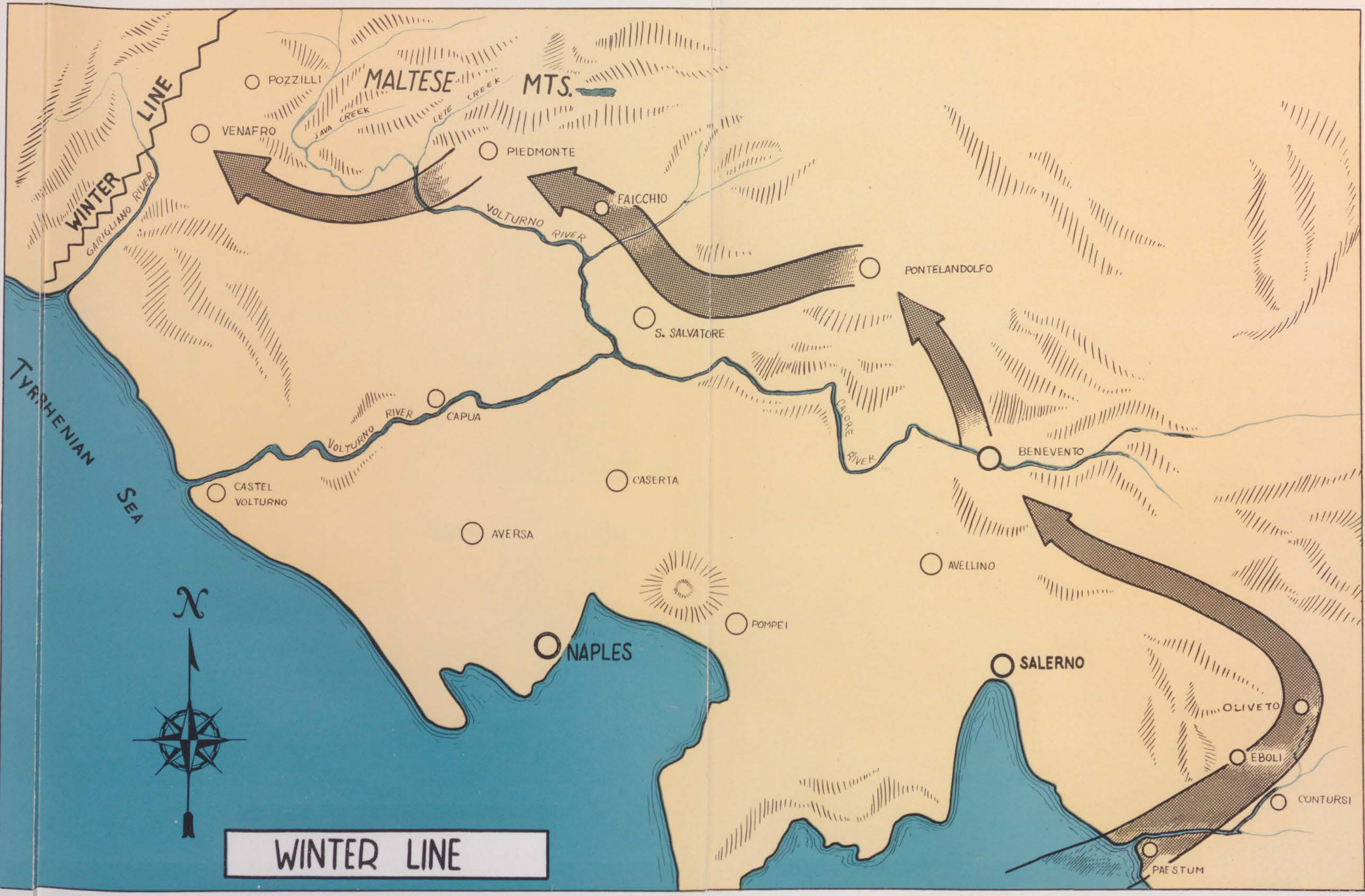














*This was the worst.*

*This was a time of fighting from a hole with the whole German army looking right down your throat. You could almost hear them laughing at you, and if you stuck your head up in daytime you could sure as hell feel them shooting at you.*

*This was a time of the "Anzio Express" and the "Butterfly Bomb"; of "Bomber Bill" and "Bedcheck Charlie."*

*This was massacre at "The Caves," and historic defense at "The Overpass."*

*This was living with death every hour of the day and night, and as close to hell as any man would want to come.*

*This was Anzio and this was the worst.*





## 5. ANZIO

**A**NZIO and neighboring Nettuno seemed at peace with the world in the morning sunshine. True, the buildings near the beach were shattered by bombs, but viewed from the LCI's and LST's, again carrying the 157th into battle, the houses inland appeared unscarred by war. Nothing moved, however, and the quiet was ominous. Everyone felt it and growled at each other.

"Whatever we're going into it can't be worse than fighting in those damned mountains. The sun's shining, there's no mud, and no hills to climb. Hell, the Third Division landed here a week ago without firing a shot. Buck up, we got nothin' to worry about."

But troops were uneasy. They missed the high jagged mountains of the Winter Line. They looked for possible cover but at Anzio there were no reverse slopes, no huge rocks, no terraces. Nothing but the level terrain that they had last seen during their short stay in Africa.

Weary military police didn't help much with their tales of frequent air raids on the harbor, but air raids had seldom worried the doughs of the 157th in previous action. They sympathized with the MP's very sweetly, labeled them "rear echelon," and invited them "up where it really gets rough." They were to remember the MP's warnings in the days following that January 29, 1944.

Though few knew it, invasion was not new to ancient Anzio. Onetime home of the Roman orator, Cicero, and birthplace of the famous Nero, the city had first been assaulted from the sea in 445 AD by Genserico, King of the Vandals, who had launched his fleet of ships from Africa and had conquered Rome. Nettuno was born centuries later, an independent community arising from the ashes of Anzio, which had been burned and gutted by the Saracens. Lying only 36 miles south of Rome, the cities had become noted in recent years as beach resorts and frequently were visited by the rulers of Italy, including Dictator Benito Mussolini. But the sands where scores of rich Italians once had played now concealed German mines, while barbed wire entanglements marred the natural beauty of the shoreline. Ships of all types lay at anchor in the harbor, and with the precision born of long practice the sailors aboard them unloaded ammunition and supplies into DUKW's, the sea going Jeeps. Few at that time realized the nervous strain under which these men labored in this Anzio harbor that was a main target for German bombers and long range artillery.

It was a five-mile hike to the assembly area and the first bivouac for the 157th on the Anzio beachhead. Hot, tired, and short of temper, the men felt normally grveled when they were told to dig in. The veterans however, had been on beachheads before and remembering how insecure they could be, wasted little time grumbling. They dug.

From the start, no one liked Anzio.

It was too flat, and despite the distant rumble of artillery, it was too quiet. Far away were the steep slopes from which German observers watched ships entering the harbor, troops moving toward the front, trucks hauling supplies and ammunition.

*An enemy plane is shot down over*

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It was like fighting on a stage with the enemy for an audience. Recalling that the landings here were supposed to cut off Germans defending the mountains near Cassino and Venafrò, the troops quipped:

"Yeah, we've got 'em surrounded now."

Anzio breathed disaster and each man felt it.

At 1600 hours that afternoon the Luftwaffe struck at the ships in the har-

*the harbor at Anzio. (Press Assn.)*







*Troops land unmolested at Anzio. (Life-Time photo)*

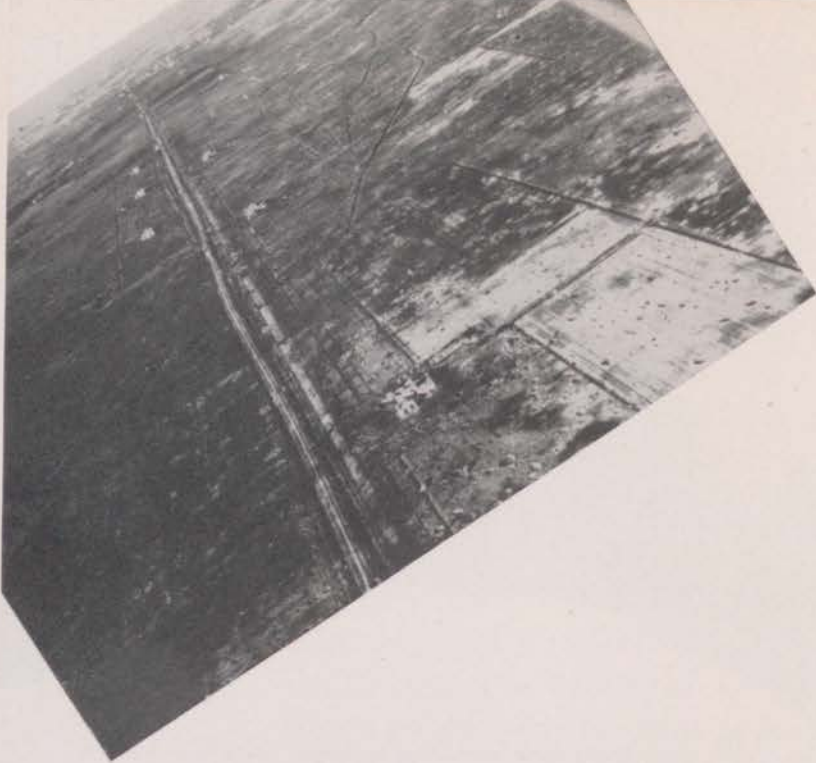
bor, flying low through heavy flak. The Germans lost three planes, set fire to one LST. At 2000 hours, in a 25-minute night raid, they attacked again. While the sky glowed with bursting ack-ack, personnel bombs striking Battery B of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, killed nine and wounded 30 men. Heavier bombs hit a large ammunition ship in the harbor. The craft, lying in plain view of the awed men of the 157th, began to burn and finally blew up in spectacular sheets of flame during the early morning hours of January 30, long after the enemy raiders had gone.

Gradually becoming used to their new surroundings, the troops spent the following two days jockeying into position in the left coastal sector of the beachhead. On the immediate right was the British 2 North Staffordshire Regiment, while on the left was the sea, where cruisers, patrolling the coast, fired inland into installations. For once, digging in was easy but two feet below the sandy top-soil, the men struck water.

Headquarters knew that the Germans were massing for an attack, but had no idea where they would hit. Enemy far out-numbered the Allies occupying the beachhead, and from points of vantage, forward observers could watch German tanks trundling out of the mountains to move into position beyond normal artillery range. Strong enemy patrols probed the forward areas and nightly skirmishes were common. At dusk, February 2, a group of 60 Germans unsuspectingly walked into Company A's position, where infantrymen cut them down with close-range fire.

The hub of enemy activity in the left coastal sector was the area surrounding the factory at Aprilla, situated on the southern edge of the town of Carroceto. A virtual "no man's land," the factory could be claimed neither by the Germans





*Air view of the all-important Albano-Anzio highway, main allied supply route. (Signal)*

nor the British, who held positions south of it. It was in this vicinity at midnight, February 4, that the Germans launched a tank attack against the British from the northwest following along the Albano-Anzio highway. By dawn the Tommies had stopped the assault with artillery but throughout February 5-6 the

Germans continued to press their advantage.

In the 157th Infantry sector, meanwhile, the front remained relatively quiet. Patrols, assigned the mission of taking prisoners, ventured into enemy territory with little success. "You can get within 20 yards of the krauts," the men complained, "but you'll play hell capturing any of 'em." One captive was taken, however, on the night of February 5, when members of the Regimental I & R platoon found three Germans, two of them dead but the other just recovering consciousness from the concussion of the artillery in a recently shelled draw. Another fell into regimental hands at night when he wandered into an outpost. This enemy paratrooper complained bitterly because the men on guard had failed to challenge him in the fashion taught in manuals.

At dawn, February 6, enemy aircraft dropped "butterfly" bombs in the regimental sector and for the first time in six months of combat, everyone began building log roofs over their holes for protection. "Butterfly" attacks came nightly and were nowhere near so harmless as their name. The butterflies were dropped in a hollow bomb-like metal container which split apart on the way down and exploded tiny bombs over a wide area. These exploding butterflies, hitting the ground within brief seconds of each other, made a sputtering sound like popping pop-corn. Nearly as powerful as a 60-mm. mortar shell, butterflies fell into foxholes and dugouts causing serious casualties and damaging vehicles and artillery pieces. They were particularly feared by marching troops. Sandbags, as protection against butterflies and shellfire became more and more a necessity. For the time being, however, logs lined on top with cardboard from 10-in-1 ration boxes and covered with dirt served the purpose.

There was little to indicate that February 7 would be other than an ordinary combat day. The British on the right reported enemy tank and infantry activity in their sector but only intermittent German shellfire harassed the 157th. As they had each day since the beachhead had been established, Brit-



ish Spitfires patrolled the lines, frequently venturing into enemy territory to strafe German positions. Third Battalion was on the right and in contact with the British North Staffordshire Regiment, while on the left, Second Battalion troops guarded the coastal road. Between lay a 1,000-yard gap but it was heavily wooded and the few men defending it furnished adequate protection against a breakthrough.

On the right of Third Battalion was Company L while on the left, Company I defended the rolling ground adjacent to the woods. Unobtrusively enough a few men made preparations to stage a night raid on the enemy lines to bring back prisoners. Their mission was unaccomplished, however, for at 2100 hours, in the wake of a jolting artillery and mortar barrage, German infantry with tank support suddenly assaulted Company L and the adjacent British. While Company I fought off minor thrusts, the main enemy pressure was hurled between Company L and the left flank unit of the North Staffordshire Regiment. In a moonlight fire fight which lasted two and one-half hours, Third Battalion succeeded in holding its ground but not without severe casualties. One was Major John Boyd, battalion commander, killed instantly while making his way forward to the Company K observation post.

With Captain Merle M. Mitchell, the executive officer, in command of Third Battalion in its emergency, the companies began shifting to establish defenses against the renewed attacks certain to come. Two squads from Company K moved to the right flank of Company L, where the enemy was infiltrating, while a raiding party from Company K flanked and captured a German machine gun crew which had penetrated the lines and was pouring fire into important Third Battalion positions.



By 0300 hours, the enemy had established a clean break deep into the British sector and scores of Germans were attacking the rear areas. Enemy tanks began firing on the Third Battalion from the right flank, so Captain Mitchell extended his line southeast, withdrawing Company L to keep it from being trapped. Sixty British, who had expended their ammunition and had been separated from their unit, attached themselves to Third Battalion just before dawn to help protect the flank but when Company L withdrew the Tommies failed to accompany it and were captured.

At 0500 hours February 8, the heavily shelled battalion command post withdrew, suffering casualties as the men came under small arms and machine gun fire in attempting to cross open ground. By dawn the action had quieted, al-



*Picture taken by Jack Harper from a front line Anzio foxhole as enemy artillery round lands short.*

though Company I launched a brief attack to regain its position while the enemy occupied ground formerly held by Company L.

Measured in statistics, the night's fire fight was one of the most concentrated in which the 157th Infantry ever engaged. In two and one-half hours, supporting artillery batteries fired 24,000 rounds, while Third Battalion expended its entire three-day supply of machine gun ammunition. In helping repulse the German assault, Company L's 60-mm. mortar crews fired 2,000 rounds, Company K, 1,900 rounds and Company I, 1,700 rounds. One section of 81mm. mortars in Company M fired 3,600 rounds.

For the following two days the troops fought off minor attacks and watched the Germans advance into the factory area despite determined British opposition. The assault technique was old but successful. In the wake of artillery



fire, the main body of enemy infantry drove into the allied lines, while scattered groups infiltrated into the rear areas to cut communications and attack defending troops from behind. Costly as those tactics proved, it was increasingly clear that the numerically superior Germans were willing to expend the full in men and material to drive the beachhead forces into the sea.

It was with a general feeling of relief that the regiment yielded the left coastal regions to the British the night of February 14 and prepared to move into the central sector of the beachhead. The move began the night of February 15, when Second Battalion took a position on the blacktopped Albano-Anzio highway,

three kilometers in front of a huge overpass which was to become one of the bloodiest battlegrounds of the war. The battalion that night relieved elements of the British First Infantry Division, the 504th Parachute Battalion, the Sixth Gordon Highlanders and the Duke of Wellington Regiment, moving into the dug in positions which the men of those units had established. On the right of the Battalion, Company E held ground alongside and straddling the shell-pocked macadam highway leading to Rome. Company G protected the battalion's left flank while Company F, in reserve occupied the gap between.

Ahead of the battalion stretched miles and miles of flat, open terrain, broken only by draws and ditches barely deep enough to conceal a crawling soldier. On the right was the factory area while behind, where the battalion command post was located, lay a labyrinth of man-made caves dug into a shale ridge and extending underground in all directions for thousands of yards. Virtually impervious to shellfire, the caves became headquarters for the battalion staff, the medical aid section and the field artillery radio crew. And as trucks could drive within the tunnels, these caves became a supply point as well.

Tired from their night march and the constant stop and go which marks a frontline relief, the men settled back in their shallow slit trenches and relaxed as best they could. Dawn, February 16 was approaching and occasionally enemy shells landed in the battalion sector, harassing the troops. There was a brief period of silence. Then, just at daybreak, the enemy began a full hour of terrific artillery fire, more concentrated than these men ever had undergone before.



*Typical dug-outs on the Anzio beachhead. A plane is falling in flames in the distance. (A Harper photo)*



Suddenly the shelling ceased and across the flatland from the factory area, rolled German light tanks, closely followed by enemy infantrymen.

The full brunt of the assault struck Company E, where three of the tanks succeeded in completely overrunning the left flank platoon. This maneuver, however, exposed them to the direct fire of an American tank destroyer, which was supporting the now hard-pressed infantry company, and within a few moments after the initial break-through, it destroyed two of the German vehicles. The third enemy tank withdrew, leaving the German infantry, which had broken through the center of the company area, to fight the battle alone. At a 25 yard range, the T.D. opened fire with .50 caliber machine guns mowing down scores of the attackers. To this crew went the credit for breaking up the first assault but the tankmen had expended all their ammunition and had to withdraw.

All morning long the German infantry attacked, coming across the open field in waves to be cut down by rifle and machine gun fire. Gradually overrunning Company E, the enemy infiltrated behind the troops. On the right, the 179th Infantry, also being attacked, pulled back, and on the left enemy assaults forced the British to withdraw. Company E, the allied advance unit, juttied out from the main line of resistance and was almost cut off from the rest of the battalion.

*Ducks waddle back and forth bringing supplies and equipment to Anzio beachhead. (A Time-Life photo)*



Company G, on the left, in a line of platoons extending from the bluff above the caves, also was being assaulted by German tanks and infantry. Artillery fire destroyed the tanks before they reached the line but enemy infantry continued to advance, crawling forward through draws and ravines despite machine gun, automatic rifle and mortar fire. Approximately 200 Germans died attacking G Company's right flank but on the left, in the wake of artillery, a mass of German infantry overran one platoon. The company commander, Lt. Joe Robertson, ordered artillery fire placed on the platoon position and the concentration, though it brought G Company casualties, cut the exposed enemy to bits. Despite their losses, assaulting German troops plunged into foxholes





### SALUTE TO THE ARTILLERY

Don't tell the Infantry who won the war. The Infantry *knows*. The Infantry won the war! But the Infantry knows a few other things too, and one of them is that the Doughs would still be digging holes and firing M-1s somewhere in Europe right now if it weren't for the crews firing the oversized pop-guns pictured above. They had a handy little habit of dropping tons of death wrapped in steel just where and when they were needed most. And many a line outfit was able to move out of very unhealthy localities only because the Artillery dropped a box barrage that kept the enemy down while the move was made. Their forward observers worked close to the infantry lead scouts. They set up their guns and fired over terrain that the Germans had plotted and cross-plotted months before, and they out-shot Heinie in counter-battery throughout the war. Especially dear to the hearts of the Infantry was the artillery aerial observer, flapping like an awkward seagull over the enemy lines in "Cardboard Joe" and calling down the fires that meant saved lives for the groundlings. Yes indeed, they kept the caissons rolling along.



*Remarkable before-and-after airviews of Factory area on Anzio beachhead show devastating result of Allied bombing while the factory was in German hands. Factory was scene of many battles. Signal Corps photo*

to fight hand-to-hand. Under continuous enemy pressure, the weakened platoon withdrew.

During the afternoon, German tanks again attacked Company E, which still was attempting to maintain control of the highway. Behind German artillery the tanks moved directly up to the foxholes of the riflemen and at point blank range, wiped out one squad and killed a platoon leader. Artillery destroyed the two anti-tank guns which had been placed in that area for support. One of the guns had been dug in at the corner of a house and when shells struck the building, it caved outward and buried the weapon and its crew.

Toward nightfall the action slowed and Captain Felix Sparks, the adjutant-turned-company commander, moved his reserve squad into position on the highway to aid the few E Company troops who still remained. The squad barely had moved when the Germans attacked again, assaulting Company E in strength of three companies. One company of Germans began infiltrating directly into the E Company position, taking advantage of the darkness to crawl forward through the draws and ditches on each side of the highway. Through the night, the enemy methodically wiped out Company E's forward troops, attacking from the rear and from the front. By daylight, February 17 no one who had entered the fight with the left platoon remained and only a few men of the platoon which had battled to protect the battalion right flank on the macadam highway highway still held their ground.

Meanwhile, Third Battalion, occupying ground in the vicinity of the overpass, three thousand yards south of Second Battalion's position, also was feeling the might of massed German arms. There was no hotter spot on the beach than the overpass area, for the mammoth structure was located at the juncture of



the Albano-Anzio and east-west roads, both of which were being used by allied troops as routes of supply and evacuation. Called the "flyover" by the British, the overpass apparently never had been used. Grass and weeds grew on the concrete construction, and the east-west road, instead of crossing it, veered south to by-pass it. Its only purpose, it seemed, was to offer the Germans a landmark for an important target.

Though the overpass itself was valueless, Third Battalion's position was one of the most strategic on the entire beach. An enemy break-through at the cross-roads would have paved the way for a German assault straight through to Anzio and would have split the beachhead forces in two. That such was the purpose of the enemy, there could be little doubt.

Enemy artillery already had zeroed in on the "flyover" by the time Third Battalion moved into position during the early morning hours of February 16. Intense interdictory barrages fell in the areas as the troops, under the cover of darkness, hastily dug in their positions in the swampy ground. The only defilade in the immediate overpass area was that formed by the high banked east-west road, under which the British, who formerly occupied the ground, had tunneled positions.

While Second Battalion in its forward position received the brunt of the tank and infantry assault, the enemy also shelled the men of Third Battalion mercilessly with artillery and "screaming meemies," as well as from tanks and the big self-propelled guns known singly as "Ferdinand." The battalion command post was shelled and forced to move back 600 yards. The aid station was shelled, bombed, and strafed. But the troops on the line held their ground.

There remains little doubt but that in the five days that followed Second and Third Battalions saved the beachhead. Unofficially it was reported that in the "overpass" area alone the Germans concentrated the artillery of three divisions on the position. Tanks, located from 400 to 1,400 yards distant, fired into the troops, although their 88mm. shells were nothing in comparison to the "Anzio Express," the 170mm. and 210mm. projectiles which rumbled through the clouds and rocketed into the area time after time. Many of these were the railroad gun shells which sank ships in the Anzio harbor.

Only under orders did men leave their slit trenches. They relieved themselves in K-Ration boxes. They slept the sleep of exhaustion in the muck and

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*Yeah Man! . . .*

"If there were enough Doughboys in the world, there would never be another war."—From a speech by The Honorable Orville Zimmerman of Missouri. Congressional Record, February 20, 1945.

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water at the bottom of their holes. They saw buddies blown to bits by direct hits. Their noses bled from the concussion of the explosions. Some wept as nerves cracked under the constant strain. Through the nightmare they watched men die on every side. They saw a medical aid man, Guy Pearce, go down mortally wounded after exposing himself time and again to treat soldiers who had been hit by shrapnel. They watched Jim Rutledge take a medical aid pack from a wounded first aid man and crawl forward to dig out men who had been buried alive in foxholes and to carry others from impact areas into safer positions. They saw Lieutenant Clair Beldon killed by shrapnel while attempting to drag wounded from heavily shelled sectors into shallow defilade.

Wiremen maintaining communications covered thousands of yards of exposed terrain, time and again crawling into open positions to splice breaks or to lay



*Artillery throws white phosphorus shells at enemy on Anzio. High ground commanded by Germans.*

new lines to the companies. Drivers, traveling through heavy interdictory fire, brought up ammunition, rations and water, then brought back the wounded. Litter parties worked for hours removing wounded, some of whom lay under the enemy barrages for two days before they could be assisted.

There was little rest. Men slept only when overcome by complete exhaustion.

With word that the Germans had broken through the troops three kilometers ahead, Third Battalion, on February 17, made preparation for an attack to be launched the following morning to restore Second Battalion's position. To repulse infiltrating enemy, a battalion of the Sixth Armored Infantry moved into the big gap between Second and Third Battalions, while Company I estab-



lished a semi-circular defensive position on the exposed ground directly in front of the overpass. Someone had to protect the vital crossroads which the structure overlooked, and Company I had been designated.

As reports of the heavy loss of men drifted to the rear areas, troops there were ordered to carry rifles at all times in the event of attacks by infiltrating enemy. German shells, seeking out artillery pieces in counter-battery fire, continually landed short in regimental areas, providing a constant hazard to men who were loading rations and ammunition. Under guard, German prisoners marched back from the front, arrogantly confident that their forces soon would break through to the beach. Some refused to dig themselves slit trenches but changed their minds when shells from their own artillery screamed into the area.

Frequently the Luftwaffe attacked the beach in hasty daylight raids, dive bombing guns, installations, and crossroads despite intense ack-ack. A Focke-Wulf bombed the heavily-shelled regimental command post and blew up a nearby house occupied by military police, radio men and other Headquarters Company personnel. The regimental staff set up new headquarters farther back and renewed contact with the battalions by radio.

Through the early morning hours February 17, the "Battle of the Caves" and the battle for the crossroads continued. A platoon of tanks was sent forward to aid Company E in the Second Battalion sector and from the turrets the tankmen repulsed minor thrusts with machine guns as at intervals small groups of enemy assaulted the few remaining riflemen from all sides. In a vain effort to assist the shattered company, two squads from Company G jumped off in a brief counterattack but only a few of the men broke through the German force which had infiltrated between the two units. Flares lighted the sky to make daylight out of darkness and enemy night bombers, in a heavy raid, knocked out several of the battalion's 81mm. mortars and a number of .30 and .50 caliber machine guns as well. Other German planes operated in the rear areas, releasing coils of tin foil to counteract the anti-aircraft's radar and dropping "butterfly" bombs on artillery batteries, trucks and supply and ammunition dumps.\*

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\*A letter written by 1st Sgt. Harvey E. Vocke of E Company tells some of the story of Anzio. He said in part:

"We were on the Anzio beachhead about two weeks getting acclimatized to the flat terrain and then hell broke loose. We lived a couple of days in the swamps and then went up to relieve the British. The English told us it was a quiet sector, but we had known these quiet sectors before and we knew damned well that it would probably get rough as soon as we got in there. Well, anyway, we moved into position under fire and just when the sun came up the Jerries threw in a barrage that wouldn't quit. It knocked our communications out and then Jerries began infiltrating into our positions. Next morning enemy tanks came in, captured a full platoon and left a hole in our lines big enough to come through in parade formation. And that's just what they did, too; came through practically in parade formation. Everyone was scattered moving back to the Battalion CP. After about an hour I found Captain Sparks with about thirty men. We dug in south of Bn. CP in direct observation of the enemy. They must have thought we were Jerries because they didn't even



His position hopeless, Captain Sparks was ordered to withdraw his 18 men from Company E, 400 yards down the macadam highway just at the approach of dawn. Moving back in the middle of a tank battle under the protection of smoke and friendly artillery fire, the group attempted to dig in a new defensive position facing east along the highway but the alert Germans struck from the right rear. Almost out of ammunition, the weary men retired to a small hill 200 yards to the left of the highway, dug in and waited. The expected German follow-up on Company E never came.

At daybreak the Germans continued their full scale offensive, attacking on a wide front with tanks and infantry. This time they struck Company G, where machine gunners and automatic riflemen, in position on a bluff which overlooked the oncoming enemy foot troops, poured fire into the draws and ravines through which the gray-clad infantrymen approached. The Germans withdrew, leaving dead and wounded in the ravines.

Never before had the Regiment faced better troops nor such overwhelming odds. In the higher echelons there were expressions of doubt that the beachhead could be held. The Germans had the same tenacity of purpose which made the men of the 157th Infantry so difficult to dislodge, but the German command had more reason to be confident of victory for it had at hand numerically superior forces as well as an equal strength in artillery and armor. In addition, it could provide close air support and its supply lines stemmed from Rome, only 36 miles away, while Allied supplies had to be shipped to the beach over a dangerous water route.

Yet no one could quite believe that Anzio was to become another Dunkirk.

Up front, where the fate of the beachhead lay squarely in the hands of the men whose lives would decide the issue, the grim humor was as typically American as jive.

From one officer: "If the worst comes to worst, I can always float out of Anzio on my air mattress."

From a harassed GI under strafing: "What I like is the 36 hour air-cover we're gettin' every day: 12 hours of ours and 24 hours of theirs..."

From an artillery forward observer: "What are you guys worrying about? We got enough stuff back there to attach a gun to every man, so quit your bitching."

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fire on us. The next three days in that position were hell. We fired all the ammunition we could scrape up in the ammunition dump we found one night. One morning I carried a wounded man down to the caves and was going to bring back a can of water but when I was coming out of the caves Jerry opened up with machine guns and knocked the cans out of my hands. They made assault after assault on the caves that day and night. It seemed everywhere I looked I would see a GI getting killed by machine gun fire. And when things quieted down a little and I took a truckload of wounded men to the rear we were fired on by our own troops and the British. Everyone shot at everything on Anzio in those days. But I guess I was lucky at that because the only man that came out of our company position was Captain Sparks."



While the troops of Second Battalion fought off attack after attack, the Germans, on February 17, pressed through on the right and moved in force straight down the Albano-Anzio highway toward Company I. From 20 to 100 yards in advance of that company lay barbed concertina and it was on the wire that the men repulsed the first German infantry attack at dusk that evening. As always, the enemy came across the plains in waves, following in the wake of artillery. Machine gunners and riflemen cut them down.

In the darkness, troops in both Second and Third Battalion sectors could hear the rustlings made by enemy infantrymen as they crawled forward through the draws and ditches. Occasionally the Germans would yell something in English and one crawled to the wire in front of Company I to croon German songs. There were those who believed, with reason, that the enemy troops were drunk or doped.

Through the night the enemy continued to shell the Company I position heavily. Germans infiltrated around the right flank and harassed the troops with machine guns and machine pistols, while other machine gunners fired from nearby houses. The Germans moved three tanks into position behind buildings to the immediate front and these too laid direct fire into the company area.

Before dawn February 18, Company I had received ammunition but no water or rations. At daybreak, Company L and Company K jumped off in attack in an attempt to reach the Second Battalion troops but the Germans were firmly entrenched and only Company L made progress. Against heavy fire of all types, the company gained approximately 1,000 yards of ground before German infantry closed in upon it from the flanks and forced it to withdraw.

Day and night the fighting raged. In the Second Battalion sector, litter parties carried the wounded to the aid station in the caves, where one section was packed with men awaiting evacuation. Nearby, another section of caves had been set aside for German prisoners, some of whom had been wounded. A few dazedly rubbed their foreheads and asked for "Wasser," while one German officer demanded that his soldiers be given tea. No one paid much attention.

Always water and rations were needed but the infiltrating enemy had cut the supply routes and only occasionally could supply parties work their way forward

*The famed "Overpass" at Anzio, scene of some of the most bitter fighting in World War II. (Time Inc. photo)*







*Two fighters who fought with the Regiment from Sicily to Munich: Ralph Krieger, Felix Sparks.*



*First hot meal in many days is enjoyed by two GIs back for a rest from Anzio's front lines.*

to the caves. Near one company sector trickled a stream in which lay several dead Germans, who had been cut down by machine gun fire. The water ran blood red but the thirsty men filled their canteens, boiled and drank it.

Each K-ration had to be shared by three men. Once an allied plane dropped K-rations by parachute into the battalion area, then, apparently missing its target, flew into the German occupied sectors and in the same manner dropped a case of 10-in-1's to the enemy. Charged with explosive, the case blew up in the faces of the German soldiers who swarmed around it as it hit the ground.

There was no lack of air support during the daylight hours. Spitfires flew overhead constantly, patrolling the rear areas as protective cover for artillery pieces and frequently venturing across the lines to divebomb enemy strongpoints. Light and medium bombers drifted across the sky in waves, never breaking formation despite the heavy anti-aircraft fire they encountered over German territory. Many of the planes never returned and on several occasions, troops watched bombers blow up in flame and falling debris. But often, under the tons of bombs, German ack-ack fire ceased entirely, leaving the enemy troops and installations on the ground at the mercy of the waves of aircraft.

Just at dusk, February 18, Fortunato Garcia, communications sergeant with Company E, crawled through a draw to the command post and warned the Second Battalion staff that approximately a company of enemy was approaching between Company F and the caves. Suddenly, into the cave entrances came machine pistol fire and hand grenades. Immediately the tunnels became a bedlam. Soldiers rushed to vantage points and fired into enemy areas as the mouths of the caves came under heavy machine gun concentrations. German infantrymen lobbed grenades into the cave entrances as G and H Company machine gunners, atop a small bluff overlooking the battle area, laid down a final protective line. Riflemen in the First and Second platoons of G Company brought fire on the German flanks and lofted hand grenades over the bluff into the advancing enemy troops.

Inside the tunnels, Capt. George Hubbard, the battalion liaison officer from the 158th Field Artillery, radioed back for artillery fire to be placed directly





*German prisoners on Anzio were cocky. They believed they would be released by the attacking Germans.*

upon the battalion's position and upon the caves themselves. For 30 minutes, supporting artillery batteries pounded the regions just ahead of the cave entrances and under this tremendous concentration of fire the enemy attack withered. For two hours allied artillery swept the draws and ditches in which lay scores of exposed Germans pinned to the ground. Morning found that area strewn with dead enemy soldiers. A few wounded lay in the draws moaning "Kamerad."

At the overpass, too, the regiment was fighting to hold its ground. With two platoons from Company L and heavy machine gun crews from Company M attached, Company I again came under tremendous concentrations of shellfire,

*Chaplain Father Barry leads prayer on Anzio. Services were well attended here. (Jack Harper photo)*



the heaviest lasting three full hours. Once, the enemy in attacking the British on the right, also assaulted elements of Company I but was repulsed. Snipers duelled constantly and to supplement their rapidly depleting supply of ammunition, riflemen used .30 caliber cartridges taken from machine gun belts. In a day's sniping, one soldier, Sergeant Kenneth Kindig, killed or wounded 25 Germans before being wounded himself.

Behind the lines, men battled to get supplies through to Second Battalion. The battalion adjutant, Lieutenant Stanley Lemon, reconnoitered the sector and determined the ground over which supply parties could travel. During the night of February 18, he placed Company F and Company D of the Sixth Armored Infantry at the rear of Second Battalion in position to keep the approaches clear of enemy. The two Sixth Armored companies were forced to fight to gain positions but with the supply route secured, drivers and carrying parties from the 157th were able to haul rations, water and ammunition to the caves. They successfully evacuated from 90 to 100 wounded from the area as the Germans increased their pressure upon the Sixth Armored Companies. During the early morning hours of February 19, furious fire fights broke out directly behind Second Battalion troops. From then on, supply and evacuation parties followed a fighting force which cleared the route of enemy personnel.

At dawn February 19, in the wake of a heavy artillery barrage, the enemy infantry suddenly attacked Company I, again charging across the open plains in waves against grazing machine gun and rifle fire. The Germans withdrew but an hour later they launched a second assault. Mortar crews, unable to fire their weapons on the flatland, took rifles and entered the battle while machine gunners traversed the lines to pin the enemy to the ground.

Again the Germans drew back.

They launched their third attack at dusk, loping across the plains at full speed with no thought for cover. Many reached the wire but were cut down trying to crawl under or climb over it. Once more the waves of Germans dispersed.

*Night and day, Allied and German artillery pounded away. Below: Long Tom fires at night. (Harper photo)*







*Aid men usually had to evacuate wounded under enemy artillery fire on Anzio. (Signal photo)*



*General view of tremendous Anzio hospital area. In spite of markings area was frequently bombed.*

Throughout February 20 enemy infantry activity remained limited, although heavy artillery continued to pound the entire regimental area. There was no leaving the muddy slit trenches and, as it had at Venafro, "trench foot" began to take toll. Through a prisoner, the battalion staffs learned that the Germans were effecting a relief. The night was quiet.

A dawn attack against Company I in front of the overpass introduced new German tactics. In the wake of an artillery preparation fresh enemy infantrymen began leapfrogging forward in pairs, gradually building up a line by scrambling through draws and infiltrating along the north-south highway. Despite rifle and machine gun fire the enemy continued to press closer and closer to the weakened company but suddenly 72 British 25-pounders, in support, coordinated a mass of shellfire upon the German position. When the barrage had ceased there was no enemy activity whatsoever, aside from a few moaning, struggling wounded who lay atop the exposed plain where no man dared aid them. As if in revenge, the Germans poured artillery, mortar and tank fire for five full hours on the dwindling group of men in front of the "flyover".

But there were no more infantry assaults upon the position. The enemy's all out drive had been stopped, this time for good.

Third Battalion had paid a heavy cost. In six days it had suffered 324 casualties and of 165 men who had moved into positions with Company I, only 68 remained.

In the Second Battalion sector, meanwhile, the troops fought with a glimmer of hope, for frontline rumors February 21 indicated that they were to be relieved by a British unit that night. But new disappointments awaited them for the Queen's Infantry of the 56th British Division, effecting the relief, was forced to fight its way into the position, was "butterfly" bombed enroute, lost its heavy weapons and ammunition and suffered 76 casualties. While many of the machine gun and mortar crews remained in position to assist the British, the other Second Battalion troops, relieved during the early morning hours of February 22, fought their way to the troop assembly point, the caves. Daylight came and the Germans continued infiltrating and attacking the British from the rear as for so many days they had attacked the troops of Second Battalion. By





*Always a comforting sight to the infantry; ack-ack outfit digging in on Anzio. (Jack Harper photo)*

dark the enemy had assaulted the caves, had captured a platoon of F Company riflemen and had released a number of Germans who had been prisoner. The Germans also captured the Company H 81mm. mortar crews and weapons.

Second Battalion planned to effect its withdrawal by using the route over which supplies had come each night but the Germans, closing in on all sides, now held the ground over which the men had to march. Three houses, occupied by enemy, overlooked the route and platoons from Company G attempted to dislodge the German defenders so that the main body of troops might leave the sector under covering fire. The platoons reached the draw below the houses but were unable to advance against the heavy fire covering the approaches. The men withdrew and returned to the caves.

Withdrawal began at 0200 hours, February 23, the walking wounded and men suffering from rheumatism and trench foot bringing up the rear. Harassed by small arms fire, the column moved away from the caves, followed a ravine west to a small bridge, then took a trail leading south toward friendly lines. In the caves were Captain Peter Graffagnino and his medical aid men, who refused to leave so long as wounded remained.

From organized positions through a depth of 1,000 yards, German machine guns fired upon the slowly moving column, concentrating their fire in the draws and ditches through which the men were threading their way. Machine gun fire striking the center of the column from the flank pinned the men there to the ground and the companies became separated. The forward elements, men from Company G and Company F, moved through a deep draw and by belly-crawling from 400 to 500 yards succeeded in working out of the sector. But when last seen, what remained of Company E and Company H were being subjected to heavy fire from close range and there remained but little doubt that those men were killed or captured.

Only member of Company E to return from the sector with the Battalion was the commanding officer, Captain Sparks, but two days later a second man,



Tech. Sergeant Leon "Doc" Siehr, made his way back to the regiment after having battled side by side with the British for 48 hours. Of the 713 enlisted men and 38 officers who had entered the conflict with Second Battalion, only 162 enlisted men and 15 officers returned.

Germans occupied the caves but they paid a high price to win them, statistically, far higher in killed and wounded than had Second Battalion. The greatest threat to the security of the beachhead had been stopped 1,000 yards in advance of the point from which the German drive had started a week before.

Today, the crosses gleam white in endless rows over the graves at Anzio. Here the German assembled his might and declared to the world that he would drive the invader into the sea. He was supremely confident. Yet for all his advantage of supply and terrain, and in spite of his fanatical attacks, he was able, at best, to gain only 1,000 yards which he soon lost again. The action at Anzio did far more than save a beachhead. It shook the Teutonic arrogance of an army that lived on that arrogance.

It raised, for the first time, a doubt in the German mind:

"If, holding every advantage, we could not defeat the Allies at Anzio, where will we defeat them?"

The men who could best answer that question lay at rest beneath the crosses and the waving Allied flags.

*Sketch of General Mark Clark as he dedicated the farflung military cemetery on Anzio beachhead.*



*Did you ever sit on a time bomb with a lot of your friends? That's what it was like sweating out the long months at Anzio.*

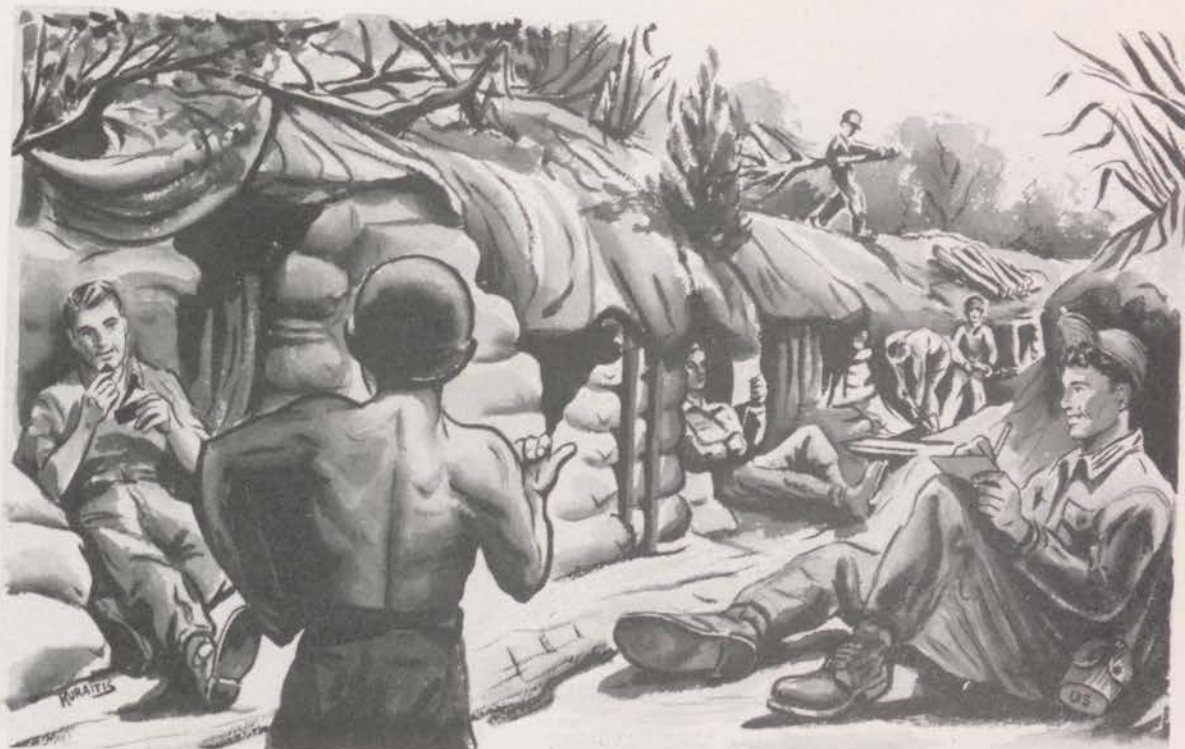
*Each day brought death in one form or another: a direct hit by a heavy shell, a single shot from a sniper, bombs from above hurtling through the spitting ack-ack.*

*No man in any part of the beach was entirely free of the hourly fear of death. The "Anzio Express" carried destruction to every ground area and far out into the harbor. Death struck from all sides and no man knew whose turn was next.*

*Even over the airwaves came the thought of death in the voice of "Sally" and her sign-off: "Easy, boys, there's DANGER ahead. . ."*

*Nerves cracked, for no man was made to sit on the time bomb that was Anzio.*





## 6. STALEMATE

**S**UMMER came to Anzio. Days were hot and nights were cold. Roads were beds of dust and all over the beach sprouted the warning signs, "Drive Slow. Dust Brings Shells." Hay fever sufferers sneezed and wept.

On the line, troops lay stalemated as they had ever since the German onslaught failed in February. That action had cost the 157th heavily and it had been placed in reserve to reorganize. Old non-coms from First and Third Battalions were transferred to Second Battalion to lead and teach the many replacements rushed to the beach to reinforce the regiment. Under the eyes of enemy observers men practiced firing rifle grenades, rehearsed squad tactics, underwent machine gun and mortar drill. They took night marches and listened to endless lectures. Then they went on line.

It wasn't too bad on the line for those who kept their necks down. Line companies got shelled now and then but everybody got shelled at Anzio. Men were killed every day but it didn't make any difference whether they were up in the holes or walking down a street in town. Those that were going to get it, got it, that's all. Of course it didn't do any harm to dig a little deeper or to



shovel another layer of dirt on top of the dugout. Sandbags were precious and scarce—although a mysterious source seemed to supply some dugouts more than amply.

Nobody walked around much in the daytime, but night patrols were frequent, and the patrolling was rugged. The cemetery up the road from Campo Morto was a Kraut strongpoint where anyone looking for trouble usually found it. Another scene of frequent fights was the Mussolini Canal which the Germans kept well mined and well patrolled.

The necessity for keeping observers in the vacant houses ahead of the lines provided another unwanted detail. When there was nothing better to shoot at, the Germans shot at those houses. But observers were needed, so observers went out.

Sometimes, the line was even safer than the rear areas. Every night "Butterfly Bill" paid the artillery a call and the batterymen really sweated. German tanks and artillery batteries placed fire in these areas too and frequently they set the ammunition dumps ablaze. Service Company itself was dug in behind the ammunition dumps along Truscott Boulevard and at night that was one of the hottest spots ashore.

It was surprising how many men had radios. It was simple to make a crystal set out of a couple of flashlight batteries, some wire and an old razor blade. Earphones were a little more difficult to find. Naples came in strong occasionally but the program everybody waited for was "Jerry's Front," broadcast from Rome by a team called Sally and George. They insulted Roosevelt and Churchill, and played the latest in recorded U. S. dance music. They had a girl trio called the "Three Doves of Peace" who sang "Lili Marlene" and "Happy Days Are Here Again" every night.

The songs made everybody a little homesick but Sally and George's propaganda fell flat. Of greatest interest was about five minutes devoted to broadcasting the names and serial numbers of GIs who had been captured. For a long time after the "Battle of the Caves" and overpass many of the names were of

*Typical German propaganda leaflets dropped over American lines on Anzio to lower troop morale.*



**The leaflet** which we are showing you in the original and in translation on the reverse side was dropped over our lines by order of your command.

**Allied divisions landed near Rome?**

"There are many roads that lead to Rome," but none for you.

**German coastal positions broken through?**

Do you still think so to-day?

**Main fighting line outflanked?**

You don't mean by chance our lines? Numerous of your units have been cut off from their lines of communication and taken prisoner.

**Big encirclement battle is starting?**

Who is fighting with his back to the sea, surrounded on all sides by a powerful opponent?

**DON'T READ IT**  
**You may get the blues**

*This is a bit of poetry by an American soldier*

**Here it is:**

Somewhere in Italy where the days are like a cross and each one is followed by another slightly worse where the cold wind blows heavier than the sky's desire and a soldier dreams and wishes for a quiet and peaceful night.

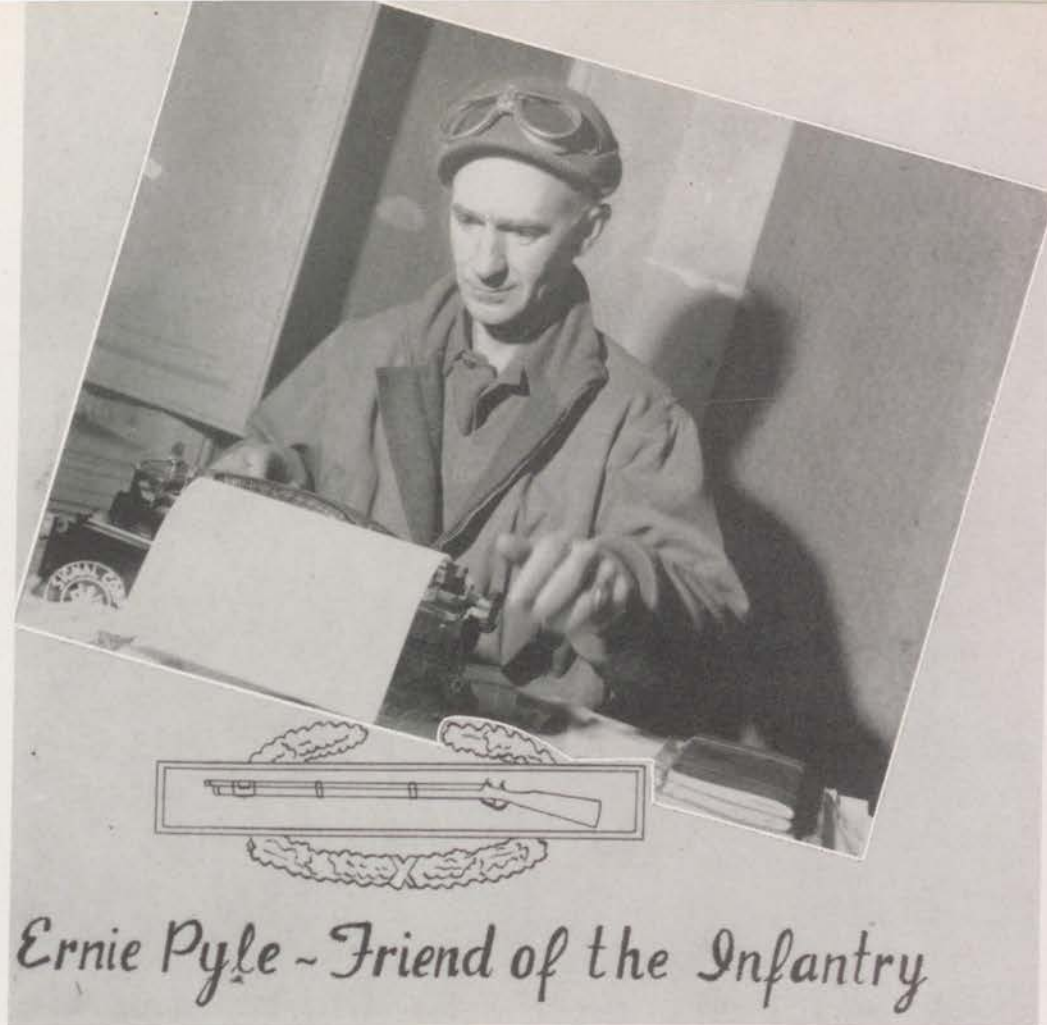
Somewhere in Italy where the nights are made for the moon is like a searchlight and the Southern Cross sparkles like a diamond necklace in a balmy tropical sky it's a shameless waste of beauty when there's not a star to be seen.

Somewhere in Italy where the mail is always late where a Christmas card in April is considered wonderful where we never have a payday and we never have a dollar but we never miss the money 'cause we'd never get it if we did.

Oh, take me back to Michigan, let me hear that merriment for this God-forsaken foxhole is a substitute for the real thing.

**DO YOU THINK YOUR PAL IS RIGHT?**





157th men. It was sobering but it was a relief to know the men hadn't been killed. George concluded the program with "Easy, boys, there's danger ahead," and Sally sent everyone a "sweet kiss."

For a while propaganda leaflets were fired to the Krauts telling them to surrender and to bring the leaflet in as safe conduct. Nobody was kidding the Krauts though and soon they started firing back propaganda leaflets of their own. Some of them were sexy so they were always gathered up and read. Nobody believed them so they didn't do the Germans much good; about as much good as ours probably did.

It was the habit after firing propaganda pamphlets to lift artillery fire and give the Krauts opportunity to leave their holes and gather them. But soon the Krauts were using this time to relieve themselves, to stretch their muscles, and otherwise overcome the stiffness of foxhole life. So one day the artillery fired the pamphlets, waited a minute, then laid in a concentration of high explosive. Many a Kraut was caught with his pants down.

Ernie Pyle came on the beach. Many thought he was foolish for coming to Anzio but everybody appreciated his being there. He was a fine man and a true friend to the infantry. It was through him that the infantry received a ten percent raise for combat, as well as the Infantry Badge.

Ernie almost was killed at Anzio too. "Butterfly Bill" dropped a bomb in the



*"Street Scene" at Anzio during the long months of stalemate before Allied breakthrough. Harper photo*

building in which he was sleeping, and had it exploded Pyle would be buried in the Anzio cemetery instead of out in the Pacific.

Twice a month the "45th Division News" reached the beach. It wasn't bad. Everybody read it through to see if his name was in it. The "News" suffered when Bill Mauldin left it to go over to the "Stars and Stripes." Mauldin's cartoons and the Mail Call column were the best the "Stars and Stripes" had to offer.

Some pessimistic soul on the beach must have thought the allies were stuck there forever so he started the "Beachhead News," the Anzio beachhead's own daily newspaper. At first it was a mimeographed sheet reporting the latest from the outside world, but later it became a printed four-pager with a pin up girl in every issue. Somehow it broke down censorship enough to mention individual outfits by name or designation so everybody looked first at the pinup, then scanned through for mention of the 157th.

Chow was fair at Anzio. In reserve positions the cooks would prepare hamburgers, Spam, dehydrated potatoes, beans, corn, white bread, chocolate pudding and for breakfast, hotcakes and bacon. The cooks had a trying job making the same things taste differently day after day. Many of them hoarded flour and canned milk while the company was on the line so they could bake pastry.



Of course there were occasions when a company ate steak for a couple of meals. It was hard to tell when a cow might walk in front of a rifle. There was nothing to do in that case but call the cooks—and eat.

There was one position on the regimental front where the Germans were so close they could take English lessons from the company unlucky enough to be defending it. Opposing forces were separated only by barbed wire and spent hours hurling insults at each other from the bottom of their respective holes. But that wasn't all they hurled. Night after night supply sergeants hauled cases of hand grenades into the position and wondered why so many were used. They remembered a time when no one could get close enough to throw hand grenades, but that was before Anzio.

Supply parties deserved and were given much credit. Nobody in his right mind traveled the Anzio roads at night unless he had to, and the supply parties had to. Usually the Germans didn't start interdicting the roads until about 2000 hours so the supply sergeants and drivers customarily headed for the front about 1800 in the early dusk. They reached the line under the cover of darkness and if they were lucky they got back to the kitchens before the German shooting started. Commonly enough, however, they were thrown off schedule evacuating the wounded.

The regimental graves registration section had the same trouble, for almost nightly it was called forward to evacuate bodies which Battalion G.R.S. had brought back to the command posts. The worst of it, the men claimed, was that they were using a shell-shocked jeep. Everytime a shell landed close the jeep stalled.

## MAIL CALL AT ANZIO

By

AL. MORGAN

"We get your letters here.  
We get them in the evening at  
dusk,  
Keeping our five-pace interval,  
hiding  
In the shrub listening for our names  
As the young sergeant with the  
high-pitched voice  
Reads them off and hands them  
out.  
We take them silently, and as  
silently  
Go to our holes in the ground,  
clutching  
Our passport to the bull session in  
the chow line.

"My boss says the war will be  
over by Christmas, and he oughta  
know. He's got a lotta connec-  
tions in Washington.'  
'My wife says the kid is starting  
to walk.'  
'My girl says she looked Anzio up  
on a map and she's worried be-  
cause it's close to Cassino. How  
d'ya like that . . ."

"We get your letters here  
And read them by the light of in-  
sect repellent  
With a piece of tent rope as a wick.  
The noises of the shells and the  
bombs  
Are still there. But they can't com-  
pete  
With the kid in Michigan taking  
his first step  
Or the muffled sound of jazz on  
Fifty-second Street.  
Or the boss and his connections.  
Or the noise  
Of an alarm clock ticking in the  
silence  
Of a bedroom.

"We get your letters here  
And carry them with us to the  
front.  
Take them to the ditches we hide  
in  
When the planes strafe and the  
ground erupts,  
Read them to each other and talk  
of home,  
Of the farms and the rolling lands  
of Maine,  
Of Shubert Alley and the dust of  
Georgia.  
Our immortality is tucked in our  
pockets  
And we're somehow safe and im-  
mune  
Against Death.  
We get your letters here."



*A view of a typical hole on Anzio before being covered. Many were elaborate affairs. (Harper)*



*Only a long way back from the line on Anzio could you line up like this for chow. (Harper)*

In mid-March the regiment was alerted to launch an attack across the barren but thoroughly-mined plains. Cassino on the southern front had been subjected to one of the heaviest mass bombings of the war and infantry and tanks were expected to push through the German stronghold momentarily. If the forces in the south could join those on the beachhead the drive to Rome would start. Thus, under the command of Lt. Col. Chester James, who had seen the regiment through its trying February in the temporary absence of Colonel Church, ill with pneumonia, the 157th made preparations for the assault it had been dreading for weeks. CP guards, in darkness, dug in a new regimental command post. Battalion commanders studied plans with the regimental staff. Companies were assigned missions. The artillery fired countless preparatory barrages.

But there was no jump off.

At Cassino, the Germans had found protection from bombings in the ancient tunnels which ran beneath the mountain town and had successfully repulsed their attackers. Hangman's Hill and the monastery had taken a heavy toll in allied lives. On the beachhead, the troops settled back day to day living and dying once again.

*Everyone seems to be happy except the mule. Respite from combat on Anzio.*





Relieved by elements of the Third Infantry Division in the middle of April, the regiment moved into a rest area in the Pines, a heavily wooded sector in the southern beach. The Pines were not more than a mile distant from "no man's land" but they were seldom shelled, for the surrounding terrain was flat and the Germans realized that any gun positions they established would be quickly destroyed. But morale didn't rise much when, on the first night back, Sally broadcast greetings to the 157th and named the grid co-ordinates of its rest area.

Coming back to the Pines was like coming back to a different world. It was peaceful and quiet and cool there among the big trees and the war seemed far away. The gunfire in the distance hardly seemed real, although once in awhile the "Express" smacked into the bay a half mile away.

Of course there was training. Always there was training, even when everybody was so sick of rifles and machine guns and mortars and ammunition they never wanted to see them again. They fired rifles on a target range where occasionally they had to take cover from shellfire. They took speed tests with machine guns and mortars. They stood inspections and they caught guard duty. Through it all, most of them stayed sober. For it wasn't like the old days in the south when the Italians would load everybody down with vino. At Anzio there weren't enough Italians for a good bull session. Most of them had been evacuated from the beach long before and the few stubborn ones who remained didn't feel much like partying.

Everybody had a lot of fun in the Pines, though. Special Service dragged out magazines, books, horseshoes, ping pong tables, baseballs, bats, dart games . . . the whole works. Movies were shown in a tent every night. Now and then the audience would lose interest in the movie when "Butterfly Bill" came droning over the Pines but he was just circling around preparing to go up front and give somebody hell. The German planes always rendezvoused near the

*Troops pictured returning to front lines are literally walking on Anzio. Road is of Anzio rubble.*



Pines, then split up into groups and set out on their mission. It made everybody on the ground sweat longer that way.

At night it was pitch dark in the Pines. Men bumped into each other, fell into deep holes and walked smack into trees that were as big as a barn door. Then somebody would turn on a flashlight for a second and everybody would scream "turn that gawddamn light out!" Finally someone conceived the idea of laying engineers' tape along the main routes, and most of the difficulties were solved.

The regiment stayed in the Pines about 12 days, then it relieved the 30th Infantry of the Third Division. "The lucky Third," the men said. "It rests all the time. But it's a good outfit. In fact, outside of the 45th, its the best there is."

At regular intervals, men were sent back on LSTs to the rest camp at Caeserta. They spent a few days there eating hearty meals, sleeping on cots, getting plastered and making a play for Italian women. Then they sailed back to the beach, usually carrying with them a couple of bottles of wine and some wild stories for their buddies.

The "big deal" at Anzio, however, was rotation. Once a month a few of the old timers were sent home—the oldest ranking corporal or buck sergeant in a company, or a private who was having family troubles. Everybody congratulated those chosen and enviously watched them leave for the country no one dared dream of seeing again for many months. Peculiarly enough, most of those leaving felt a strange longing to stay; their consciences told them they were "running out on the boys." It would be a week or more before they felt right about the whole thing.

Beer arrived at Anzio in May. There was a bottle for each man and Coca-Cola for those who didn't like beer. It was good beer too, especially good since no one had had it for months. And the coke drinkers didn't waste a drop. Nobody tipped the coke up and downed it. They took short swigs to make it last as long as possible.

*Religious services of all creeds played a great part in the lives of soldiers resting in The Pines.*







*Moles come out of their holes at Anzio. The high-domed lad is Harper who took many of these photos.*

May 15 arrived and rumors of an imminent jump off were heard. Patrols became more numerous and scattered fire fights occurred. Under the cover of darkness artillery batteries shuttled forward, dug in and camouflaged their positions. In the rear, fake artillery pieces made of wood and rubber were set up to throw the enemy night bombers off the scent. Twice a day waves of allied bombers flew over enemy territory and pummeled the German positions. Twice a day, too, at dawn and dusk, the allied guns laid time-on-target barrages on the enemy lines. In unison, the men in the holes opened up with rifle, machine gun and mortar fire. "Turkey shoots," they called them. And a lot of "turkey shooting" was done from the bottom of foxholes.

In the south the allied troops who had been fighting in the mountains near Cassino launched another all-out assault against the enemy fortress. The already shattered town was bombed and shelled again and the infantry—some of it fresh now—worked its way into the rubble that the enemy defended. The beachhead heard reports of violent house to house fighting, of set backs, of gains and then of more gains. Cassino was falling and the German Winter Line at last was cracking. The summer push had started.

By May 21 the troops had heard the news—they would jump off May 23. It was news they had been dreading for weeks, something they had refused to think about. In the company CP in Garibaldi's tomb near the cemetery men wondered what it felt like to step on a mine. In the abandoned German shower unit which had seen plenty of use since the beachhead had been established, men wondered if this was to be their last bath. In the holes some men secretly hoped they'd get hit before the push started . . . not badly, just enough to place them out of action.

And in the base section at Naples, men wondered what Rome would be like and if they would be able to get quarters in the big hotels there.

That was war. Some fought it . . . others enjoyed it. The men who enjoyed it were not with the 157th Infantry.

*Someone had to make a move and everybody knew it. Two armies can't sit looking at each other forever without things happening. Big things. The Kraut had made his move months back, and came out bleeding. Now it was the allies' turn and nobody was very happy about it.*

*You can't make an attack without leaving your hole, and when you left your hole on Anzio you had about as much cover as you'd have on a billiard table. If your ears weren't pinned back by enemy fire immediately, your chance of missing a mine were just fair; that's all, just fair.*

*So there were few cheers when plans for the attack were announced. The days of the waving sword and the gallant horse charges were many years past. These were the days of rising from the ground to walk steadily towards the filthy death of artillery and bomb and mine.*

*And the cry of battle was in tune with the times:*

*"Let's kill the dirty bastards. . . ."*





## 7. ROAD TO ROME

**T**HE TWO guards lit cigarettes and watched the platoon file by in the first light of dawn. Slowly the riflemen disappeared up the draw on I Company's right flank, advancing towards enemy lines. These men were tense and drawn for they were on no routine patrol. They were the advance element of the breakout from Anzio. They were the first on the road to Rome.

Four hundred yards out, land mines killed two of them, but the platoon pushed forward to positions on rolling ground from which they could protect the advance of the troops to come. Here they lay motionless and waited, thinking of home, praying a little.

The weather was cool and brisk for the 23rd of May. Allied fighter planes patrolled the lines and the men watched them dive bomb distant targets. Other men also were watching—the assault troops waiting to attack. In their slit trenches and dugouts they sweated out the zero hour, conversed in low tones and smoked cigarettes in endless chains. A few boiled Nescafe coffee and ate K-Ration ham and eggs, but most didn't feel like eating. Instead they checked and rechecked their ammunition, their pack straps, their weapons.

The minutes ticked past. Five-forty hours.

"In about five minutes those Krauts will catch the damndest barrage they ever saw," an artillery observer told his radioman as he listened to the rumble

\*Unfold map from page 98.

of the allied guns zeroing in on their areas. "And after that I wouldn't give two hoots in hell for anybody's chances."

The artillery preparation began at 0545 hours and men's spirits rose as they watched the terrific concentration of shellfire and realized the tremendous power massed behind them. In conjunction with the artillery, groups of fighter planes bombed and strafed German positions. But the shellings and bombings wouldn't destroy the mine fields which lay ahead nor would they wipe out the defending infantry . . . and everyone knew it.

Men knew that there was only one way to get out of Anzio and that was to



*Attacking troops reach the railroad embankment, an objective of the first hours in push out of Anzio.*

crawl from holes and fight across the damned plain that would be alive with shellfire, to plod stubbornly across the hundreds of yards sown with death of German mines, to get through the heat and past the rotting corpses and kill the men who said the German ring would not be broken. That was the only way to get out of Anzio.

The infantry jumped off at 0630 hours. Taking the offensive for the first time in months, the allied beachhead forces suddenly fanned out onto the open plains to begin the relentless push to Rome. First and Third Battalions of the 157th attacked simultaneously, moving forward on the left of the Carano stream-bed. Adjoining Third Battalion on the right was a regiment from the 34th Infantry Division, which launched its assault across Paratrooper Hill, where



American paratroopers had been trapped and wiped out by the Germans in January. On the left was First Battalion, assaulting in line with the 180th Infantry.

Ahead of the Third lay the small shell-battered cemetery where so many skirmishes had been fought during the months of stalemate on the beachhead, and in the distance appeared the high banked railroad tracks which lay horizontal to the attacking troops and was a natural objective for both First and Third Battalions. To reach the tracks meant fighting across rolling wheat-stubbed hills, through deep draws and past scattered houses harboring enemy artillery observers, riflemen or machine gun crews.

The troops met little resistance and within 30 minutes after the jump off, Company L had passed the cemetery and was moving across the rolling ground ahead. Company I, pushing north along the Carano streambed, advanced so rapidly that the regiment on its right fell several hundred yards behind, leaving a gap between the units and exposing Third Battalion's flank to attack.

First to encounter serious difficulty was Company L, which was advancing across a barren shell-pocked stretch of land 600 yards beyond the cemetery when it walked into a heavily sown minefield. The company lost four men in rapid succession as German schu mines blew off their feet. All lay unassisted in the heat of the sun until dusk when mine removal squads were able to clear a path so that carrying parties could reach them.

Sweeping forward, the attacking troops completely overran many of the German positions as artillery fire, falling from 75 to 300 yards in front of them, paved the way. German infantrymen, their hands high in the air, filed out from the draws and ditches and began the plodding march to the rear. Three times during the morning, Third Battalion called back orders to lift the supporting shellfire falling on the rapidly advancing companies. At 0945, the artillery firing for the Third received orders to cease all shelling south of the railroad tracks.

Meanwhile, with Company B as its spearhead, First Battalion encountered heavy artillery and machine gun fire as it attacked. There were casualties, but the lead company made steady progress towards its objective, a small knoll south of the railroad tracks. Following behind, Companies A and C mopped up, suffering losses themselves in the numerous mine fields. Captain Arnold Caldwell, giant commander of Company D, was one of those who lost a leg.

In the rear, the anxiety which had marked the initial jump-off turned to elation as scores of bedraggled German prisoners marched in from the lines. They were a motley crowd, badly in need of haircuts, shaves and baths. Their clothes were torn and dusty and a few wore high rubber boots in the place of leather shoes. Some were wounded and all were thoroughly worn. Most of them un-





hesitatingly admitted that capture out there was preferable to fighting, and one enemy officer unbended so much as to compliment the American infantry upon its assault. The attack, he said, came as a complete surprise to the Germans. Such praise from the enemy was rare.

By noon Third Battalion had reached its objective and elements of Company I crossed the railroad tracks to enter the patch of woods on the opposite side. All along the line the attack slowed as the troops took the ground assigned them and settled into the draws to await further orders. On the right of Third Battalion, the 34th Division pushed slowly forward, clearing houses of machine gun crews which had harassed Company I from the flank earlier in the day and gradually closing the gap which had opened between it and the 157th.

Scattered artillery and mortar fire fell in the area as the companies re-organized, rested briefly and awaited the next phase of the attack. Tanks and tank destroyers, those which had escaped disaster in crossing mine fields, trundled into position in close support of the infantry. A few brought ammunition forward.

First warning of new enemy opposition came from the observers in an artillery's Piper Cub, who reported seeing 24 Mark VI tanks coming from the northwest. An hour later, six German tanks, advancing behind the defilade of the





embanked railroad, trundled through an underpass and fanned out onto the plains between Company L and Company I. Three of the mammoth vehicles struck the right flank of Company L while the others swung into position to fire on the American tanks and infantry which suddenly had been laid wide open to assault.

In one memorable action, Tech. Sergeant Van T. Barfoot had a field day. He first knocked out two machine guns holding up his platoon. Shortly after, a third gun crew surrendered to him. During the counterattack that followed his advance, Barfoot disabled a Mark VI tank and shot the crew, discouraging the attack of following tanks. Continuing the attack, the rampaging sergeant destroyed a recently abandoned German field piece, and finished the day by assisting two wounded men 1700 yards to safety. In due time came his reward—the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The thrust at Company L separated the forward elements of Company I from Third Battalion and under direct 88mm. and machine gun fire, the troops scattered for cover. In a brief engagement, one Mark VI disabled two of the supporting American tanks, then machine gunned the crews as they scrambled from the vehicles. A second Mark VI shelled the disorganized men from close range, spraying the draws and slopes. Forced to seek shelter near the Carano stream-bed, Third Battalion troops left First Battalion's right flank exposed to assault.

While the brunt of this onslaught fell on Company L, the Germans also struck B Company. Tank fire pinned one platoon in a shallow wadi and enemy machine gunners in the turret shot men as they attempted to crawl to cover.

*Ready for action near the Mussolini Canal before breakout from Anzio.*





Nearly the entire platoon was wiped out and the company was forced back to the ground it had taken earlier in the day.

Gradually, artillery and tank destroyer fire began to take effect upon the Mark VIs and they attempted to withdraw. TD shells pierced two of them and exploded the ammunition they were carrying, while shellfire drove others back.

Although the German tank assault was stemmed, it left a wide gap in the lines and the immediate danger was that German infantry would break into the rear areas. The German infantry, however, was scattered and was fighting only a delaying action, which gave the hard-hit First and Third Battalions, time to reorganize and retake the ground they had lost.

But enemy tanks now roamed about at will in the rear of the reorganizing troops, firing spasmodically at gun positions and approaching vehicles. When an artillery observer called for fire on two Mark VI's they attempted to withdraw toward a 30-foot gulch where platoons from Company K occupied a series of natural shale rock caves. As one of the giants trundled along the edge of the gulch a shell exploded a few feet away and stunned the driver. Veering sharply to the side, the tank slowly toppled off the bank and plunged upside down into the rocky draw below. Three of the crew, scrambling out from a port in the rear, attempted to run to safety but were cut down by Company K riflemen while one German was pinned alive under the breech of the tank's 88mm. gun. It was impossible to free him and he died there from a fractured skull.

By dusk, Company C in First Battalion's area, had pushed through Company B and had moved up on the ground lost in the tank attack. The elements of Company I which had occupied the woods north of the railroad tracks pulled back into line and contact patrols probed the flanks in search of adjacent units. Only sporadic enemy fire hampered them. Once again began the tedious task of evacuating wounded and hauling ammunition, water and rations to the forward troops.

For the following two days the battalions remained in their positions while tank battles raged all around them and while other infantry regiments pushed forward in adjacent sectors. The big guns in the rear thundered hour after hour, searching out enemy observers in the Italian sandstone houses, and sweeping the draws where German infantry clung tenaciously to the ground it held. In the distance, Cisterna, a prime target for four months, became a heap of rubble as American infantry and tanks captured it in the wake of artillery fire.

And in the middle of this desolation, death and destruction, poppy fields waved their vivid colors sleepily in the breeze.

At night the sky was aglow with gun flashes. Enemy bombers hovered overhead, dropping flares and butterfly bombs along the line. Ack-ack fire and patrolling British Beaufighters, knocked down several of the aircraft.



Meanwhile reports indicated that the troops approaching from the south where Cassino finally had fallen, were making steady progress and it was rumored that a link-up with the beachhead forces could be expected at any time. Advancing from Terracina, the lead elements of the Second Corps raced ahead along the straight stretches of the Appian Way intersecting the famous Pontine Marshes. The Germans had flooded the marshes but the waters didn't cover the roads.

Thus, during the early morning, May 25, combat engineers and a reconnaissance squadron made contact with elements from the beachhead.

The junction of the two forces made possible reinforcing the beachhead troops by land, and the effect was immediate. Troops of the French Corps were ordered to take over the sectors held by the recently committed 85th and 88th Divisions, which began moving overland to assist the forces driving from Anzio.

On May 26, in preparation for a renewed attack, Second Battalion of the 179th Infantry was attached to the 157th Infantry as a reserve unit. The 157th's own Second Battalion, with Company B also attached, was to make an assault straight down the Cisterna-Campoleone railroad and Third Battalion was to follow a few hundred yards behind. Company B, on the left, had the mission of maintaining contact with the 180th.

The 157th jumped off at 1100 hours on May 26, sweeping across the level ground in the same fashion it had three days before. The troops moved rapidly but after advancing 500 yards they met effective artillery and small arms fire. The shelling became so intense that Company B, to escape it, moved beneath it and engaged the enemy at close quarters, fighting hand to hand with German infantrymen who were dug in along the draws and wadis. Charging forward at a lope, the company routed scattered groups of enemy from position and completely overran them. German anti-tank gunners fled from their field pieces in the face of the onslaught and 200 yards beyond the gun positions the company uncovered a battalion command post located in a series of caves



*Common sight on Anzio:  
shotdown fighter plane.*



*A crowded Road to Rome.*

which had been dug far back into the side of a deep gulch. As the men poured short bursts of BAR and rifle fire into the caves, Germans scrambled from the openings and hurriedly surrendered. One radio operator died with his ear-phones still attached to his head while an enemy colonel, in undignified fashion, backed out of one of the caves just as "Coiley" Niedbala approached it. "Coiley," so called because of his lack of hair, yielded to his natural impulses. He planted a foot in the German officer's rear and booted him to the ground. The colonel, with others of his command, limped away captive a few moments later.



*Trucks move up near blown railroad tracks. Heinies were systematic in destruction of all rail lines.*

Aside from its yield in prisoners the command post contained a quantity of valuable maps and overlays as well as a two-way radio still operating. The draw itself held six 81mm. mortars and mortar ammunition which the company immediately turned against the enemy.

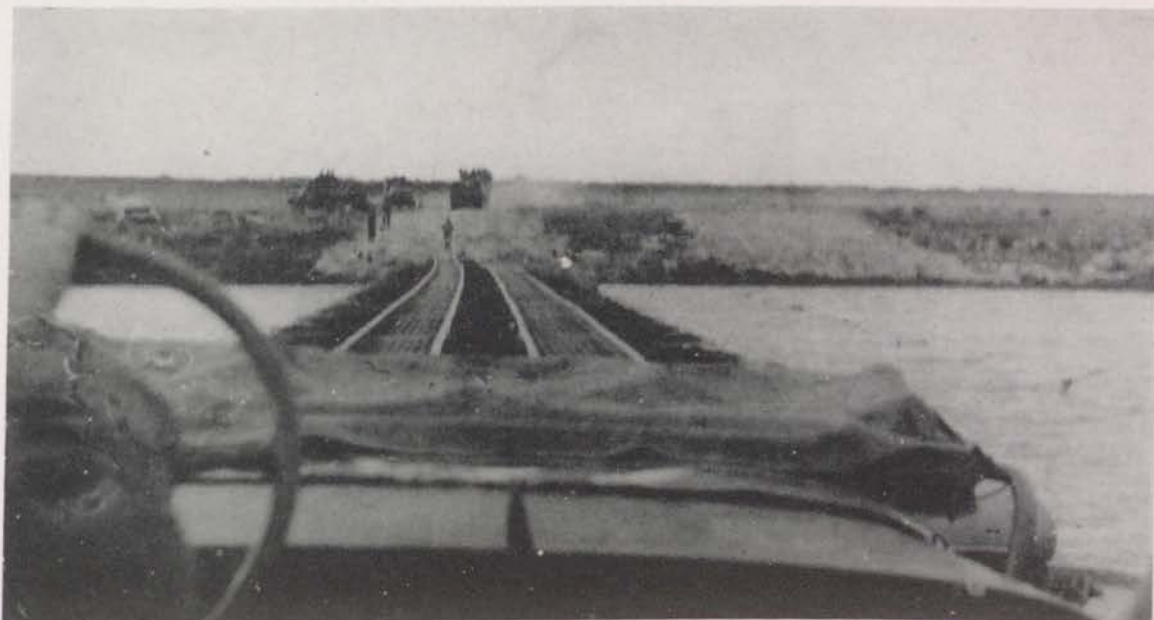
Continuing its drive, Company B overran 84 Germans who were attempting to hide in a ditch 300 yards beyond the fallen command post and also took 35 who had sought safety in a huge bomb crater. Then having taken its final objective, the company organized its position and relaxed for the first time that day. The men feasted on the sardines, cake and schnapps which the fleeing enemy had left behind, a welcome supplement to their K-Ration diets.

Meanwhile, Company F, leading Second Battalion down the railroad tracks,



advanced to within 300 yards of its objective, a small shell-torn dairy farm. There without warning, the leading elements suddenly ran into heavy machine gun and tank fire from the right flank. They lay pinned to the ground while the company's First and Second platoons maneuvered in an attempt to overcome the resistance. But they were doomed to failure. As they moved into a draw they were caught by enemy mortars which swept the area again and again. The platoons pulled back but the shelling took heavy toll. Only 25 men from the two units escaped and it was necessary for Company E to push through the hard hit Company F to continue the attack. By dusk the two companies had reached the farm and dug in their positions in nearby gullies. They were progressing, but never more weary. And Second Battalion had been ordered to jump off again at dawn May 27.

The driving force which so many times before had brought the men out of their holes in the face of enemy fire, sent them across the plains once more at



*Another historic river becomes part of tradition of 157th as regimental vehicles cross the Tiber.*

0615 hours. Resistance was immediate. German snipers concealed in the wheat stubble fired with deadly accuracy into the approaching companies. Enemy machine gunners poured concentrations into the right flank. Tank fire forced men to scatter and the attack bogged down.

The assault was renewed after the artillery had placed a concentration on the enemy line of resistance and for an hour the Second Battalion made steady progress. But at 0800 hours the Germans struck with tanks and infantry in a heavy counterattack which fell mainly upon Company E. The company suffered



*Elements of the regiment speed through what was left of Velletri after Allied pounding. (Harper photo)*

20 casualties before supporting artillery and tank destroyer fire forced an enemy withdrawal 30 minutes later.

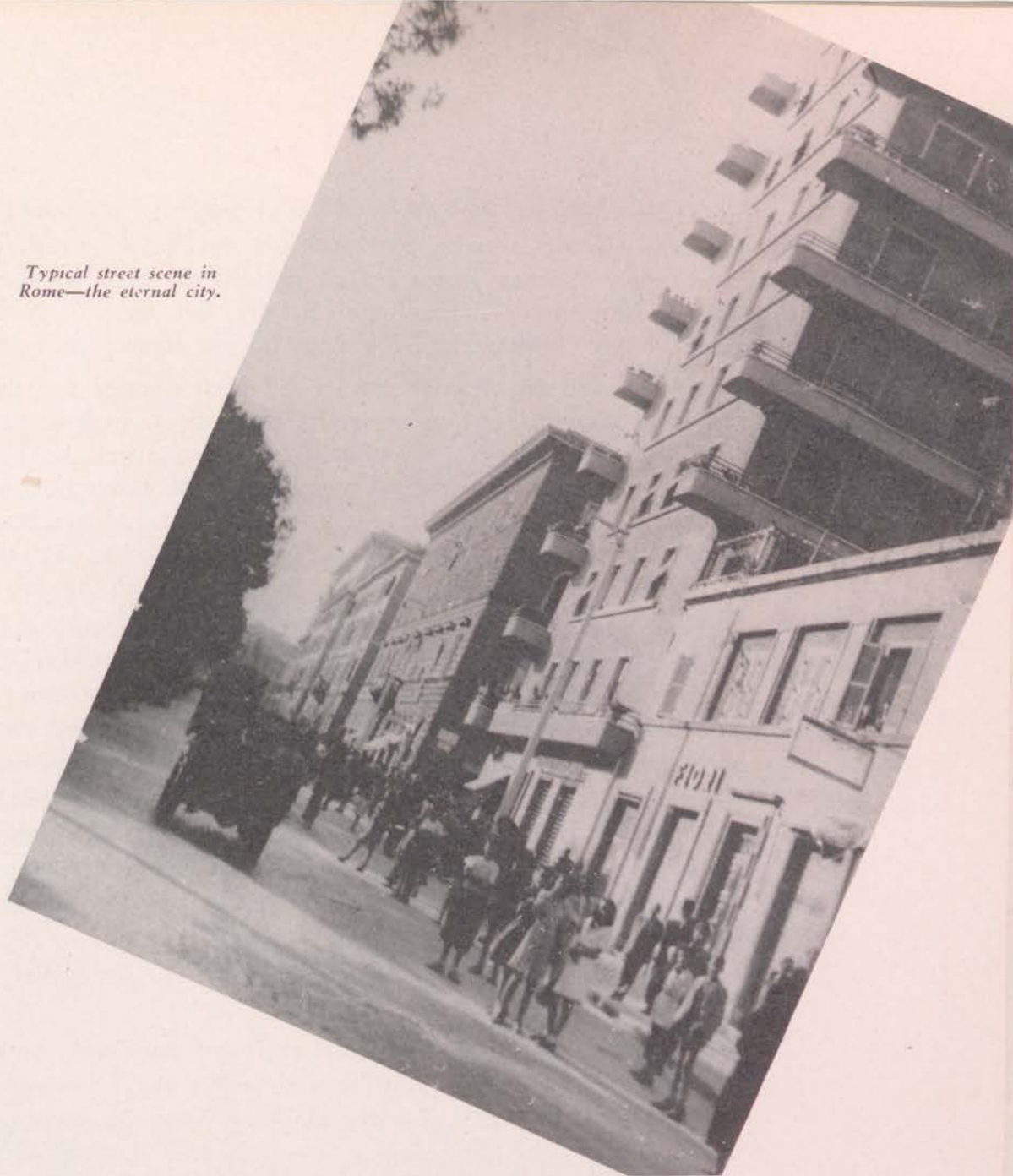
As the morning passed the battalion reorganized its battle worn troops and prepared to jump off again. On the left flank the attached Company B with Company G had overcome limited resistance and had slowed its attack to keep the thin line intact. Company F, in reserve, pushed through the battered Company E but in attempting to advance along the railroad tracks met direct tank fire. The men withdrew and dug in with Company E to await the arrival of expected reinforcements on the right flank. But the reinforcements never came.

At 1500 hours the Second Battalion pushed off in attack one more, Company G spearheading the assault behind four tanks which trundled ahead to clear the resistance. The troops made progress until mines and machine gun fire brought casualties. Company E moved into a tree-lined gulley which had been mined and there lost as casualties its company commander, Lt. Bob Cannon, all platoon leaders but one, and all platoon sergeants but one. Again the attack bogged.

As the night passed, supply and evacuation parties brought water, rations and ammunition to the companies and removed the wounded from the battle area. The exhausted doughboys slept in their holes unmindful of the sporadic



*Typical street scene in  
Rome—the eternal city.*



shellings which fell in the battalion areas. They'd survived another day. Who knew? Maybe by morning the war would end.

But dawn May 28 found the 157th on the move once more, this time spearheaded by the Third Battalion which jumped off at 0706 hours. On its left was the 180th Infantry and on the right the 135th Infantry of the 34th Division moved forward to fill the gap which had existed on that flank since the drive began. The Germans were strong on the right, however, and the 135th made only slow gains.

Thus the counter attack which the enemy hurled against the Third Battalion as it pushed forward along the railroad toward Campoleone came suddenly from the right. Waves of German infantry on a 1500 yard front scrambled across the tracks and hastily moved into position in the rear of Third Battalion, raking the surprised companies with machine gun and rifle fire. The battalion

pulled back to meet the onslaught but at least two platoons of Company I, the advance unit, were unable to return and were believed captured. The company commander, Captain James Evans, radioed the battalion command post "This looks like the end. I'm signing off for the last time." Nothing further was heard of him until weeks later when he was announced a prisoner of war.

By nightfall the German assault had been stopped but the Third Battalion was badly disorganized. The report from the front was that I Company was gone, that L Company had suffered heavy casualties and had no ammunition, that K Company was scattered and that the defensive line was being held only by battalion headquarters, headquarters company and attachments from M Company. Relief was in sight, however. Under the cover of darkness that night the First Armored Infantry moved into position to push through the 157th and continue the attack the following morning.

The First Armored went through at 0530 hours May 29 and the infantry moved into a reserve position which proved to be a hot spot. Seeking cover, the companies dug in along draws and gulches which became congested as more and more men arrived. Mines and tank fire took toll but the worst tragedy occurred when an enemy shell exploded on the reverse edge of a deep gulch in which men from all units had been forced to congregate. The high ledge toppled, then caved on the scores of screaming men below, burying many alive and killing others outright. May 29, with the 157th in reserve, brought the regiment its highest one day in casualties. Company parties evacuated 160 men, most of them from beneath the pile of rubble at the bottom of the gulch. Many others lay dead beneath the rocks and dirt.

For the following two days the regiment remained in close support of the Sixth Armored Infantry and for a time was under the control of the First Armored Division. All hoped that the First Armored would need no help, for the regiment had been hard hit and the men were out on their feet. Warily, some of the troops moved into Campoleone and remained there while the Sixth Armored and the British, cutting across from the factory area, tore gaping holes in the German line. Thoroughly beaten, the enemy began taking flight in a controlled retreat. The road to Rome lay open.

On June 1 the regiment shuttled through battered Cisterna to an assembly area below the mountain city of Velletri. Here it came under the control of the 36th Infantry Division, which had been shipped to the beachhead shortly before the southern forces had arrived. With the 36th, the 157th helped capture Velletri on June 2.

For the first time in months there was wine for everyone. The houses were intact and as in the "old" days, civilians came out to meet the troops. It was like being freed from the greatest of Nazi concentration camps. Men looked down on the old beachhead from the heights they now occupied and wondered how they had survived. Bill Mauldin summed up the general feeling in a car-



toon showing Joe and Willie gazing down on the level plains which for four long months had been a battlefield, and remarking:

"My Gawd! There we wuz and here they wuz."

There were fire fights outside of Velletri—brief, savage ones—but German resistance had been broken. The armor pushed ahead as the infantry fell behind. "To hell with 'em!" the doughboys growled. "Let 'em have Rome! Its time they got shot at anyhow."

Then for two days the regiment was on the move almost constantly. The infantry shuttled forward in trucks, walked, shuttled, walked again. Allied troops entered Rome on June 4 but the 157th Infantry wasn't there. In fact the regiment wasn't even headed there. The men saw Rome from a distance as they veered south of it and moved out toward the plains northwest of the famous city.

On the outskirts of Rome the morning of June 6, men took baths from their helmets, cleaned their weapons and wrote letters. Some toyed with the idea of hitchhiking to the city but there was a rumor that the regiment would move in the afternoon. The artillery radios were tuned in to BBC and a few of the troops lay on the ground nearby, sunning themselves and listening to the music.

Suddenly there came a blunt announcement:

"Allied forces have crossed the channel and have landed on the coast of France."

*Streams of equipment and supplies pour into ships in harbor at Naples, preparing for invasion of France.*



LOADING, NAPLES HARBOR



*Bambinos del Mussolini—but  
Il Duce was elsewhere.*

There was celebrating in Italy as the invasion announcement that some had given up all hope of hearing was repeated and enlarged upon.

Morale went high with the knowledge that the all-out Allied assault had begun.

Hope returned to the eyes of the weary infantry.

The war in Italy was over. There wasn't a bit of doubt about it in the minds of the infantry as the tanks swept on to the north. As a matter of fact, with that beachhead in France, the whole war was about over. It had to be. These agreements were so unanimous that men failed to dig in when the regiment moved June 9 to an area about fifteen miles above Rome. That night "Butterfly Bill" flew over and dropped some samples of his wares. Spades flew in the night time.

This was a well earned rest area and troops made the most of it. A Red

*Training assault on the beaches of Italy sharpens regiment for coming invasion of Southern France.*







*Down to the ships again comes the 157th Infantry, headed towards yet another invasion.*



*Divine services near Naples just before regiment sails for France. Both photos by Harper.*

Cross Clubmobile made its first appearance and everyone fell in love simultaneously with the girls and the doughnuts; especially the doughnuts. Special Service equipment appeared again. The air was filled with horse shoes, baseballs, ping-pong balls. Passes to Rome were issued and the Eternal City was given a working over by 157th personnel. Some were lucky enough to get five days at the newly established rest camp in Rome, recently dedicated by General Mark Clark himself.

In a ceremony on the plains, General Clark presented Distinguished Unit Badges to Second Battalion for its "Battle of the Caves," and made a ringing speech promising that the men of the 157th would be in on the final march into Germany. There was very little cheering. The 157th had seen too much to inspire very easily. Given their choice, they would gladly have sat out the march into Germany.

Tech Sergeant Jim Rutledge of L Company summed up the general feeling bluntly in a later ceremony. Awarding Rutledge the DSC, General Clark said:

"Rutledge, I've heard a good deal about you."

Replied Rutledge:

"Yes sir. And I've heard a good deal about you, too."

Late in June the regiment returned to the Anzio area, enroute to Salerno.

*The 157th gets feel of landing craft again as they ready for another amphibious combat landing.*





Even now, with the fighting over, Anzio brought on the old nervousness. There were too many mines still uncovered, too many duds still unexploded.

A training program began, with plenty of practice on amphibious landings. The beaches again were assaulted and the roar of bangalore torpedoes shattered the Italian silence as the 157th prepared to re-enter battle. There followed a two weeks rest near Agropoli where swimming was the main diversion, although some seemed to find others in the nearby cornfields. Chaplains had a worrisome time.

Next move was to the "Dust Bowl" area near Naples, so called because the dust in the olive groves where the regiment bivouacked was ankle deep at the best, and much deeper in other spots. Training was limited to lengthy hikes. It was understood that a second front was to be opened in France, but by that time the Allies had come roaring out of the Cherbourg peninsula and optimism was at a new high.

Early in August the regiment moved to Naples, boarded landing craft, and waited in the harbor for three or four days—destination unknown.



ITALIAN WASH WOMAN



TINA

N

FRASCATI

MARINO

ALBANO LAKE

ALBANO

DI NEMI LAKE

GENZANO

VELLETRI

CASILINA

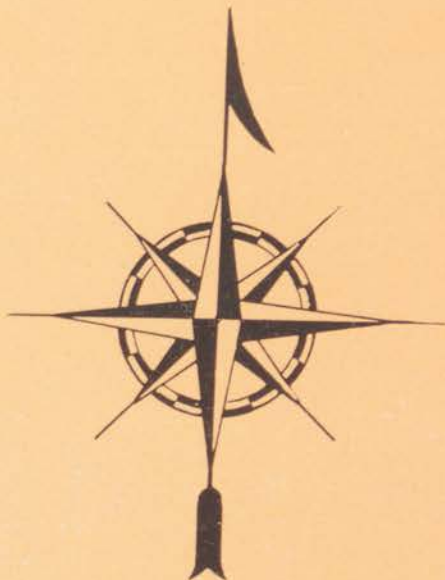
CORI

CISTERNA

APPIA

TO ANZIO

MARCH TO ROME







PORCARECCINA

CASALETTI

PORCARECCIA

MTE.  
SPACCATO

CASALOTTO

MAGLIANELLA

PARROCCHIETTA

ROME

TIBUR

TUSCOLANA

ABBADIA  
TREFONTANE

VALLERANELLO

CASTEL  
DI LEVA

ST. D.  
PAVONA

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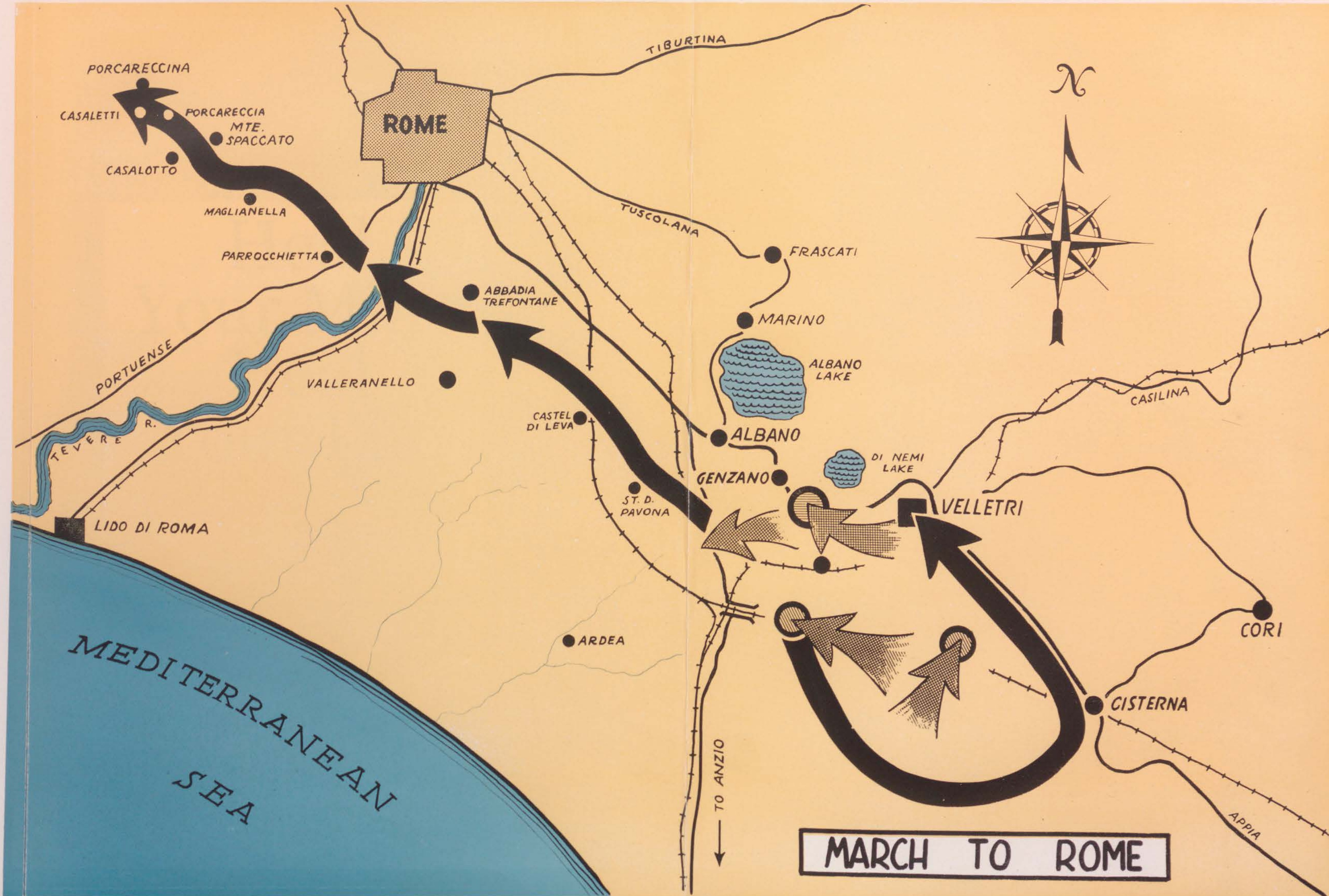
LIDO DI ROMA

MEDITERRANEAN  
SEA

TEVERE R.

PORTUENSE





MARCH TO ROME



*"You ever been kissed by a French girl?"*

*"You know the way she kinda cups your face in her hands and draws it up to her face . . . gently . . . like it was somethin' fragile? And then she looks in your eyes for a full minute and whispers 'Cheri.'"*

*"Brother!"*

*"What a hell of a difference it makes when you're a liberator instead of a conqueror. Flowers and wine and a bubbling of excitement that is like nothing you've ever seen before or ever will again, for a nation is coming to life before your eyes."*

*"It's a wonderful thing to see and to feel."*

*"Especially that 'Cheri' stuff."*

*"Brother!"*





## 8. SOUTHERN FRANCE

IT WAS easy to tell the veterans from the replacements. Not by how they dressed—everyone lay around stripped to the waist on the decks of the ships sailing from Naples. Not by what they did—everyone was busy with the limited activities aboard a transport. Not even by their looks, for in the weeks intervening since the fall of Rome, the old timers largely had lost the dead-fish eyes and the sullen droop of combat fatigue. No, not these things, but the talk gave them away, for the newcomers chattered unceasingly about the ships' destination, the strategy of global war, and the possibility of this voyage being just a feint to fool the Germans. Among the veterans of Sicily and Salerno, conversation was limited mostly to "I'll raise five" and "three to two against a six." They knew they'd be orientated on the operation in due time, and they knew damn well the operation was no bluff.

The men ate the good navy chow and got used to the "Hear there now" announcement that preceded every order issued over the loudspeaker. Within two days they knew that the announcement "the smoking lamp is lit" meant that smoking was permitted on deck. A few learned to tie intricate knots and not to spit against the wind.

By August 12th, the general course of the ships was apparent. On August 13th,

\*Unfold map from page 110.



the troops were orientated on the situation. They saw aerial photographs of the beaches they were to land upon, studied relief maps of the terrain and were given the latest information on the opposition they were likely to face. On the morning of the 14th the convoy passed between Corsica and Sardinia, traveled north along the coast of Corsica and then swung northwest toward France.

D Day August 15th, was overcast, perfect invasion weather, as men climbed down the rope nets into the assault boats. Two hours before, the Air Corps had bombed the coast. From 0700 to 0730 heavy bombers concentrated on the sector which the 157th was to assault and at the same time the Navy's battle wagons loosed a tremendous forty-minute barrage along the coast. Meanwhile the infantrymen circled endlessly, listened to the sound and fury around them, got sick,



*Troop carriers off the French Coast during the invasion of France. Note the heavy fires inland.*



*In the wake of the assaulting infantry come the flood of troops and equipment—Germany bound.*

cried, prayed and cursed. It was the Sicily-Salerno pattern all over again. It was H minus thirty . . . then twenty . . . then ten, and taut nerves stretched tighter with each passing minute.

At 0750, the navy pounded the beach with short and long range rocket fire for nine minutes. During the barrage, the boats headed straight for shore, the men huddled low. The tension in one boat was broken by a nineteen-year-old carrying a flame thrower. Bent over, with the sixty-pound contraption on his back, he called to his buddy, "Hey Joe. How do you like your Germans, rare or well done?" A chuckle swept the boat as nerves relaxed.

At 0759 the naval fire lifted and a minute later the first wave of infantry hit shore. First and Third Battalions, the regimental assault waves, moved through the gaping holes in the barbed wire and crossed the six foot sea wall without suffering a casualty. The enemy opened spasmodic mortar fire on the incoming





# Preparation...

*German defenses for coast of Southern France were pummeled by naval guns with effect pictured above.*

American troops as they swept ashore, but the resistance was short lived. As the rapidly organized companies began pushing inland, German gun crews and riflemen, unarmed, made their way down the hillsides to surrender. A mile inland, infantrymen captured an entire battery of heavy artillery. A Third Battalion unit uncovered a camouflaged dugout and found a pot of hot coffee and a cauldron of boiling water on the stove. The men drank the coffee and used the boiling water for shaving.

As a sergeant led his squad inland past a house, a Frenchwoman rushed out the door. Expecting a royal welcome, the non-com waved to her, but the response floored him: From the woman came a torrent of rusty English, most of which added up to: "Where in hell you been? We been waiting three years for you. . . ."

Meeting only light opposition the regiment pushed inland and by 1525 Third Battalion had captured the town of St. Maxime. Here the soldiers got their first taste of what it was like to fight in a friendly country. People lined the streets, applauded and cheered them as they marched in. Flowers were thrown in their path, they were embraced and kissed and given wine. They felt the warm sun of the Riviera beating down on their faces, looked at the unbelievably beautiful women and the gayly colored buildings and admitted to each other that "they never had it so good."

*Invading troops found defenses so shattered by bombardments that 157th suffered but seven D-Day casualties.*



# For This ...





*Part of great horde of German troops bagged by the Allies at first of Southern France invasion.*



*Members of the French Maquis bring in a German prisoner in coordinated action with allied troops.*

For the first time they were liberators instead of conquerors.

They continued mopping up along the coast and by nightfall had made a junction with the Third Division which had landed on their left. By nightfall too, motorized patrols of the 157th had reached the towns of Vidauban, St. Tropez, and Grimaud, while Second Battalion had moved to within striking distance of the German-held Le Luc. The first day of the most successful amphibious operation in history was over and the regiment had no men killed, no men were missing in action and but seven men were wounded. They captured 356 prisoners and they were gnawing towards the heart of Hitler's Fortress.

By dawn of August 16th, the regiment was on the move again. Preceded by motor patrols, First Battalion pushed forward by trucks to Vidauban and after a short fire fight, neutralized an enemy road block in that region, moved through the town and occupied the high ground beyond. Second Battalion, attacking toward Le Luc, encountered two enemy strongpoints but with the aid of tanks drove the Germans from their positions. Le Luc fell the next day.

From here on it was blitzkrieg—American style. Towns flew by . . . Salernes, Tavernes, Varages, Barjois, St. Martin, Esparron, Rians. As the regiment moved inland, the assistance of the partisan French became increasingly valuable. It was open season on Germans in France and men, women and children, armed with ancient hunting rifles, M-1's, horse-pistols, anything that would shoot and kill the conqueror, roamed the hillsides and valleys. Returning from the front, they cheered the Americans, shook hands all around and related their experiences in voluble French. Patriot patrols accompanied the battalions and small FFI groups searched the mountain passes and valleys, flushing Germans from their scattered hiding places. Information provided by the Maquis proved vital to the rapidly moving regiment.

On August 20th, the 157th approached the Durance River, a tributary of the Rhone. The lead elements succeeded in fording the river without incident and the advance continued. By August 24th the regiment had reached Apt.

Third Battalion, with a platoon from Anti-tank and Cannon Companies,



moved to Nyons to contact the 36th Division and become a part of "Task Force Butler." Ahead of it was one of the hardest, most satisfying battles of the campaign in France. On August 25th battalion was assigned the mission of establishing road blocks at La Concourde. K Company, reaching the edge of town, received fire from 88's, mortars and machine guns supported by six tanks. One Mark VI tank knocked out five American tanks and the infantry scattered. The enemy had perfect observation plus interlocking bands of machine gun fire. Three times the battalion attempted to take the town but was beaten back, mainly because it didn't have enough armor support.

"Hell," said one tired doughboy. "They expect us to lick a Panzer Division with our bare hands."

To make things worse during one attack on the town, eight friendly planes strafed the advancing infantry and by nightfall as men of Third Battalion settled down in the red glow of one of their burning tanks, they were weary, tired and disgusted. They were also fighting mad . . . mad because for once they felt hopeless battling against overwhelming odds.

They were relieved by elements of the 36th Division in the early hours of the morning of the 26th and moved to the vicinity of Lorient, overlooking a highway that represented the last escape route of the Germans fleeing the Rhone Valley.

On the 27th they jumped off and tried to take Lorient. Advancing through an open grape vineyard they were met by heavy fire and were forced to withdraw. Pulling back to the high ground overlooking the highway, they set up and then began the "Field Day." As a machine gunner expressed it, "It was like sitting in the bleachers at Ebbets Field." Shortly after the battalion got into position an enemy motor convoy came down the road on the opposite side of the valley. TD's and the 81mm. mortars opened fire and stopped the convoy completely. As enemy personnel and drivers left the vehicles and started running across the open valley, mortars increased the range to pin them to the ground. And heavy machine guns opened up and mowed down those that escaped the mortar barrage.

Later in the day, two platoons under protection of overhead machine gun fire entered Lorient and captured an enemy hospital containing several wounded

*A 4.2 mortar squad sets up shop in the street of a small French town to plaster retreating Nazis.*



*The Heinies pulled back so fast in the Southern France rout that even tanks couldn't catch them.*





American soldiers. Enemy tanks, however, returned to the town and drove the two platoons away. Major Merle Mitchell, commander of the Third Battalion called for close artillery support and the tanks halted. Next morning the Battalion entered Lorient in force and captured it. There the men saw the fruits of their labors the day before. More than eighty enemy trucks had been destroyed, more than 100 enemy lay dead and over five hundred prisoners had been taken. The escape route had been closed and the men had the personal satisfaction of avenging the beating they had taken two days before.

Meanwhile, on the morning of the 26th, the main body of the regiment shuttled to Crest and at 1440 hours Company F, reinforced, jumped off in an attack on Alex. Second Battalion, sweeping into town from the high ground, met stubborn resistance and close quarter fighting took place in the narrow streets. Fire fights flared in all sections of town and shortly before midnight Second



*Light machine gun covers advancing infantry.*

Battalion patrols were ordered to clear the enemy from the southwest part of Alex with hand grenades and tommy guns. At dawn on August 27th, G-2 reported that 15 Mark IV tanks, entering besieged Alex from the south, had swung into a position 1,000 yards west of it. At 0630, following a fifteen minute artillery and mortar barrage, Second Battalion attacked. By 0735 the town had been cleared of enemy and road blocks were established. An attack then was launched on the high ground northeast of Livron, where the battalion was to intersect the road running north along the Rhone River. But in pushing forward on the morning of the 28th, Second Battalion met heavy resistance from artillery, tanks and small arms. After a six-hour battle, the objective fell and shortly after midnight the regiment was relieved.

The following day it shuttled through Grenoble on the Swiss border to the vicinity of Voiron, a trip of more than 100 miles. On August 30th it moved to another bivouac area as Third Battalion returned from its mission with the



Butler Task Force. On August 30th too, the 157th Infantry received a new commanding officer. Colonel Walter P. O'Brien relieved the newly promoted Brigadier General John H. Church.

It was a funny war, this blitzkrieg through France. The doughboys found the French more willing to trade a half dozen eggs for a K-ration. Two cigarettes bought a canteen cup of fresh milk and as soon as a town fell the streets swarmed with infantrymen looking for the "Boulangerie." The word itself intrigued the doughboys. . . . One former bartender in the Third Battalion said, "When I get back to the States I'm opening me a bar and calling it "The Boulangerie." Sure, I know it means bakery, but it has a hell of a classy sound to it . . . and besides, how many people back in Bayonne understand French?"

Other French words and phrases found their way into the GI vocabulary. "Avay voo des oeuffs?"

*Mortars bracket house  
against enemy riflemen.*



"Voolay voo cooshay aveck moi?"

"Avay voo champagne?"

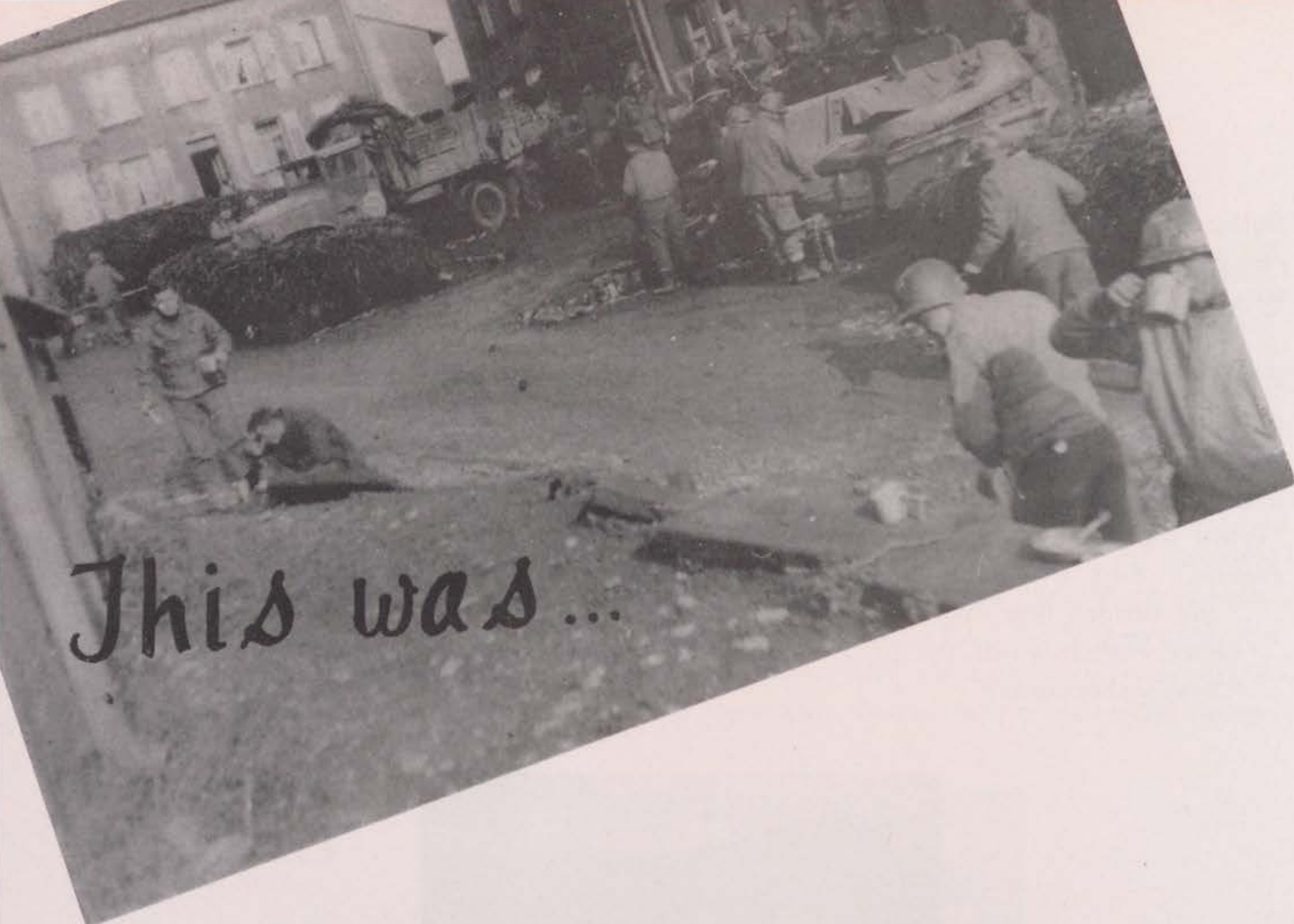
"A la Victoir!"

"And damn toot sweet!"

One serious minded doughboy had the peace all figured out. "Hell," he said. "All you gotta do is show up at the peace table with a coupla dozen cartons of Chesterfields and you can walk off with half of Europe."

The men drank champagne, cognac, white wine, red wine and eau de vie; (White Lightning), flirted with the French girls and chased the Germans. Said they, "This is the way to fight a war . . . chase them for six days, fight them for two . . . we never had it so good."

By September 11th the regiment was approaching the vital Belfort Gap area, the final escape route left to the fleeing German forces. During the morning it jumped off and after meeting only slight resistance, Second Battalion was hit by



This was ...

a German counterattack. Hastily, Company G, in battalion reserve, maneuvered northeast to assist Company F, which was bearing the brunt of the German assault. The counterattack was stopped and the Germans withdrew under artillery fire.

This day was a black one for Third Battalion. Moving in from the southeast, Company K captured the town of Abbenans during the afternoon and established road blocks east and west of the town. Company I and Company L, pushing through, were hit with another German counterattack but after fierce fighting succeeded in stopping it. Casualties during the day were light, but the regiment suffered severe losses in key personnel. One company commander was killed and another seriously wounded but the blackest news of all was the message brought back from the front by a Third Battalion radio operator. He reported that Major Merle Mitchell, the battalion commander, Captain Henry Huggins, the battalion operations officer, and others had been ambushed while on reconnaissance and had been either killed or captured. The two officers and their party, the shaken radioman said, had hit the ground under surprise machine gun and 20mm. fire. The operator, in making his way out of the area had seen Germans close in on the small body of men from all sides. Patrols that night were unable to find any trace of Major Mitchell or his party. Major Felix L. Sparks, First Battalion executive officer took command of Third Battalion.





Against stiffening resistance the regiment attacked again the next morning. Once more the Germans counterattacked and though they succeeded in driving a wedge between the assault platoons of the leading company the men held fast. On the 13th the main body of troops moved forward, captured Villers La Ville, established road blocks and sent patrols toward Melecey and Bevenge. During the afternoon patrols from A company came upon a jeep, two 300 radios still in operation, helmets and packs neatly arranged in the back seat and a small group of American dead. Two of the dead were identified as Major Mitchell and Captain Huggins.

By nightfall, Fallon was taken by Third Battalion but resistance on Second Battalion's front continued to be heavy. Fighting for every inch of ground the troops managed to cut off a large enemy force and that night Second Battalion accounted for 210 of the PW's in the regimental stockade.

On the 14th, rain and poor visibility hampered the regiment's operations. First Battalion took the towns of Senargent and St. Ferjeux while Second cleared Grammont and sent patrols toward Courchaton.

It was near Grammont that a third member of the 157th earned the nation's top decoration. Lt. Almond E. Fisher, leading his platoon through the darkness of early morning, met continued and heavy resistance. In successive actions the officer knocked out five automatic weapons and so organized the attack and later defense of his platoon that it dominated forces far outnumbering





*Into the woods of France, fighting from tree to tree, where a shallow rise like this was a gift from heaven for infantry to build a firing line.*

it. Fisher was wounded in both feet but insisted on remaining in the action until it subsided and the position of his platoon was secure. Studying the accounts of his action, the War Department awarded him the Congressional Medal of Honor on April 23.

In the interim, on Third Battalion front, the doughboys, with support from attached light tanks stormed a hill and were then subjected to a heavy mortar barrage throughout the early afternoon and evening. The lines remained firm during the next three days and rumors flew that the French, who were massing troops in the rear, would relieve the Americans. On September 19th the rumors came true and the 19th and 20th were spent in shuttling troops approximately eighty miles toward the extreme left flank of the Seventh Army, moving through Baines Les Baines to the vicinity of Darnieulle. Occupying a key position between General Patton's Third Army and General Patch's Seventh Army, the regiment began crossing the rain-swollen Moselle River on September 21st.

Seeking bridges which had been undamaged by the retreating Germans, or fordable points in the swift flowing river, First and Third Battalions sent patrols to Darnieulle, Uxegney, Igney, Thaon and other towns bordering the Moselle. During the afternoon, First Battalion with two platoons of tanks, one platoon of 57mm., and one platoon from Cannon Company attached, shuttled across the bridge at Chatel, entrucked and then marched to an assembly area at Vaxamcourt. That same day a platoon from L Company with a platoon of tanks attached reached the canal on the outskirts of Thaon and fired upon enemy road blocks, reported by civilians. The tanks and the infantry withdrew at dusk and a short time later, Thaon received a heavy shelling. At two-hour intervals throughout the night, patrols from the Third Battalion moved into Thaon.

First Battalion, across the river jumped off in an attack in the early hours of the 22nd and met determined resistance from rear guard German units. The



enemy was well hidden in the woods and one unit, Company B, waged a six-hour fire fight before withdrawing and calling in heavy artillery concentrations on the German-held positions. Following the artillery barrage the company again jumped off but after receiving heavy mortar fire, dug in for the night and prepared to attack again in the morning.

Meanwhile on Third Battalion's front, the infantry began wading the Moselle at a point near the town of Igney, while armored support crossed the bridge at Chatel and rejoined the unit on the east side of the river. By mid-afternoon, the entire battalion was attacking south. At nightfall, Company L, the assault company ran into intense small arms, mortar and tank fire. Hastily setting up, the company prepared for the inevitable counterattack. It came and the tense doughboys of Company L held their fire as the Germans advanced. Then every weapon in the company opened up and the onrushing Germans fell. Still others took their places and the Americans held their positions in the face of three-to-one-odds, killing and wounding Germans as fast as they could pull the triggers of their M-1s. By 1000 the attack had quieted, and a hurried radio message was sent to battalion for ammunition and medical supplies. All but several rounds of machine gun ammunition had been used in repulsing the counterattack and had the Germans launched another drive during that period the men would have been helpless and either killed or pushed into the rushing waters of the Moselle. Shortly before midnight, however, Company I launched a surprise assault on the left. Caught off guard, the Germans waged a gradually losing battle, suffered heavy casualties and withdrew.

Here was a new type of fighting for an outfit that had fought in the tropical heat of Sicily, the cold rain of the Italian mountains, and the flat, open plains of Anzio. This was their first taste of fighting in woods. Rain and fog cut down on the already limited visibility and the men had a preview of the nervous "where the hell are they?" type of battle they were to endure later in the Vosges Mountains. Tree bursts were a constant hazard, mortar and artillery shells hitting the branches above their heads showering pieces of shrapnel downward.

At dawn on September 23rd, Company C and Company L launched a coordinated attack, advancing through heavy woods. Again they ran into intense small

*Lt. Barfoot leads his platoon through streets of Bains-les-Bains where he was awarded the C. M. H.*





arms, mortar and tank fire, and casualties mounted. With every company committed, First Battalion gradually moved up on high ground and pressed southeast toward the wooded slopes of Hill 375 and the town of Girmont. Against increasing resistance, the battalion moved into the woods and began clearing them. By nightfall they dug in close to their objective and were subject to intense fire from Hill 375. The same day Second Battalion attacked toward Domevre Sur Durboin and southwest toward Girmont. By nightfall the Battalion was at the outskirts of Domevre Sur Durboin, where, under heavy artillery fire, it established positions for the night.

The big push in this area started the next morning with the combined might of the three battalions thrown against the resisting German forces. Company C, attempting to move into Girmont was unable to advance under the fire it received from Hill 375 and the progress of Company B, assaulting the hill, was slow. In Second Battalion's sector the infantry tried to advance into Domevre Sur Durboin and failed. Of the three battalions, only the Third succeeded in reaching its limited objective, the high ground on the west side of Girmont. Afternoon saw a break-up in the German resistance as the doughs of Company B forged up Hill 375. Groups of Germans, attempting to cross the northwest slope from Girmont were pinned to the ground under rifle, machine gun and mortar fire. Fighting back spasmodically, they retreated in disorder, suffering heavy casualties as they attempted to race across open ground. Company C and Company I, with the aid of armor, pushed into Girmont and the town was cleared by 1500 hours.

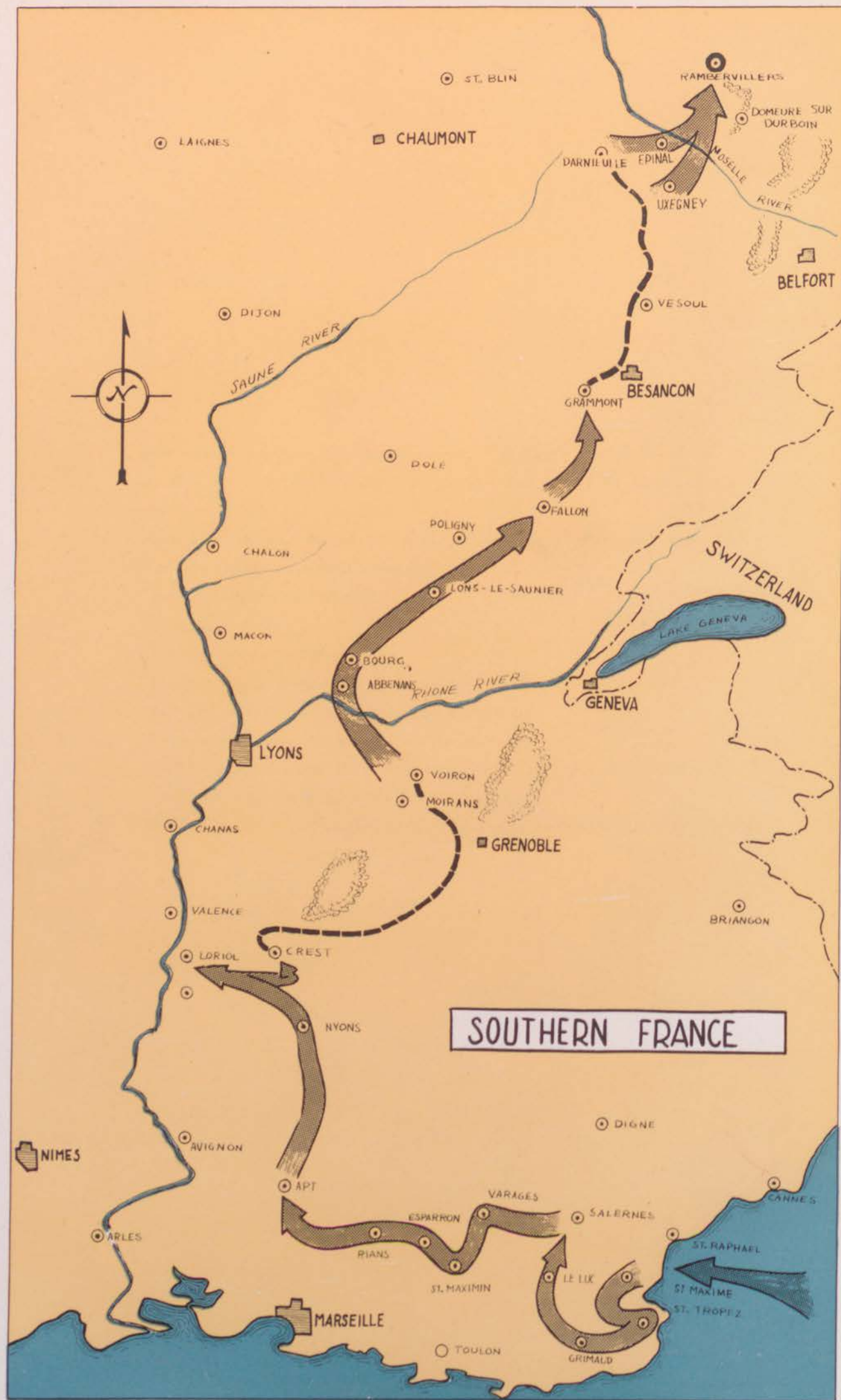
On September 25th, the Regiment again jumped off. First Battalion cleared the troublesome Hill 375 while Second Battalion pressed into Domevre Sur Durboin and finally drove the enemy from the town late in the afternoon. The rush against sporadic resistance started again on the morning of the 26th. Dogreville was by-passed, Sercoeur, Padoux, Vomecourt, and St. Gorgon fell and the battalion advanced on Rambervillers, a strategic rail and road center. On the night of September 28th, patrols entered the city and encountered strong resistance. On the morning of the 29th other patrols entered Rambervillers and covered all the roads leading south from the town. All patrols from the battalion were called back in the afternoon as French armor attacked Rambervillers from the northwest but at nightfall the city was still in German hands. The regimental positions in the vicinity of St. Gorgon received rocket, artillery and mortar fire throughout the night.

With Second Battalion in support, First Battalion jumped off in an attack on Rambervillers at dawn on September 30th following a fifteen-minute artillery preparation. The battalion met only slight resistance as it entered the city but as it moved through the streets at noon it encountered heavy artillery concentrations. Rambervillers holds a special place in the annals of the 157th Infantry because it not only served as a breathing spell but also was a prelude to one of the toughest campaigns in the regiment's history.

The month was November and winter was close at hand.

So too were the Vosges Mountains, Alsace, and Germany!





*The replacements came up with the rations. They were "broken down" like so many K's, like so many five gallon cans of water, and sent to the individual companies.*

*They sat on the wet, muddy slope of the hill and listened to the platoon sergeant talk to them . . . talk quietly and grimly.*

*"You're gonna be tired," he said.*

*"Goddamned tired!*

*"You're gonna be wet and miserable.*

*"You're gonna jump off at dawn and fight all day and dig in in the dark.*

*"And then you're gonna jump off again the next morning.*

*"You're gonna be disgusted and sick and scared.*

*"You're gonna be fighting the German army, the weather and the damned woods.*

*"You're gonna wanna lay down and die ten times a day.*

*"But . . . somehow . . . God knows how . . . you're gonna find the guts to go on".*





## 9. THE VOSGES

**D**AYS got shorter. Skies were clear over France, food and wine were plentiful, the girls were beautiful. And American cigarettes and coffee had unbelievable trading value.

"What's so rough about war?" asked the men who had arrived overseas in time for the invasion of Southern France and the victorious rush overland. The veterans smiled grimly, felt the breeze growing colder, remembered the winter at Venafrò, and answered: "Ask me that in a couple months—if we're both around."

After securing the town of Rambervillers, First Battalion reverted to reserve and set up road blocks on the principal roads. The regiment, protecting the left flank of Corps, continued the attack to the northeast. In advancing toward Bru, the infantrymen were moving up the ditches by the side of the road when suddenly, out of the woods on the left, came several tanks. Taken by surprise, the men hit the dirt and sweated. But the tanks were spearheading a French force and cut in front of the battalion to engage the Germans who were defending the woods just outside Rambervillers. Occasionally a spent bullet whizzed overhead but aside from that, men of the 157th were merely spectators at the fight. What impressed them most was the way the French used their tanks, jockeying

\*Unfold map from page 120.



for position and then firing everything they had. They discovered that the French fought a noisy, enthusiastic war. French soldiers shouted and whistled, tanks sounded their sirens continuously. One light tank in particular, added a gay note to the battle. Mounted on the turret was a French taxi horn and its blatant note was in strange contrast to the grim battle going on around it. Those who knew French taxis said the horn must have felt very much at home on the tank.

German forces beaten, the French pushed through on the main road to Bru and the 157th cut east to attack the town frontally. No resistance was met initially but when L Company reached a wooded ridge 600 yards away, the Germans struck with artillery, mortars and tanks, and the battalion withdrew. Defenses were set up on the high ground just short of town and the only house on the landscape was used as the CP for "K," "L" and "M" Companies. Later in the afternoon the forward Battalion CP also moved in.

In the basement of this farmhouse were five freshly dug graves and the body of an old woman. When the husband returned from his hiding place in the woods he told of the Germans massacring his two sons, daughter-in-law and two young grandchildren to prevent them aiding the Allies.

Meanwhile, Second Battalion jumped off in an attack on Jeanmenil. Company E, leading the attack on the town, encountered small arms and artillery fire and was unable to advance. F Company was committed to the right in an effort to circle the town and attack it from the southeast while Company G furnished protection for the right flank. Against bitter resistance, the battalion gained ground but by night they were still short of the town.

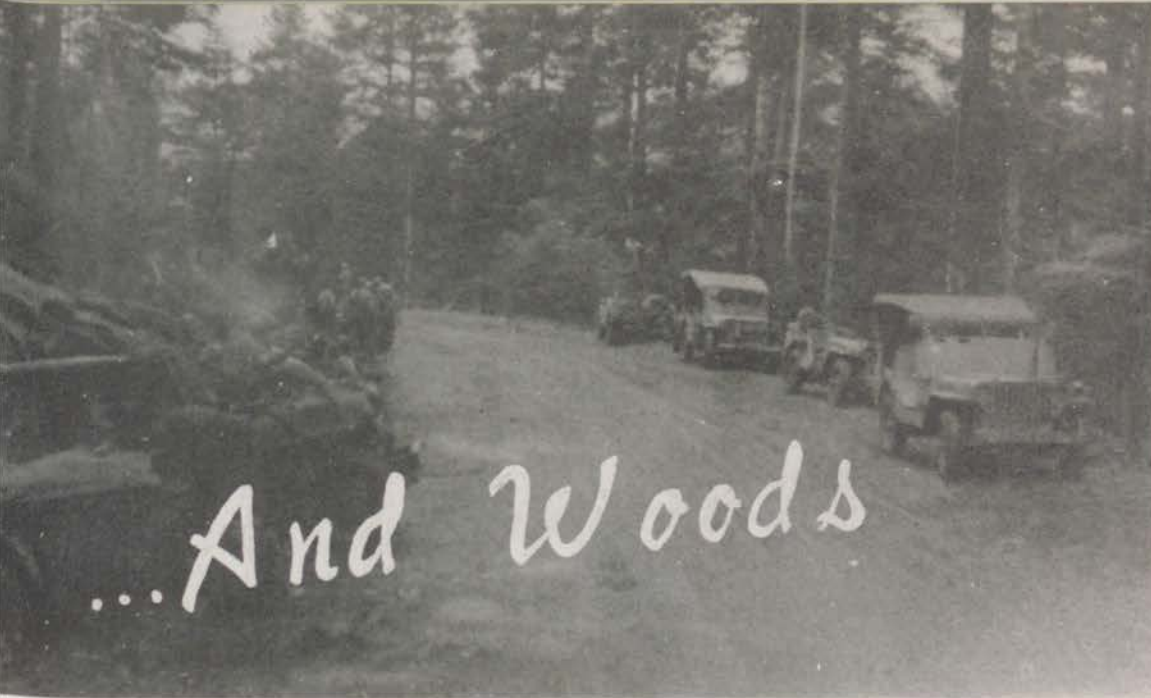
On October 2nd both Third and Second Battalions attacked again but without success and for the next three days the action was limited to laying minefields on the front positions, sending patrols to test the enemy's strength, and maintaining contact with the French on the left.

Meanwhile the enemy continued to shell the town of Rambervillers, which

*Once prosperous houses in northern France as the size of the steaming manure piles reveal. (Harper)*







*North of Rambervillers were the Vosges mountains, considered an insurmountable obstacle in Winter.*

was being used as a main supply point by regiment. Despite the shelling, Special Service set up a rest camp in a former German barracks next to the railroad station. Movies were shown, church services held, and such luxuries as hot chow and hot showers were available. There was a reading room and a bar. "The only trouble with the place," said Captain Denver McWilliams, Regimental Special Service Officer, "was that every once in a while the Krauts threw a shell in." One particular shell scored a direct hit on the main building but fortunately it was a dud and did nothing more than rip a hole above the entrance. That hole became a standing joke to the incoming men. In every group there was at least one who looked at the hole, whistled and said, "What the hell kind of a rest camp is this?"

As it became increasingly apparent that the advance was stopped, a system of reliefs was worked out so that each battalion spent eight days on the lines and four back in regimental reserve on road blocks in Rambervillers. For a change the infantrymen had something to look forward to. Morale lifted. Shells still fell with depressing regularity in Rambervillers but that made the similarity to other campaigns more pronounced. Describing his stay in Rambervillers, one Tech. Sergeant said "It was like Anzio . . . with women. . . ."

The regiment continued to patrol the front lines and artillery support was aggressive. But as the infantry remained on the defensive, the old timers started yet another gripe.

"We'll have to break out of here eventually and when we do it's going to be like Anzio all over again. The Krauts are laying beaucoup mines out there right now and you know what's up ahead of us, don't you? Woods! The damndest bunch of woods you ever saw. Brother, that's going to be rugged!"

Then the weather turned. Torrential rain beat down, and fog hampered patrol actions. It was October 16 and winter was close.





*Then came the woods where shadows were of trees—or maybe of Jerry drawing a bead on you . . . where the crackle of the leaves underfoot started enemy trigger fingers itching . . . where tension was so tight that men jumped at sound of wind.*

Concentrating artillery fire on the church tower in Jeanmenil, used as an OP by the Germans, the 158th Field Artillery knocked it over by the 16th. Meanwhile, in the Bru sector small skirmishes took place. One outpost changed hands three times in a 24 hour period. Artillery, mortar, anti-aircraft and small arms fire were placed on known enemy positions. Heavy German counter fire fell on the regimental lines and veterans spoke of the Bru sector as a "Little Anzio."

The period from October 16th through the 23rd was spent in a reconnaissance of enemy positions. Patrols were sent out to capture prisoners, listening posts were set up on the main roads into Bru and Jeanmenil. The regular reliefs continued and so did enemy shelling of Rambervillers. Most of the casualties were suffered by civilians of the town who didn't seem to care enough to take cover.

At 6:30 on the morning of October 25th, 1944, Second and Third Battalions jumped off. Prior to the jump-off, the attached chemical mortars laid down a protective smoke screen and the infantrymen moved through it met little resistance, in the first thousand yards. By noon, the town of Wuilliam Fontaine was cleared and the men had reached the woods and were moving through them against spasmodic opposition. Meanwhile, Third Battalion, assembling in the vicinity of Autry, jumped off in an attack on Housseras just before daylight. A low mist clung to the ground, shrouding the countryside and the enemy. The men were nervously alert. The consensus was that this was going to be "pretty damn easy or rough as hell."

*Heroes in beards, firing mortars.*





Company K and Company L leading the attack met no resistance until they reached the edge of the woods to the right of the town. Here, the enemy met them with machine gun and mortar fire, pinning L Company. Company I with a platoon of tanks attached pushed into Housseras against stiff opposition. House by house, room by room, the company advanced. Snipers in the steeple of the church harassed the men. Enemy soldiers were dug in behind, around and in front of the houses. But despite this, I Company cleared the town by dusk.

To the right of the town, Company K came to the aid of L Company and it, too, was pinned down. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was cruelly effective. By late afternoon, the two companies in a coordinated bayonet assault succeeded



*Replacements take that long trail up to the line for first taste of infantry combat. (Signal Corps)*

in overrunning the enemy positions and clearing the adjacent village of Les Hauts Pres. By midnight the regiment had gained the initial ridge east of the Rambervillers-Autry plain and had established contact with the 179th Infantry to the south.

The attack progressed next morning and the Jeanmenil road was cut and road blocks established. Tanks and TD's moving forward, were able to fire directly on this strategically important artery and German forces were denied use of the highway. And grudgingly the enemy in the woods gave ground.

Intermittent rains soaked everything. The attackers climbed hills and fought down the reverse slopes. They were wet. They were tired. They were hungry. But that was nothing new. They'd been wet and tired and miserable before.





What was new was the stealthy, nerve-wracking movement through dense woods with visibility limited to ten or fifteen feet. What was new was the continued tension on every step of the way. It was sometimes a relief to be fired on, for fire gave some location of the enemy. Every tree was a possible enemy stronghold, every bush could screen an enemy machine gun.

"If we could only see the bastards," was the constant mutter of the attackers.

On the 27th, L Company, advancing through the woods, started across a dirt road and up the slope of a hill when a Mark IV tank rumbled around a bend. Everyone hit the ground. Half the company had already crossed the road and the other half huddled in a ditch. Hearts stopped beating, but the tank, bisecting the company, rumbled on without spotting the crouching men. A road block, protected with a bazooka was set up and when the tank returned twenty minutes later, it was knocked out with one shell.

Meanwhile, Second Battalion succeeded in crossing the Jeanmenil highway in the face of intense small arms fire. One group of trapped Germans was driven over into Third Battalion sector and for several minutes, bullets, friendly and enemy, crossfired overhead. Third Battalion set up a circular defense and systematically mopped up the encircled enemy. Seventy-six prisoners were captured on one hill.

On the 29th, the Regiment renewed its attack to the north and northeast. Though the opposition was slight, the advance was slow. One of the first lessons learned was the necessity for careful and complete reconnaissance before attacking. The enemy was not only well dug in but also perfectly concealed. Time after time, the main body of troops met resistance in areas supposedly free of Germans. Second and Third Battalions, moving from high ground to high ground, made steady gains but just before dusk on the 29th, I Company was hit with a counterattack by Infantry supported by tanks. Supporting artillery, which had already registered in protective barrages, opened up on the attacking enemy and the Germans dispersed.

*Through half-snow, half-rain that was SOP weather for the Vosges, an 81-mm. crew fires its weapon.*





The rains and cold grew worse. When the rolls did come up, they were soggy masses. Men who dared to take their shoes off, slept with their socks under them in the hope of drying them out by morning. But too often enemy troops infiltrated at night, fire fights broke out, and the extra time spent fumbling for shoes could spell the difference between life and death. So more men were evacuated for trench foot, and the old Venafro-Benevento pattern evolved again.

They went on. They attacked and dug in and attacked again. They gulped down the hot coffee that came up with the rations and chewed the cold, leathery hamburgers that offered some relief from the continuous K's. They learned to advance quietly in a woods where a slight sound carried hundreds of yards. And no matter how tired they were, they put some kind of a covering over their holes at night. Tree bursts were a constant hazard and the only protection against them was a roof. One man found what he thought was a pile of empty shell containers and covered his foxhole. He discovered the next morning that the supposedly empty containers were filled with live ammunition.

Mail was delivered on the front lines and the men read rain-soaked copies of their hometown papers. They read of home town optimism, plans for V-E Day, and sweeping ridiculous statements of a quick victory. They read long analysis by armchair strategists who wiped out German resistance with a bold stroke of the typewriter. They questioned new men who had left the states the previous month and heard that the war was practically over. The reaction was bitter and profane and heartfelt. These men had seen friends blown to pieces an hour before and fought for the ground under their feet yard by yard. Their pants were caked with the mud and dirt of France and the blood of the men who died beside them. There was no optimism, no jubilation, no plans for a V-E Day in the snow-covered Vosges Mountains of France that November.

On October 31st, advancing towards the high ground to its front, K Company was hit with a German counterattack in force before it had time to dig in. Striking swiftly, the enemy overran the position, captured a machine gun, killed its crew and turned it on the American defenders. Taking what protection the trees afforded, the men fought back. For several hours the tide of battle see-sawed. L Company, moving up to aid the besieged K Company was hit with a flank attack two hundred yards short of the position and forced to defensive action. K Company, meanwhile withdrew one hundred yards and succeeded in halting the German force. Next morning, L Company moved forward and tied in with K Company on the right.

The regiment remained in position the rest of the day, the longest time they'd spent in one place since the initial assault on Housseras October 25th. Men improved their holes, cut trees down to make sturdier roofs, hung their wet socks out to dry, washed the week's accumulation of filth off their faces and wrote letters.

Then the rumors started about relief by a new Division. Faces brightened. "Hell! As long as they talk about relief, I can stand almost anything," said a veteran. "Sure, I know it's a rumor but it's started and there's always some-



thing behind those things. It means that sometime . . . maybe not this week or next . . . but sometime we'll get relieved. In a spot like this you begin to think maybe you'll never get relieved. Maybe you just stay up here until the law of averages catches up with you."

At 0800, November 2nd, First and Second Battalions jumped off in attack. First Battalion pressed forward toward the St. Benoit-Etival highway against heavy opposition. A field of schu-mines held it up at the outset but by 1640 Company A had crossed the highway and had penetrated into the woods on the opposite side. The Second Battalion, attacking east, met small arms, mortar and self propelled fire but gained ground steadily. Company C, attempting to capture Hill 467 met bitter resistance from German infantry well concealed and dug in along the slope. It lost ground but on the second assault supported by artillery and tanks, overran the strongpoint. November 3rd and 4th, the foot-by-foot advance moved on toward the Meurthe River. Mines and booby traps were a major hazard. One particular road block located by Third Battalion was a quarter of a mile in length and every tree was wired with explosives. Finally, during the morning of the 4th, Third Battalion reached the high ground, two thousand yards short of St. Remy. Patrols reported the town heavily defended by groups of Germans.

On November 5th, Third Battalion contacted the 399th Infantry of the newly committed 100th Division. An attack toward the east just before dark met heavy machine gun fire from a series of battered houses. At 1614, Company L received a German counterattack from the northeast which delayed the advance more than three hours. At 1840 hours Company K became engaged in a heavy fire fight and tanks moved forward to knock out enemy positions. By nightfall the battalion had dug in and organized defensive positions. Through the night sporadic concentrations of artillery and anti-aircraft fire fell on the regimental positions.

When rations came up that night, the men heard news of troops massing behind them and they knew that the rumored relief would soon be an actuality. The "sweating it out" began.

They continued the advance on the 6th. With Second Battalion in reserve, First Battalion moved forward slowly. Third Battalion, meanwhile, continued its house-to-house fighting up the southeast road to Pajaille, engaging scattered groups of enemy at close quarters. A platoon of Germans counterattacked Company I at 0630 but the enemy dispersed under artillery and rifle fire.

The rain began in earnest the morning of the 6th, soaking the woods, filling the foxholes with water and hampering any grand scale attacks. No man slept the night of November 6th. For continuous mortar fire fell in the area and foxholes had become swimming pools. The wet, weary troops occasionally threw themselves on the muddy ground beside their holes in a weird parody of sleep. When a shell whistled they automatically rolled into the three or four feet of water for what protection it offered.

With Third Battalion remaining in position in preparation for its relief,



First Battalion jumped off in an attack at 0800 on the morning of November 7. The enemy launched a counterattack against Company A during the morning but fell back under artillery and small arms fire. At 1400, however, the Germans pinned Company B under intense flanking fire and partially surrounded the unit. Company C moved up on the right, engaged the enemy in a heavy fire fight and by nightfall had cleared Company B's exposed flank. After dark, a few Germans infiltrated between the companies and were captured. Then at last at 1600 the Third Battalion of the 398th Infantry, new to combat started the relief. The men, with the wry humor of misery turned their water-soaked holes over to the newcomers ceremoniously.

"It's not much," said one. "But I call it home."

"It's a pretty good house but there's only one thing wrong with it," said another pointing to the three foot pool of water, "The roof leaks."

So spoke the mud-encrusted men of the 157th as they came out of the woods of the Vosges Mountains. This line of bearded, tired men walking to the rear had made the first successful winter advance through the Vosges in all military history. They were heroes in every sense of the word, but their reaction to the whole business was summed up by one weary rifleman. Stopping to light a cigarette with numbed hands, he mumbled:

"Who in hell do we see about a discharge?"

*Luxury of luxuries, hot coffee . . . but they're watching that fire; smoke over trees brings artillery.*





N

MOYENMOUTIER

RAON-L'ETAPE

LUNEVILLE - ST DIE

HIGHWAY

Meurthe R.

ETIVAL

ST. REMY

LA SALLE

PAJAILLE

ST. BENOIT

MÉNIL

BRU

JEANMÉNIL

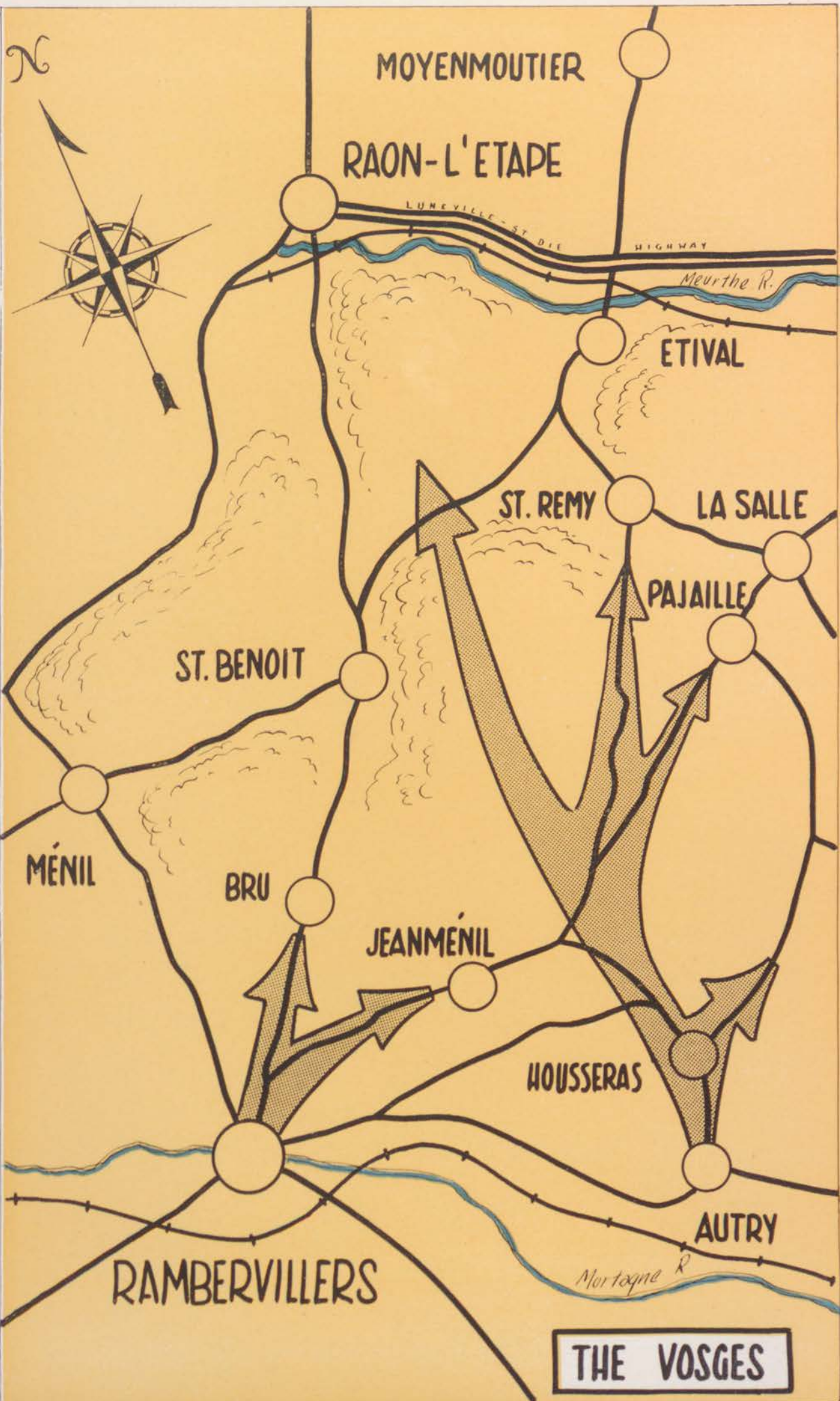
HOUSSEAS

AUTRY

Mortagne R.

RAMBERVILLERS

THE VOSGES



*Here were the great and bitter days during which many lifetimes of victory and defeat were lived.*

*Here was Alsace and the first grappling with the German language.*

*"Haben sie schnapps?"*

*"Gut tag, Fraulein . . ."*

*Here was the race to cross the border and the deep satisfaction of fighting at last on German soil.*

*But that elation turned to bitterness as the Kraut struck back viciously at Bunenthal. And the bitterness grew at Christmas time with preparations for withdrawal on all sides.*

*Then disaster at Riepertweiler, where six gallant companies went down to defeat and the regiment withdrew from Germany.*

*But not without the grim promise of a quick return. . . .*





## 10. ALSACE

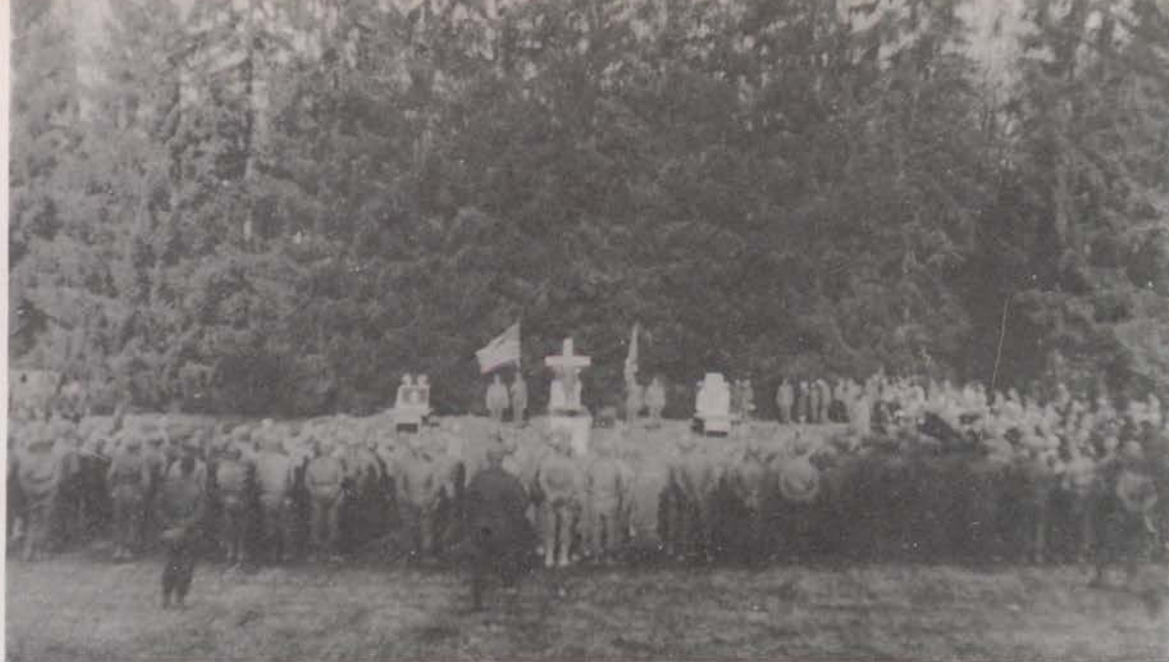
**M**ARTIGNY-LES-BAINS and Darney are two little towns in eastern France, but to the bedraggled doughs of the 157th, fresh from the snow-covered Vosges, they were suburbs of heaven. For here they went into rest, November 7, 1944.

Aside from four hours training each day men relaxed. Again there was the short, sweet interval of hot showers, good beds, movies and dances as Special Service went into action. Not only the local girls but also their mothers, fathers, and kid brothers and sisters turned out for the music and the dancing. and many a waltzing mademoiselle learned the fine art of jitter-bugging from a heavy-booted infantryman while her entire family shouted encouragement. A library, ping-pong tables, pool tables and a bar were set up. They were great days, those; days when men could stride down a street without the ear cocked and the nerves tight, waiting for incoming shells. But days, unfortunately, that were all too short.

On November 14th, Third Battalion marched in review before General Alexander Patch, commanding the Seventh Army, and General W. W. Eagles, commanding the 45th Division. They paid tribute to the veterans of I Company who were presented with Distinguished Unit Badges for their part in the heroic struggle at the Anzio "Flyover." The company's first sergeant, Willard Cody, received the Legion of Merit during the ceremony for outstanding achievement during the Sicilian, Italian and Anzio campaigns. And as a concluding measure, General Patch stepped forward and pinned silver leaves on the shoulders of Major Felix Sparks, commanding officer of Third Battalion. Promotion to

\*Unfold map from page 136.





*Memorial services conducted by regimental chaplains near Martigny-les-Bains in November. (Harper)*

the rank of lieutenant colonel came as a complete surprise to the lanky officer.

On the 17th and 18th of November, chaplains of the regiment, Captain Leland L. Loy, Father Joseph D. Barry and Captain Leroy W. Raley conducted memorial services for those who had died on the long road through Sicily, Italy and France. Solemnly, in a quietly impressive ceremony, men in ranks paid homage to their fallen comrades. Hundreds of civilians attended the services to pay their respects to their American friends.

Then rumor returned to plague the troops. "We're going back in!" was the story but nobody could either confirm or deny it. Rumor soon proved to be fact, however, for the regiment was alerted on the 20th. And on the 23rd, the day after Thanksgiving, the 157th again moved towards battle.

As the trucks rolled swiftly to the northeast, men noticed a change in the passing scene. Fields were the same, sky and woods were the same, but the signs in the towns were changed. They read "Backerie" or "Milch-Brot" in lettering that was strange to the eye. People waved half-heartedly from the sides of the road and shouted in guttural accents.

Said a GI:

"Hell, that's not French, that's German!"

"Yeah, but these aren't Germans," another answered.

"I remember reading about this place. It was originally French. Back in 1870 or 1872 or somewhere about that time, the Frenchies and the Krauts had a terrific scrap. That's when the Krauts had this guy Bismarck. Anyway, the Krauts come out on top and took over this Alsace. But in 1918 the French took

*Volley is fired in memory of friends who have fallen on long road through Sicily, Italy, France.*







*Typical of the towns and scenes of Alsace are the pictures above and at right as 157th troops file through the narrow streets of the towns with the German names: Ingwiller, Zinsweiler, Rothbach, Oberbronn, Niederbronn. Weather pictured was also typical. (Photos by Jack Harper)*



it back and kept it until the Jerries ran all over them in 1940. Then the Nazis took good care of these Alsatians."

"Yeah," another agreed. "My folks come from Strasbourg. That's the biggest city in Alsace. My dad used to tell me about the place. I learned to speak Kraut from my folks."

"You oughta get along in this country, fella," continued the historian. "But there'll be Frenchmen that speak better German than they do French and there'll be Nazis that speak French better than they do German. You gotta watch out and not trust any of them."

On the 25th and 26th of November, the 157th was attached to the 44th Division. While Second and Third Battalions remained in reserve, First Battalion, attached to the 71st Infantry, moved toward Rauwiller on the morning of the 25th in an attempt to restore the lines broken by a German counterattack. By the evening of the 26th, First Battalion had reached the high ground north of Rauwiller and on the morning of the 27th, the regiment reverted to Division control. There were sighs of relief.

"I don't mind fighting my own fights," said one veteran, "but I'll be damned if I like to go out and get my fool head shot off in other outfits."

That same day, Second and Third Battalions were committed in a drive toward Weinbourg and eventually Ingwiller. The Second, spearheading the assault, entered Weinbourg without the opposition that was expected and rushed toward Ingwiller. F Company cleared the road junction just north of the town, which fell into E Company hands.

Winter weather now set in in earnest, and while the veterans of Venafro hadn't minded the snow and the cold while in rest, they shuddered in anticipa-



*Tension is apparent as riflemen close in on a house suspected of concealing German snipers.*

tion of the days and nights ahead. To the front lay the mountains of the northern Vosges. The border of Germany was not too far distant and there the mountains became higher and the woods thicker.

This winter however, heavy clothing was available. Men received either shoe-pacs or overshoes. Wool lined parkas, combat suits and sleeping bags were issued to all front line troops. Many wore their "longjohns" and two pair of OD pants. A special effort was made to see that every man had a pair of gloves and a frequent change of socks.

The advance across the northern part of the Alsatian plain, its left flank in the mountains and its right on the plains, was rapid for the 157th. Towns with odd sounding names: Ingwiller, Zinsweiller, Rothbach, Oberbronn, Jagerthal, Bad Neiderbronn were soon under control. But the advance was not without cost. Each town took its share in American blood. To the left, the 100th Division and 121st Recon, attempting to pierce the mountainous region, were halted by German infantry, road blocks and mines. Thus the left flank was left dangerously open but orders were to advance. On the right, the 179th and 180th regiments continued forward to keep pace with the "Flying '57th."

Swinging into the mountains northeast of Bad Neiderbronn the regiment found the going tougher. Mountains were high and trails vague. The advance became painfully slow and costly. Supply again became a major problem. On nights when jeeps could not reach a company supply point, every available man was brought forward to help take water, rations and ammunition to the company, carrying their valuable loads on packboards or in their arms. Later, quar-



termaster provided experienced negro mule skinnners and mules to make up the pack trains which hauled supplies to the companies under the cover of darkness. It was a far cry from Sicily and Italy. Few men remained who had handled mules in those campaigns, but those few heaved a sigh of relief. "Sure glad they got colored boys on the mules this trip. I'd as soon charge a machine gun as push those damn mules around."

The advance companies drew closer to the German border and entered the Maginot Line, the line the French once believed would keep the Germans out of France.

Battered field fortifications were all that remained of the once proud Maginot, which the Germans chose not to defend. American infantrymen sleeping for the first time in pillboxes, earned a vacation from digging in.

Windstein, Langensoultzbach and Lembach were cleared. The veterans were on the German border, ready to step across. It was something many of them had never expected to do.

On the evening of the 12th, Lt. Colonel Russell D. Funk, commanding officer of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion called Col. O'Brien.

"Colonel," he said. "We can lay a barrage across the border any time you say."

"What are we waiting for?" was the reply.

Seconds later, the regiment's first artillery concentrations fell on German soil.

By now, tired of warfare as they were, everyone was excited with the prospect of being with the first Seventh Army unit to enter Germany. On the right the 180th Infantry and the 103rd Division were in a race to the border. Reports filtered through, "2000 yards away. Meeting stiff resistance" . . . The 103rd has 1000 to go. Company A of the 157th is right at the border . . . 180th now at the border."

L and K Companies of the 180th won, but Company A of the 157th was a close second. On the morning of December 16th it left Wingen and supported by tanks, forced its way across the border. Placards were placed on trees at the border for signatures of doughboys who were entering the Reich as guests of Company A, and invited the infantrymen to "Spit on Hitler's Home." On some some placards the word "spit" had been evidently misspelled.

Third Battalion crossed the border later that day and moved to a hill north of the small German town of Nothweiler, overlooking the outer defenses of the Siegfried line. First Battalion, continuing the attack, ventured towards Bun-



*An American tank supports the Infantry by blasting houses out from under snipers.*



denthal. The Second, moving on the left of First Battalion, gained steadily until stopped by a huge marsh, where the Germans had dammed a stream.

Forward observers, spotting emplacements in the hills ahead, called for artillery fire and then watched direct hits bounce off the concrete. At first they refused to believe what they saw. This was the outer rim of the Siegfried line.

Towards evening of the 17th, Second Battalion prepared to cross the marsh in rubber boats, but found them unmaneuverable in the swamp. Company F, leading the assault, attempted to wade the waist-deep water but was turned back by machine gun fire. Three times more before dawn on the 18th German machine gunners, established in pillboxes on the opposite side of the marsh, cut down battalion efforts to make a crossing. At daylight the companies were forced to withdraw.

G Company resumed the attack for Second Battalion. Pushing through First Battalion's sector, it succeeded in reaching the cemetery area of Bundenthal. Then machine gun fire split the column, pinning the two leading platoons to the ground and causing the remainder to withdraw to cover. Later that night, patrols were sent forward but could not contact the two platoons.

In First Battalion's sector, Company C pointed the assault towards Bundenthal. It crossed the open field south of town, and began infiltrating towards it. One platoon crossed the anti-tank ditch via a small foot bridge, another scrambled down and then up the sides. The two leading platoons succeeded in reaching the outskirts of Bundenthal before dawn exposed the remainder of the company to enemy observation. Throughout the day, men of Companies A and B, following close, were pinned to earth by fire from all sides. As dusk approached they withdrew, leaving two C Company platoons at the edge of town.

Patrols from both First and Second Battalions continued to probe the outer defenses of the Siegfried in an attempt to reach the besieged platoons in Bundenthal. Small arms, machine guns and mortar fire prevented any of these patrols from penetrating farther than the cemetery at the edge of town.

Enemy artillery and mortars pounded the town mercilessly. Machine guns and small arms ripped into the buildings setting two afire. Enemy-occupied hills surrounded the town on three sides, pill boxes covered the fourth. Little hope remained that the handful of Americans would ever reach their own lines again.

Just before dawn of the 23rd, two men from Company G, Sgt. William Alter and Pvt. Al Guriel, members of one of the trapped platoons, made their way back to friendly lines. They reported that there were seventy men stranded in the southern edge of the town. Ammunition was low, medical supplies were exhausted, and the men were existing on hog mash, raw potatoes and half-rotted apples. Immediate plans were made to attempt a rescue.

Lt. Colonel Chester James, acting regimental commander in absence of Colonel O'Brien, Lt. Colonel Ralph Krieger and Lt. Colonel Russell Funk proposed making the attempt just after dusk on December 23rd. Tentatively, the artillery batteries would register the pill boxes during the day and that night coordinate concentrated fire with the actions of a First Battalion patrol.





*Remnants of the Maginot Line stand on German border, an ironic symbol of French defensive effort.*

While final preparations were being made, the three battalions patrolled their forward areas extensively. Windstein and Neidersteinbach were found to be unoccupied but a G Company patrol drew small arms from the town of Schonau. The artillery registered the areas surrounding Bundenthal according to plan. Everything was in readiness.

At 1800 hours on the 23rd, a 12-man patrol from Companies A and B started toward the cemetery on the outskirts of Bundenthal. Browning automatic rifles and machine guns poured fire on all known enemy positions as the patrol advanced. The artillery fired a 1000-round concentration on the German pillboxes. Moving ahead through the swath of fire, Tech. Sergeant Warren Haynes, Cpl. Raymond Dwyer, a medic, and Pfc. Edgar Ingleton and Joseph Long hastily made their way into the edge of town. Haynes contacted the weary troops holding the first house and runners alerted the remainder of the town's defenders to the attempted withdrawal. Shouldering some wounded and carrying others on blanket stretchers, the men made a dash for the anti-tank ditch near the cemetery, encountering no resistance from the enemy pinned in pillboxes by the incoming shells. As the haggard troops scrambled into the ditch 100 yards from the edge of town, the Germans finally brought their guns into action. Fire failed to halt the withdrawal.

*A great moment for the mortar crew pictured below as they fire their first round into German soil.*





*Part of two platoons from First Battalion that were trapped in Bundenthal are pictured in Niederbronn following their rescue just before Christmas of '44. At right, observers report effect of fire on Bundenthal where Germans counterattacked.*

Unshaven and worn, many of the soldiers who had withstood the six-day siege in the battered town were evacuated to hospitals, while the others were sent to the recently established regimental rest camp at Neiderbronn to celebrate a Christmas many thought they would never see.

The situation on the German frontier stabilized itself into one of patrol action. Christmas was at hand, the second for the 157th on the line. Regimental chaplains visited front line installations to conduct services and say a word of Christmas cheer. M Company had its own Christmas tree, a little scrub pine decorated with a star cut from a C-ration can and tinsel made of scraps of tinfoil. Christmas dinner, unlike the cold wet sandwiches of the year before, consisted of hot turkey and all the trimmings of a home cooked meal, but without the home.

Then the push started again. Passing through Second Battalion's positions on the northwest flank of the Division, First Battalion captured Hirschthal but heavy fire halted the advance short of the Schonau Valley.

Third Battalion jumped off at 0830 hours clearing Neidersteinbach against steady resistance which grew as the infantrymen drew nearer to Obersteinbach. A platoon of K Company ventured into the town as the rest of the company watched from a high hill nearby. Defending from every house in the village, the enemy ripped into the platoon of Yanks and all but destroyed it. It was reported by other K Company men that the civilians in town had come out of their houses to kill the wounded and loot the dead but there was no confirmation.

Once again the advance ground to a halt.



Came January 1st, start of a new year, and a day that would be called "Perfect Football Weather" in the land so far away. It was a time for remembering the parties and the hangovers and the family dinners and the long list of resolutions that marked New Year's Day of other years, but there was little joy in the regiment on that day of 1945. The advance had been stalled and wire was being strung, mines laid, trees and bridges readied for dynamiting before the threat of German troops known to be massing in the area. From the north came hysterical rumors of the Bulge. "The Normandy troops were fleeing to the coast. Patton was routed, a new and tremendous Dunkirk was in the making!"

Morale sunk and the challenging "Win the War in '44" gave way to the grim "Stay Alive in '45."

Then, on this same day, Germans widened the Bitche salient by continued attacks on the newly committed 70th Division and the left flank of the 45th was laid bare. Withdrawal was imperative. Engineers remained behind to blow bridges, place road blocks and booby traps by the thousands, and many an infantryman set a hand grenade of his own before starting the discouraging retreat to protect the flanks.

Withdrawal was nasty medicine to men of the 157th and the bitching was loud and profane. This outfit had held at Salerno and Anzio against every German boast that they would be destroyed; they had left foxholes to break through to Rome; they had chased the Heinie in a mad rout across France, and whipped him badly whenever he made a stand. They had fought long and hard for the feel of German soil under their feet and to leave it without a fight didn't seem right to them. For the first time their backs were to the enemy.

From the 4th until the 12th, the 157th manned the pillboxes of the Maginot

*German guns commanding the highway in distance were knocked out by artillery near Zinsweiler. (Harper)*





*this . . .*



*and  
this →*



*did  
this . . .*





line, sending frequent patrols to sound out enemy defenses and strength. Hot chow was served to the men at the front, and returning RTUs swelled the ranks. But morale stayed low.

On the evening of January 13, regiment moved to the vicinity of Reiperts-willer and relieved the 276th of the 70th Division under heavy enemy artillery fire. The 315th Infantry was on the left, the 36th Combat Engineers in the heavily wooded hills on the right.

First and Third Battalions jumped off next morning and made steady progress until 1300 hours, when 88mm. and mortar fire stopped them. They dug in while the 315th launched an unsuccessful assault.

Another attack was attempted by the battalions on the morning of the 15th. By mid-afternoon the Third reached its objective through heavy fire. At 1615 hours, the enemy forces counterattacked. They were repelled but quickly reorganized and drove back. Murderous small arms fire from K Company positions stopped the attack, and the enemy withdrew as their heavy mortar barrage blasted the K Company positions. Casualties were heavy and litterbearers worked long hours that night.

First Sergeant Maurice Cohen of Company K later said, "It was the worst mess I ever saw. Dead and wounded Americans and Germans were lying all over the area. We had no way of evacuating the wounded much less the dead until night."

Pfc. William Sain who was wounded in the action added, "Those damned Heinies counterattacked in rushes. Enemy dead were piled up like cordwood in front of our positions."

Of the units taking part in the American attack that day, Third Battalion of the 157th was the only one to take its objective. As a result it found itself 1500 yards in advance of adjacent units with its flank unprotected. The Germans were quick to realize this and their counterattacks were fierce and repeated. In addition, they kept pressure on the 315th and the 36th Engineers, beating back their every effort to move up on line with Third Battalion.

The following day, January 16, the Germans massed artillery, tank, rocket, mortar and machine gun concentrations on the units dug in on the salient. Knowing that further attacks were coming, C Company was moved to the support of Third Battalion. The expected attack developed, was thrown back, but not without heavy infiltrations of enemy troops between the companies. G Company, supported by two light tanks, mopped up some of these troops and also dug in to support Third Battalion.

Then began a series of enemy artillery barrages followed by infantry attacks directed at this battalion. Hard fighting through the long day piled up German dead and kept the Germans from overrunning the positions, but there was further infiltration with each attack. By the end of the day the enemy had established itself in about company strength to the rear of the desperate battalion.

So successful were the infiltration tactics of the Germans that in broad daylight they were able to ambush a ration train of three jeeps carrying supplies to the forward positions. One of the four survivors, Cpl. Alfred Miller later





*Engineers performed brilliantly in reopening roads destroyed by retreating Germans. Bridge across the Zins River at Zinsweiler, blown by Heinies, was repaired so rapidly that the advance of the Allied armor was hardly halted.*

under direct machine gun and rifle fire. We all hit the ditch on the side of the road and I rolled down an embankment until I reached a covered position. After covering the road with small arms and machine gun fire which riddled the ration trucks, the Germans began firing rifle grenades at the men on the ground. I saw one man take a direct hit on the face and fall over dead. Grenades fell near my position and I crawled to another without being hit. By crawling and running from one place to another I got back to our lines."

Third Battalion Anti-tank and Ammunition-Pioneer platoons, with two light tanks, fought into the battle area and succeeded in supplying the companies with rations and ammunition by 1940 hours that evening. Attempts by battalion headquarters personnel and squads from Company B to drive the Germans out from their positions behind the Third Battalion were unsuccessful.

January 17th the fight for the relief of the battalion went on. It followed the same pattern with vicious but unsuccessful attacks following each other. From the enemy came hours of artillery pounding with horrible accuracy, undoubtedly directed by radio from observers among the infiltrators. Hundreds of shells were lobbed into the one draw offering a covered approach to the battalion. Battalion CPs at Reipertsweiler and Lichtenberg came under heavy fire. The situation remained unchanged and all efforts to supply the desperate companies that night failed until Lt. Willis Talkington of Third Battalion's A&P Platoon loaded a light tank with rations, ammunition, medical and other supplies, and directed it into the main battle area. The tank fought its way to the companies successfully, but next morning, trying to return, it was knocked out by bazooka fire. The tankers were killed, the officer wounded, but he managed to make his way back to friendly lines.

January 18—the situation was unchanged. Through the day, the Germans



kept such intense fire on American positions that no aid could be given the wounded. When hit, men sank in their holes and tended their wounds as best they could. It was bitterly cold. There was rain and snow.

Identification taken from the body of a dead German revealed that the 157th was opposed by the 11th SS Regiment of the Sixth SS Mountain Division, a full strength assault unit from Finland. This outfit, nicknamed the "Nord," specialized in Winter mountain fighting. Their personnel was experienced, rested, and fanatically Nazi.

Suddenly the Germans hit at G Company. They were beaten back once, but surged forward again with reinforced strength and overran the company. Only thirty men escaped death or capture. From their newly won position the Germans placed fire on the unprotected flanks of Third Battalion. Artillery pres-

*Germans shelled Lichtenberg continually. Historic castle in background was 157th strongpoint. (Harper)*



sure continued and enemy infantry attacked again and again. At each attack some infiltrated through the lines to raise more hell from the rear and flanks. Their own casualties were terrific, but they knew that American ammunition was running low, and their own continual barrage made resupply impossible. They were close to the kill and they knew it.

In desperation, G Company of the 179th and B Company of the 157th plus Regimental Headquarters and Anti-Tank companies tried to fight their way to the trapped units. They failed. In the woods the Germans seemed to be everywhere. A provisional element from Second Battalion Headquarters attacked the German line surrounding the Third, but they fell back after suffering heavy casualties.

January 19 found Third Battalion and its attached companies still surrounded, still meeting hourly attacks, still fighting for their lives. Again Com-





*In the woods outside this small village of Riepertsw eiller, six companies of the regiment were trapped by German counterattacks in January of '45. Every effort to relieve them failed. (Signal Corps photo)*

pany B of the 157th and Company G of the 179th attacked, again were driven back. Anti-tank and A&P Platoons of Third Battalion were thrown in. These men knocked out scattered machine guns but were forced to withdraw when almost surrounded by automatic fire.

Said S/Sgt. Bernard Fleming, squad leader, "My squad was in a ditch with three enemy machine guns on us. I asked for a volunteer to get aid. He got only about 50 yards when a machine gun killed him. I asked for another and he got about ten yards before he was shot through the legs. I went out and dragged him behind some cover, then yelled to the others that I was going to the rear myself. I don't know how I made it, but I did. I saw Col. Sparks and told him what happened."

Sparks, commanding Third Battalion, drove forward in a medium tank to the besieged squad. Manning a 30 calibre machine gun, he fired 5,000 rounds of ammunition and directed the fire of a 76mm. gun. He succeeded in getting the men to the shelter of the tank and seeing several wounded lying helpless nearby, he left the vehicle to carry them to the tank and safety.



That night Second Battalion of the 411th Infantry was brought up to attack in the morning, and plans were made to supply Third Battalion from the air by the F/B Aerial Resupply Detachment. No rations or supplies had reached the beleaguered men since Lt. Talkington's daring effort. The regiment still had contact with Third Battalion by radio. In part, the S-2 report of activities this day read:

"The enemy again employed his infantry to attack our front line units, with the primary mission of breaking through our lines and the secondary mission of infiltrating. In each of his three attempts today, one at 0715 hours, the second at 0740 hours and his last at 1525 hours, his main effort was hurled back by Company K, Company I and Company L. But in each instance, infiltration was accomplished. This infiltration has enabled the enemy to build up a line of estimated company strength in which a number of automatic weapons are emplaced and which is outposted by machine gun positions. In many places in this line, enemy forces are dug in under the rocks on the slopes of the hills and because of the accuracy of the artillery and rocket fire brought down when any attempt is made to dislodge these troops, it is believed that there are artillery observers in this line, providing the support-fire so necessary to its existence."

January 20—an ugly day of snow and cold and bitter disappointment for a regiment fighting to save a battalion. Second Battalion of 411 jumped off early through a heavy snowstorm. It was cut down. After reorganizing, it renewed its attack but was stopped cold before noon. Planes loaded with critical supplies waited for a break in the weather to take off for the Reipertsweiler area. No break came. Radio batteries were weakening and communication with Third Battalion was shaky. It was ordered to attack to the southwest. Later the report came through that a breakout in that direction had been driven back. Orders were given for another attack in the same direction.

At 1740 hours, two men from Company I reported into Third Battalion command post and were evacuated immediately suffering from nervous exhaustion. They reported that the forward companies had suffered 75 percent casualties and that all the men had either been killed or captured. Pfc. Benjamin Melton, one of the two survivors said:

"At 1530 hours on January 20th, we attacked toward the rear trying to break through the German line that separated us from the rest of the regiment. Ammunition was scarce but we made progress until the enemy artillery zeroed in on us. Some of the men were blown to bits and I saw one officer get a direct



*American and German wounded are brought together from the hard fighting in Alsace*



hit and just disappear. I was knocked to the ground several times by the concussion of exploding shells but I wasn't wounded. We saw that we weren't going to be able to get out so we went back to our holes where we at least had a little protection. Somehow the Germans sent word to us to surrender by 1700 hours but I remembered reading about the massacre at Malmedy and I didn't want to stay there and be killed in cold blood. Together with Pvt. Walter Bruce and another fellow whose name I don't remember, I set out to try to get back to our lines. The other man was killed by machine gun fire but Bruce and I made it back to the battalion CP. We kept halfway up the slope of the hills and stayed away from all paths and trails. We saw some shoepac marks in the snow and followed these for awhile. Then we saw a shelter-half which was covering a foxhole. We laid low until a G.I. looked out from beneath it. You can imagine how glad we were to see that guy.

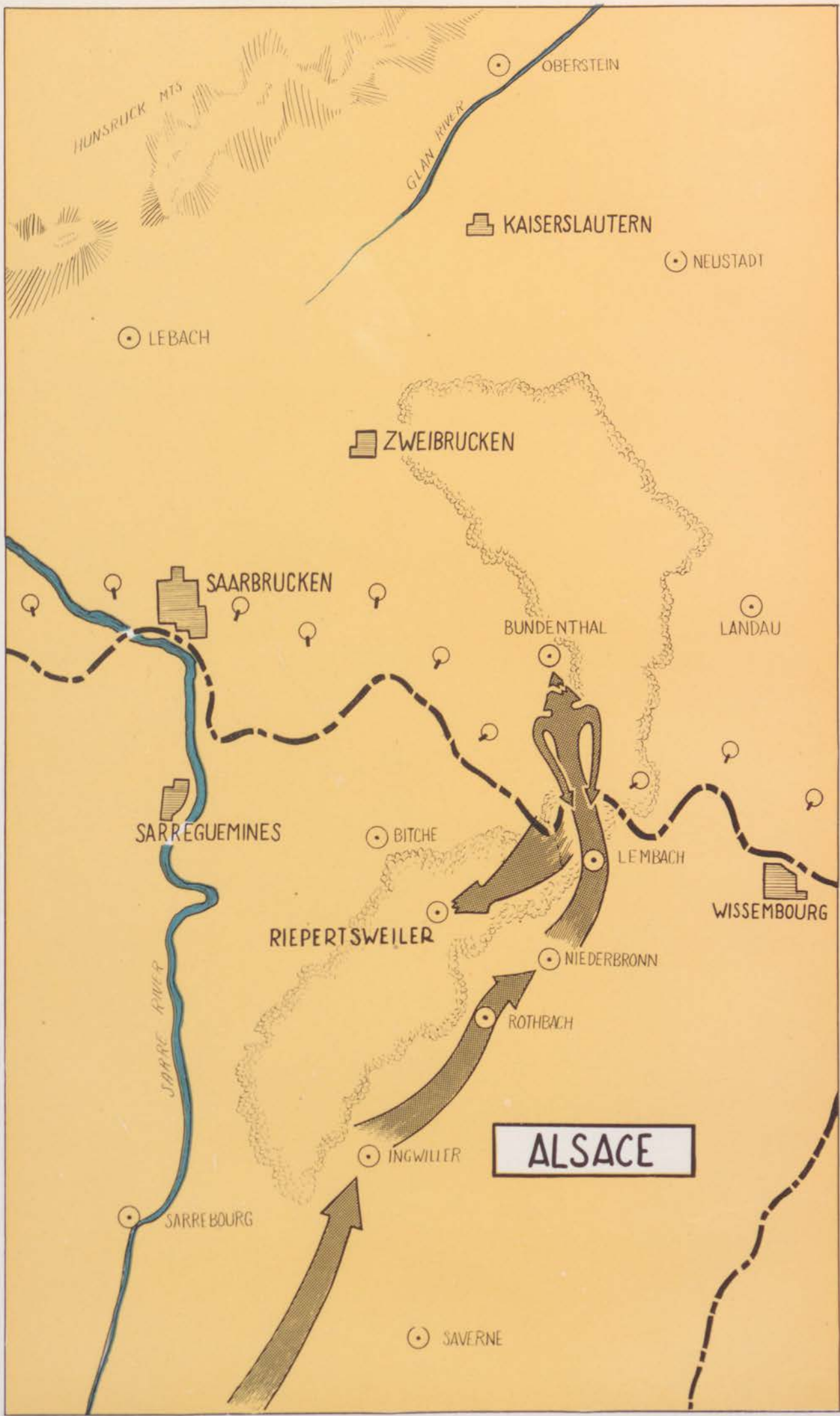
"The enemy artillery and mortar fire out there was the worst I'd ever seen. At least three-quarters of the men on the hill had a wound of some kind and a few had two or three. Until the last day we placed the wounded in holes with the other wounded so that men who weren't hurt could guard them and give them aid. We had no medical supplies, no food and no heat to melt snow for water. Once we found a box of rations underneath an ammunition pile. We gave the rations only to the wounded."

January 21st brought defeat. The Regiment was ordered off the line, leaving behind six of their companies, cut off, surrounded, hopelessly outnumbered.

In the mountains, the snow deepened. . . .







HUNSRÜCK MTS

GLAN RIVER

OBERSTEIN

KAISERSLAUTERN

NEUSTADT

LEBACH

ZWEIBRÜCKEN

SAARBRÜCKEN

BUNDENTHAL

LANDAU

SARREGUEMINES

BITCHE

LEMBACH

WISSEMBOURG

RIEPERTSWEILER

NIEDERBRONN

ROTHEBACH

INGWILLER

ALSACE

SARREBOURG

SAVERNE

*It was like a blood transfusion.*

*Replacements came by the hundreds to fill the gaps of the lost six companies. New men from the states; fresh, alert, cocky—along with older non-coms from adjacent units, fighters wise in the way of combat infantry to add the seasoning of experience.*

*And like a period of convalescence was the quietness on the line around Wimmenau. It was a life-saving interlude following the blood transfusion.*

*The regiment healed fast.*

*And feet were itching for the feel of German soil again.*

*And the old cry sounded out:*

*"Adolph, count your men."*





## 11. INTERLUDE

**B**LIZZARDS raged as remnants of the regiment traveled the road back. A high wind whipped the snow into driving sleet, highways were ribbons of ice, and many a truck slithered smoothly into ditches to the tune of cursing infantrymen. Back through Ingweiler they went, and through other towns so recently captured at the cost of death and wounds. Grimly exhausted, they billeted in Bust, Schonberg, Medding and Hangweiler.

Then came the flood of new faces, the replacements, the life blood of any infantry outfit. Fresh, buoyant, curious, full of drive, they contrasted strongly with the veterans who had come out of the mountains weary of heart and body. With the new men came many an old hand from other outfits to rebuild the 157th. The hot and regular meals, the rest, and the freedom from fear worked their usual miracles so that when reorganization was complete on February 3, it was a determined regiment that returned to the line to relieve the 180th in the vicinity of Wimmenau.

Although the area was adjacent to the battlegrounds of Reipertsweiler, the



situation was static along the front and remained so for the two weeks the 157th remained on the line. It was an ideal "breaking in" period for the new men who were able to get the feel of front-line combat with the minimum exposure. Patrols were active on both sides but casualties were light during the whole period.

Winter weather gave way to crisp sunshine for days at a time. There was still sharp cold and some rain, but the terrible sufferings of trench foot were curtailed when Capt. S. Robert Glynn of First Battalion Medics introduced the buddy system that had been used so successfully by the Russians. With men massaging each other's feet daily, trench foot almost disappeared, although there were some cases of riflemen being kicked in the face as they got a little ticklish with the feet handling.

One of the smoothest bits of action during this time occurred when Pfc. Clyde Conner and Sgt. John Stouffe of First Battalion slipped into the No-Man's town of Reipertsweiler one night and led a cow out from under the eyes of the Germans. K rations were sneered at by men of First Battalion for a day or so after that incident.

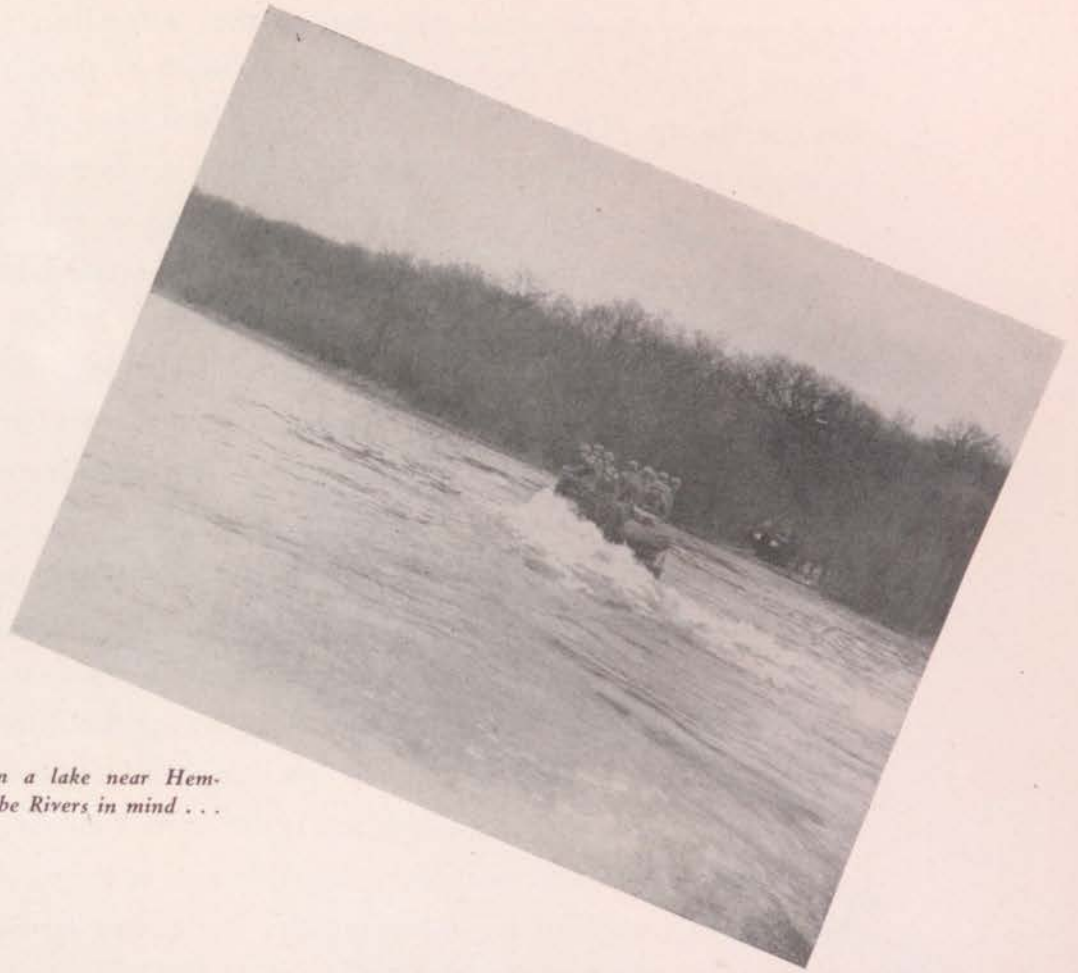
Action was so limited that one old sergeant called the area "the best damned



*Many men from the regiment were sent to the Snipers' School set up near Wimmenau to instruct riflemen in use of the new telescopic sights that proved so effective in combat.*







*Practicing river crossing on a lake near Hemming; with Rhine and Danube Rivers in mind . . .*

rest camp in France.” But there were no regrets when the 232nd Infantry of the 42nd Division took over on February 17th. As one corporal put it, “I like to come out and I hate to go in no matter how quiet it is.”

The troops were shuttled back to the Rambervillers area with the Regimental CP in Domptail. There were frequent passes to nearby Luneville and more than one man returned to Rambervillers to pick up a romance where the blitzkrieg had left it four months before. Another gripe was added to the long history of gripes against the rear echelon. “White Lightning,” the potent French whiskey which used to cost a K ration or a pack of cigarettes back in November had been hit by inflation. If you had a friend who knew where to get it and if you had ten or fifteen dollars to throw around, you might be able to get a watered down bottle of the liquor.

But it felt good to get back to France after the months in Alsace. It felt good to hear French again instead of German. It felt good to see towns relatively untouched by the war.

To most of the old men in the outfit, this rest period was reminiscent of the rest in the dust bowl area around Naples after the fall of Rome. They remem-

bered the way they'd glued their ears to the radios then and sweated out the Russian advance with the knowledge inside each of them that a big operation was coming up. The big news on the radio this time was the capture of the Remagen bridge intact and the first bridgehead across the Rhine.

On March 6th, the regiment began training in river crossings and for six days that followed the men paddled boats and practised embarking, debarking and assaulting inland by boat teams. On Sunday, March 11th the battalions practised crossing a lake in the vicinity of Hemming. During the crossing in the early evening hours one boat loaded with men from Company A overturned, throwing all the occupants into the water. One man drowned and twelve were hospitalized.

Then there was the detailed demonstration of attack on a fortified position, that did more than teach the technique of knocking out a pill box; it also confirmed rumors about what was to come. Practise on river crossings and attacking concrete emplacements; and the map showing the Rhine River and the Siegfried Line directly to the east made conclusions all too obvious.

At 1500 hours on March 13th the 157th started moving by motor from the army reserve area and reached an assembly area in the vicinity of Sarreguemines by 2245. Throughout the following day the troops rested and made the final check of equipment. The Seventh Army drive was scheduled to start at 0100 hours the morning of March 15th, with the mission of clearing all German defenses in the Seventh Army sector west of the Rhine, a hundred miles away. Intelligence sources guessed that enemy resistance throughout the initial phase of the attack probably would be limited. It was expected that the Germans would choose to withdraw to the Siegfried defenses behind them rather than attempt holding the positions occupied at jump-off time and it was believed certain that they would fight a delaying action to allow the main body of troops to retire to the emplacements.

The 45th was on the left flank of the 15th Corps and was adjoined on the left by elements of the 11th Corps; on the immediate right by the Third Division. With the 180th on the left, the 157th on the right, the 179th in reserve, the Thunderbirds, with five Battalions of artillery supporting, were poised for the final acts in the drama that had started on the beaches of Sicily.

Once more the traditional cry rang out as the 157th prepared for battle:

"Adolph, count your men. . . ."





GERMANY

PILSEN

PRAGUE

POLAND

GEMÜNDEN

ASCHAFFENBURG

13

14

NÜRNBERG

15

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

VIENNA

DACHAU

Concentration Camp

BUDAPEST

MUNICH

AUSTRIA

HUNGARY

SWITZERLAND

GENEVA

VENICE

Ro. River

YUGOSLAVIA

BELGRADE

ITALY

GENOA

PISA

Arno R.

ADRIATIC SEA

SALERNES CANNES  
ST. MAXIME  
ST. TROPEZ

10

9

ROME

8

ANZIO  
BEACHHEAD

NAPLES

SALERNO

6

7

VENAFRO  
PIEDMONTE

BENEVENTO

BIVIO CIOFFI

PAESTUM

CORSICA

SARDINIA

ORISTANO

CAGLIARI

TYRRHENIAN SEA

PALERMO

5

3

MESSINA

4

TRABIA

PIETRAPERZIA

CEFALU

SAN STEFANO

VIZZINI

CHIARAMONTE

PAGUSA

COMISO

2

SICILY

AFRICA



1943:

1. Arrived Oran June 23. A rugged practice assault on beach defended by 36th Division. Heat. Dirt. Training. Sailing July 5.
2. July 9, first combat landing. Comiso Airport. Ragusa. Charmonte. Elmo. Montrosa. Licodia. Gizzini. Riesa. Piertraperzie.
3. Cefalu. Bloody Ridge, July 28 and the toughest fight so far, one of the toughest of the war. San Stefano. Palermo-Messina highway.
4. Messina where First Battalion enraged the Third Division by entering first, August 18, after an End-Run by water that failed.
5. Trabia. Rest period. Listening to General Patton. More training. Embarking for invasion of Italy, September 8.
6. Paestum, near where 157th landed September 11. Tobacco Factory. The Gratiaglia. Sele Calore corridor. Counterattack. Bivio Cioffi.
7. Winter Line of September, October, November, December, January. Benevento Matese Mountains. Volturno River. Facchio. Mt Acero. Piedmonte. Purple Heart Valley.

1944:

8. Anzio landing 23 May. The Caves. The Overpass. Factory Area. Anzio Express. German counter attack. Presidential citation.
9. Road to Rome. Jumpoff, May 23. Campoleone. Cisterna. Velletri. And past Rome to the south on June 6. News of Normandy invasion.
10. St. Maxime, August 15. Vitabaun, St. Tropez, Grimand. Salernes. Apt. La Concourde. Lorient. Fallon. Meselle. Rambervillers.
11. The Vosges through which the regiment fought in October-November, the first successful attack through the Vosges in military history.
12. Alsace. Ingwiller, Zinswiller, Rothbach, Niederbronn, December 9. And over the German border December 16. Bundenthal. Riepertswiller, January 15.
13. Through the Siegfried Line March 17-20 and across the Rhine March 27.
14. Aschaffenburg, April 1. Through to Saal, Klein Eibstadt, Gros Bardorf.
15. Nurnberg, April 18.
16. Dachau, April 30. Capture of world's worst concentration camp.
17. Munich, May 3, third largest city in Germany falls as war ends.



ROUTE OF THE  
**157th Infantry**  
FROM  
**GIBRALTAR**  
TO  
**MUNICH**





ROUTE OF THE  
157th Infantry  
FROM  
GIBRALTAR  
TO  
MUNICH





*"Yeah, I know what G-2 says" snarled the sergeant, "G-2 says that Jerry's going to run like hell back to his Siegfried line and that he hasn't got enough replacements to keep us from breaking through; that his replacements are either too old or too young. Yeah, to hear it you'd think those Krauts would fall down if you breathed on 'em, but I've never seen any of 'em go down until they got a 30-calibre slug in their heads. G-2 said there was nothing ahead the day my platoon got wiped out, and G-2 can't talk away those slabs of concrete up there that they've been building for nine years."*

*Said a quiet boy with a BAR: "We gotta crack her before we can end this god-damned war, Sarge."*

*"Ya got something there, soldier," answered the sergeant slowly, "Ya got something there. . . ."*



## 12. THE SIEGFRIED—THE RHINE

**M**ORD came down to saddle up and the regiment moved. It was close to one o'clock in the morning of March 15. The battalions had moved up from their areas around Remelling, Sarreinsming, and Zetting, had passed through the 71st and 114th Infantries and were poised for the jump-off. First Battalion was to the east, Second Battalion to the west, Third Battalion in reserve. They attacked to the north at one o'clock under the tremendous artillery fire that was to mark every move in cracking the Siegfried. Suddenly the entire battlefield was lit up as batteries of giant lights were turned on behind American lines. Their reflections from the low clouds, threw a spectacular glare over the area.

Observers from nearby hills said: "It was the damndest feeling, watching that attack under those lights. Would have been like a night ball game back home if it hadn't been for the hell raised by the artillery and the infantry."

Stuff hit the fan early for First Battalion. A and B Companies were pinned by flak wagons and A Company later suffered casualties when it dug into a mined area. Artillery knocked out the flak and the companies cleared the woods ahead, but not without fierce fire fights on all sides as by-passed enemy went into action from the rear. Then tanks were encountered, so American tanks came up to support First Battalion's drive. Obergailback was taken by C Company, but when it came under fire of a Heinie self-propelled the company withdrew, meeting fire from infiltrating groups to its rear and fighting its way back. Later that same day it retook the town and B Company passed through.

Second Battalion fared better that day, apparantly taking the enemy by surprise. Advancing in a column of companies (E, G, F) it made rapid progress



and finally met its first opposition at Niedergailback and Bleisbrucken. There it drew back in the face of a stiff counter attack. Further attempts to advance in this area were bitterly resisted and the battalion dug in for the night.

Third Battalion came into action from regimental reserve late in the day. K and L companies struck at Bleisbrucken, supported by a platoon of tanks. K Company wiped out an enemy force counterattacking Second Battalion, and together with L Company took a high toll in German dead from Bleisbrucken but was able to penetrate only the outskirts of the town.

Thus in the first days operations the regiment gained 3500 yards of well defended enemy ground, drove closer and closer to Hitler's hole card, the Siegfried Line. But the Kraut was fighting at his own front door now and was frantic in his efforts to keep the enemy out of the house.

Advances on March 16th were surprisingly swift as the German fulfilled the G-2 prophecy by retreating hurriedly to the Siegfried. Obergailback and Niedergailback fell early, and aerial observers watched the enemy blowing up bridges as it made a wholesale withdrawal.

Contact with the main Siegfried defense was made on March 17.

"Seein' as its St. Patrick's Day" said one small scout "they should give all the Irishman their shillelahs and see if they can batter their way through that Siegfried. Me, I'm French."

Most of the action through the daylight hours was limited to locating enemy gun emplacements. First Battalion's advance was thrown back by fire from Hill 321. Towards dusk, Second Battalion pushed through Hensbach. Enemy action indicated strong defenses directly behind the spiked concrete spears, called the Dragons' Teeth. After darkness, enemy artillery, including a great 280mm. gun, was active and inflicted casualties, but the attackers were at the edge of the famed defense and ready for the showdown.

The morning of the 18th was comparatively quiet. Artillery of both sides lobbed occasional shells but there was no infantry action. Then, at noon, the battle was joined.

"Here's where they find out what we got behind us" said a tense rifleman, as a half hour artillery barrage opened up.

"And here's where we find out what we got ahead of us" said his equally tense buddy, eyeing his watch.

Then the men crawled out of their holes and attacked the world's greatest defensive fortification. Artillery was behind them, tanks were with them, planes were over them, but the riflemen felt naked before the fire of those concrete walls. They had flame throwers, bazookas, demolitions, grenades, and every



automatic hand weapon, but their main tools were speed, courage, and teamwork. Speed and courage in braving the fire to cross the anti-tank ditches, to crawl through the Dragon Teeth and assault the pillboxes. Teamwork, beautiful in its precision, to work close enough to apertures to toss in grenades, bazooka fire, or the tongue of death from the flame throwers.

The plan for knocking out the Siegfried was simple and direct. Artillery and Air Corps hit the known gun emplacements hard, keeping the pressure on while tanks and infantry moved up. The tanks were stopped at the Dragons' Teeth where they opened fire on bunkers and pill boxes, trying to button them up as the infantry moved in. Under cover of this slugging, the doughs crawled up to the apertures, and went to work with hand grenades, flame throwers, and demolitions.

It sounds good on paper, and it is good; but only when you've got sergeants who will stand up calmly in fields of flying lead to direct the fire of their men on enemy guns; only when you've got machine gun crews that will race into action on open ground when that's the only place to cover an aperture; only when you've got riflemen who will snatch demolitions from their falling buddies and carry on with the attack. If a man hesitates, if a man falters, if a tank pulls back, a lot of men die. But there was no faltering, no pulling back here. Men lost limbs and lives in that attack, but from its start there was never a doubt of its success, and the enemy must have realized that as he saw them come.

No concrete ever poured could stop these men.

First and Second Battalions led the attack. C Company was first through the

*Demolition teams worked fast to blast many roads through the Dragon Teeth for supplies to move up.*







*Concrete spikes have first been blown, then tank trap filled in to make way for advance of the armor.*

Dragons' Teeth and made the initial assault on the bunkers and pill boxes. Tanks stopped at the teeth and poured their fire into the line while engineers and demolition teams worked under fire to blow a path through the concrete and fill the anti-tank ditch so that the armor could get through for close support.

Second Battalion had rough going from the start, advancing under enemy artillery and hitting a 100-yard fort in its first attack. With all the companies committed and supported by a company of tanks, the battalion took the first forts and dug in for the night.

Third Battalion was held in reserve, but moved in behind First Battalion to continue the attack the following morning. By nightfall the regiment was firmly entrenched within the Siegfried defenses.

At dawn of March 19 the enemy counterattacked First Battalion but was beaten off in a heavy fire fight. Then Third Battalion pushed through First and continued to attack along with Second Battalion. Resistance was bitter but American pressure was too great. Beating off counter attacks throughout the day, Second and Third Battalions knocked out over thirty pillboxes and other emplacements. Engineers were blasting and filling and bridging for the advance of the heavy armor. By evening the infantry had made a complete penetration of the defenses and was patrolling Wattweiler.

The Siegfried Line had been broken!

Success of the attack on the Siegfried exceeded all expectations. Regimental Commander O'Brien who attended Division Staff meetings before the assault on the Line said that some of the high command estimated three months might be needed to crack it. Actual time taken from the approach to the outer defenses to the final breakthrough was less than a week. Better yet, cost in killed and wounded was only a third as heavy as the breakout from Anzio.

That the enemy had definitely given up the Siegfried was learned when





*Mile upon mile of concrete gun emplacements made up the Siegfried Line. Note above how the fort dominates terrain over which attackers must come. Dragon Teeth below slowed down tanks and big guns.*

Second Battalion captured a German switchboard, still in operation, and Major Robert Slyter, the Regimental S-2, sent forward Lieutenants Fritz Schnaittacher and Fritz Kaufman, interrogators, to listen to the conversations coming over the wires. These two officers remained in the pillbox three hours gathering information.

"There were many calls coming through the board," Lt. Schnaittacher reported, "but we were able to hear well on only one line. A German SS officer was issuing orders to the troops occupying the positions in front of us. He instructed them to destroy all the telephones in the bunkers with hand grenades or axes, and to gas up their vehicles at the town of Kleinbanderbock, about twenty miles distance, in preparation for a move. The German troops were to get their gas by force if necessary. There was to be a control point at Harsbert on the way to Londsturl, and everything left behind was to be destroyed before the move began at 2300 hours.

*Armor, he'd up these "Dragon Teeth," came under fire from the fortifications at the crest of hill.*







*Armor and automatic weapons threw everything they had at the Siegfried to give demolition teams all possible cover as they worked their way up to the embrasures to blow up block houses, fortifications.*

"We reported what we learned to Major Slyter and he got in touch with Division and air liaison. The last we heard of the whole thing was that night fighters had gone out and plastered a German convoy which extended three abreast for miles."

Next day, Second Battalion met some opposition during the afternoon when the troops received machine gun, mortar, and anti-tank fire from the hills south of Kirrberg, but in a swift advance the companies brushed the resistance aside and caught the defending Germans completely by surprise, capturing nearly 350 prisoners, several artillery pieces and much equipment in a brief battle.

First Battalion, during the afternoon, suffered the loss of the Battalion S-3, Captain William T. Barnes, who with the acting Battalion Commander, Major Charles Edwards, and several enlisted men, was burned when a cave full of stored gasoline exploded.

Then began a spectacular advance. Typical infantrymen, nobody wanted to walk so the advancing doughboys commandeered bicycles, motorcycles, and abandoned trucks to chase the fleeing enemy. Germans attempting to defend the town of Martinshohe were overrun by a tide of battle weary GIs who had found new spirit in a virtually unopposed advance and in being solidly situated on Adolph Hitler's sacred soil where the damage they inflicted hurt the right people.

Hundreds of German prisoners filed back to the rear for processing, some of the more fortunate ones riding in crowded trucks while the remainder walked. Completely overrun, they surrendered in groups and in many instances appeared disappointed because no one paid any attention to them. Straggling Germans, still wearing their grey-green uniforms and surrender caps, wandered aimlessly about, watching in dazed amazement the flood of troops, supplies and equipment sweeping past them toward the west bank of the Rhine River. Civilians, the first the regimental troops had encountered in great numbers in Germany, also watched and wondered.



By March 23, the 157th, along with other Seventh Army elements had reached the Rhine and was situated in the vicinity of the city of Westhofen, through which Third and Seventh Army convoys continued to pass in an endless stream. While the 157th Infantry outposted the western bank of the river, the remainder of the Division prepared to make a crossing in conjunction with the Third Division on the right flank.

Soon after midnight, March 26, the 179th and 180th Infantries launched the 45th Division attack across the Rhine. Crossing the quarter-mile stretch of water in assault boats and with no protective artillery concentration preceding them, the troops took the enemy by surprise and it was not until the boats had been emptied and were returning to the opposite bank that intense mortar fire fell into the Division sector. Though 50 of the boats were damaged, the main body of assault troops had gained the foothold which doomed the enemy position and by morning the Thunderbirds had pressed inland from the river nearly two miles.

In Division reserve, the 157th crossed the Rhine uneventfully that same day. By nightfall, all the battalions had made the crossing and Second and Third Battalions were preparing to launch a coordinated attack the following morning.

The Rhine was a great disappointment to these fighters who were used to such wide waters as the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Colorado, the Ohio.

"Call that thing a river?" Came a disdainful voice from the back of a truck, "why we got mill streams bigger'n that back home."

And the answering laugh was hearty for troops were riding high. They had battered through the Siegfried and crossed the Rhine. Almost as important, the cold and snow were over and even the most pessimistic conceded that World War II would not be fought through another winter.

The voices of American Infantry rang loud over Deutchland.

*Crossing the Rhine was uneventful for the 157th for they were in Division reserve at the time. (Signal)*





# N O T I C E

*"Soldiers, men of the Volksturm, Comrades!*

*"The fortress of Aschaffenburg will be defended to the last man. As long as the enemy gives us time we will prepare to employ our troops to our best possible advantage.*

*"This means: 1. Fight!*

*2. Erect dugouts!*

*3. And Barriers!*

*4. Get supplies!*

*5. WIN!!!*

*"As of today everyone is to give his last. I order that none will rest more than three hours out of twenty-four. I forbid any sitting around and loafing.*

*"Our belief is that it is our mission to give the cursed enemy the greatest resistance and to send as many as possible of them to the devil."*

MAJOR VON LAMBERT,

*Commanding.*



## 13. ASCHAFFENBURG

**T**HE TIDAL wave of Allied power swept eastward from the Rhine. The German withdrew at all points, and he withdrew fast to postpone the ultimate disaster. With Patton's tanks from the Third Army rampaging ahead, the 157th found white flags fluttering when they entered Georgenhausen, Reinheim, and Spachbrücken.

"Hell, man," soldiers shouted, "We're going to breeze right through to the end of this war!"

"Maybe so, maybe so. But I'm still going to keep this old M-1 loaded, and I'm still going to keep my ass down when I cross skylines for awhile. . . ."


There was no question about the partial disorganization of the enemy. A trainload of German supplies pulled into Gr-Biederau under the eyes of Third Battalion, and seemingly didn't realize its danger until T-D guns opened up on it. A captured hospital in Gr-Unstadt still had German soldiers in its beds.

On foot, on tanks, on tank-destroyers the regiment rushed ahead, reaching the north banks of the Main River at nightfall, March 27. As the 157th dug in for the night, enemy activity was evident across the river in Aschaffenburg and Schweinheim, reported cleared by Third Army forces.

On the 28th, Second and Third Battalion, crossed the Main River on the railroad bridge, and advanced on the towns that adjoined each other so closely it was difficult to tell where one ended and the other began. Neither Aschaffen-

\*Unfold map from page 160.





*Across the Main River is the city of Aschaffenburg under heavy fire from land and air as it puts up a fierce suicidal resistance. (Signal Corps)*

burg nor Schweinheim flew the white flags of surrender that had replaced the swastika in so much of Germany, so the attacking elements were alert.

It was well that they were. Unknown to them, a greyish, bespectacled German officer, Major von Lambert, had hastily organized the defense of this area and decided to resist to the last after Patton's forces had by-passed it. Lambert had little artillery and no air support. He must have realized that at best he could delay the attackers but a short time, and that this delay would have no final bearing on the outcome of the war. He must have realized that resistance meant slaughter of Germans, soldier and civilian alike. He must have realized that resistance was suicidal. But in spite of all this, resistance was his decision and his order.

So it was that the two lead battalions met heavy fire shortly after they crossed the bridge leading to the two "cleared" towns. First Battalion came from regimental reserve to tie in with the other two on the north but all attack was stopped cold with heavy losses. Night fell.

Reports from civilians and patrols gave more details of the unexpected resistance. All white flags had been ordered down under threat of dynamiting any houses flying them. Sparking the defense were hundreds of young Germans attending the officer's school in Aschaffenburg, one of the largest in Germany. They had reinforced their barracks, made pill-boxes out of public buildings, and had plenty of ammunition for their strategically placed mortars and anti-tank guns. These men had maneuvered over every yard of the surrounding terrain, they knew every draw, every ridge, every covered route within miles. And they could be expected to fight with the fanaticism of desperation.

That night on the edge of Aschaffenburg the regiment found one of the great

warehouses in which the Germans had stocked liquor pilfered from conquered countries. Choice champagnes, cognacs, benedictines, and wines of every variety were there in thousand case lots. There followed some of the most effective "requisitioning" in the history of the 157th and many days passed before some canteens carried anything so tasteless as water. Favored by many was the "157th Zombie," 1/4 Cognac, 1/4 Benedictine, 1/4 Contreau and 1/4 of any other bottle handy, followed by a champagne chaser. Through the days that followed, the rattle of machine guns was echoed by the popping of champagne corks.

Another find was a German motor pool with eighteen new trucks. They were without tires or batteries, but morning found them in American hands, sparked by American batteries, running on American tires and hauling American supplies.

Drizzling rain set in on March 29 as Third Battalion jumped off in the morning hours. Companies L and I, attacking Schweinheim, were hit by small arms and heavy mortar fire but pressed into the first street by 8:30. Company C came in on the left, making only limited gains against the same stiff opposition. Fighting was from house to house and there was evidence that civilians were giving active support to the resistance. At nightfall the exhausted men who had fought through a hard day established their positions for the next day's assault. The 158th Field Artillery poured shells into the heart of Schweinheim and building after building was flattened.

Twice during the night the defenders counterattacked. They hit K Company hard, suffering and inflicting heavy losses. Using their detailed knowledge

*Direct rocket hit has just been scored on the castle in Aschaffenburg, used as enemy command post.*







*Machine gun in rubble covers infantrymen in their advance from house to house in Aschaffenburg.*

of terrain, they worked a patrol behind L Company and attacked from two sides in the early morning hours. Only a hard fire fight and artillery support relieved the company from a serious difficulty.

Attack of the 157th continued on March 30. Throughout the murky morning the companies of Third Battalion fought from room to room, house to

house, street to street. Casualties were many on each side. To cross a street or lean out a window was to flirt with death. Riflemen used mirrors to observe a street or a house before exposing themselves. Enemy snipers hid until advance elements passed by and then raised hell from the rear. A few women fought as snipers, and it was rumored but never conclusively proved that children were used as runners, and to supply ammunition. In every respect it was an all-out defense. But it was just as much an all-out attack and the result was inevitable. Towards nightfall, Third Battalion had reached the last streets of Schweinheim, fighting to the edge of the heavily fortified barracks at the east of the town.

When mortar fire stopped Second Battalion in its assault on Aschaffenburg, air support was called. Planes of the 64th Fighter Wing came over at 1830 to bomb and strafe in the first of a series of attacks. Main objective was the castle dominating the city, believed to be the enemy command post. Anti-aircraft flak was limited and ineffectual.

Clear weather aided the Air Corps as it returned on the last day of March to continue pummeling Aschaffenburg, where Second Battalion was still bogged down before suicidal resistance. In Schweinheim, remaining houses had to be taken one by one in a slow and costly advance. Artillery support all but pulverized buildings ahead of the riflemen, but when shellfire was lifted, defenders came from beneath the rubble to fight until killed. During the day, the enemy fired fifteen hundred mortar rounds with deadly effect. In one concentration, more than 200 rounds fell on Third Battalion in a 15-minute period. Nightfall found a small section of the town still uncaptured.

During the afternoon Captain Anse Speairs, regimental adjutant, dropped a mimeographed ultimatum from a Piper Cub into Aschaffenburg. The document read in German:



*Down the Streets . . .*



*Through the Rubble . . .*



*Over the Rooftops*





*Typical of the total destruction wrecked on Aschaffenburg are smashed buildings in the heart of the city.*

#### TO THE COMMANDANT OF THE CITY OF ASCHAFFENBURG

Your situation is hopeless. Our superiority in men and material is overpowering.

You are offered herewith the opportunity, by accepting unconditional surrender, to save the lives and property of countless civilians. The conditions of the Geneva Convention are assured to you and to your garrison.

The following is requested immediately upon receipt of this message:

1. The raising of the White Flag on the Engineer Barracks.
2. The sending of a delegation under a white flag which will be authorized to negotiate for the conclusion of the capitulation of Aschaffenburg.

Should you refuse to accept these conditions, we shall be forced to level Aschaffenburg.

The fate of Aschaffenburg is in your hands.

"THE COMMANDER OF THE ALLIED TROOPS"

Battalion and regimental staffs awaited results.

April First dawned and no flag flew from the castle in Aschaffenburg. No delegate came to talk of surrender. The attack continued.

First Battalion cleared the small town of Hailbach to the north while Second Battalion resumed the attack on Aschaffenburg and Third Battalion on Schweinheim. Planes came in to bomb and strafe again and again. An M-12 propelled gun was brought into action. But the resistance continued.

Company F was sent to support Third Battalion in its final drive against Schweinheim. Initial attack against the barracks in this town was made by K Company which suffered heavily crossing the 200 yards of exposed ground in front of the defenses. Even after the attack had carried inside the barracks, it took a full day of room-to-room fighting to clear them.

Advance of the 179th Regiment on the right relieved some of the pressure on the attacking units by pushing back enemy artillery. The position of the defenders became more critical hourly.

The Aschaffenburg-Laufach road was cut by First Battalion attacking to the north early on April 2. Goldbach was cleared and the only escape route open to the defenders was through the woods north of Aschaffenburg. Resistance broke suddenly in front of First Battalion and there was a slaughter of retreating Germans. Meanwhile, Second Battalion continued its tortuous advance into



Aschaffenburg. Fighting was cellar-to-cellar, for the M-12 had made a shambles of the center of the town, which the battalion reached in the late afternoon.

Third Battalion's K Company attacked through the eastern end of Aschaffenburg while other companies of the battalion mopped up pockets of resistance in Schweinheim. Later L and I Companies took positions joining in the final attack. From the enemy came only sporadic rifle and mortar fire. The end was near.

Aschaffenburg fell on the morning of April 9th.

An American soldier who had been a prisoner of war walked into the battalion's lines bearing Major von Lambert's offer to surrender. First Lt. Fritz Schnaittacher and 2nd Lt. Fred Kaufman, both regimental IPW officers, accompanied the soldier back to the Nazi headquarters. They then accompanied von Lambert as he toured segments of the city that still were holding out and called upon the troops to lay down their arms.

Evidence of Major von Lambert's fanaticism was widespread. It was learned that a Luftwaffe officer had sent word to the Major that as an air corps officer there was no reason for him to remain in Aschaffenburg. Lambert promptly had him executed.

Another officer had failed to appear at a meeting called by the Major. This officer had been wounded and believed his wounds excused his absence. He was wrong. Major Lambert had him hung and his body left in the streets for all to see.

Such was the man who defended Aschaffenburg.

But the city itself now lay shattered as an example of the futility of resistance. It had been pounded to rubble, its occupants had been slaughtered, and those who survived were punch drunk from the day and night hammering by air, artillery and infantry.

And the warning went out: as with Aschaffenburg, so with every pocket of resistance that stood in the way of the allied drive.

Total destruction would be their fate.

*Another Nazi city lies in ruins behind them—and Nurnberg lies ahead.*





*The big guns laid the city bare but the death rattle of Nurnberg was small arms fire and it was beautiful music to infantry ears.*

*Did it carry to the ears of the man Hitler and did it bring memories of the days he marched past a quarter of a million people with the beating of a drum the only sound heard. Did it recall the days he ranted to that sea of faces to the tune of thunderous:*

*"Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"*

*What price now the rantings and the ravings and the million deaths, little man?*

*Yes, the death watch on Nurnberg was a glorious thing. It came on Hitler's birthday—and it marked the beginning of the end.*



## 14. NURNBERG

**H**AVE you ever stepped off a curb without seeing it and gone flat on your face? Remember how it took you a little while to get over your shakiness, just walking down the street. That's the way the regiment was after Aschaffenburg and Schweinheim. It stayed in Division reserve April 4th and 5th around Pfaffenhoffen, Florsbach, Wiessen and Lettgunbrunn, and followed the Division along, still in reserve, during the advance on Nurnberg from the 5th to the 9th.

From April 9th to the 12th, the 157th completed its reorganization in the vicinity of Saal, Klein Eibstadt, Gros Eibstadt and Gros Bardorf. It was still licking its wounds from the recent mauling and there was no talk of breezing through to the end of war.

But after assembling around Lauf and returning to the line, the regiment regained its optimism with a speedy advance. When twenty towns were overrun the second day, with little more opposition than an occasional sniper, the old rumors started.

"The shooting's all over. . . ."

"Hitler's suing for peace. . . ."

"The war's ended, but they haven't announced it yet."

Cynics had an answer: "Yeah, the war's over just the way it was before Aschaffenburg!"

\*Unfold map from page 160.



On April 14, First Battalion jumped off with a pronged attack that advanced so swiftly the unit was able to capture two bridges across the Wiesen River. Pessimists had their innings shortly after, however, as machine guns held up the advance in several pockets of resistance. Enemy patrols were active at night, feeling for the weight of the attack to be launched at Nurnberg.

As the city itself came under artillery fire, more formidable defense opposed the riflemen. First Battalion, still leading, fought through road blocks and knocked out a battery of 88s on a day when 787 prisoners were rounded up by the regiment.



The overall plan called for the 157th to continue its attack to the south along the eastern edge of Nurnberg, then cut back to the west and enter the city from the southeast. The attack was renewed early in the morning of the 16th and two 88 batteries were captured. First Battalion moved quickly to its objective and assembled near Diepersdorf that evening. Third Battalion encountered considerable resistance as it moved towards Feucht; the Krauts had tanks, 88s and plenty of personnel in the path. Enemy artillery was unusually active, the towns of Fischbach and Lauf were interdicted throughout the day, but April 17th saw Nurnberg trapped in a squeeze play. First Battalion moved slowly into the suburbs, continually harassed by snipers and machine gun fire, while



Third Battalion swept into Feucht, cleared it, and gained several small villages beyond it. The preliminaries were complete; with the Third and 42nd Divisions and elements from corp on the other sides, the noose was ready to be pulled tight.

The skeletons of once elaborate apartment buildings afforded hiding places for SS snipers whose sharp shooting took a toll. But it was a losing battle. Tanks in close support turned on the snipers and simply blasted the buildings out from under them.

In all three battalion sectors the resistance was similar—a despairing last



stand. A captured German had revealed the plan for the defense of the city. "The German plan," he said, "was to withdraw to the railroad running E-W through the city and make a stand. When this line of defense broke they were to withdraw to the old part of the city." But the battalions pushed relentlessly on, block by block toward the line of their main objective—the huge railroad marshaling yards. Here and there companies were held up by comparatively large pockets of resistance.

During the 19th Lt. Col. Sparks, commanding officer of Third Battalion, had his jeep literally shot from under him as he drove towards a suspected road-block. A, B, and C Companies met bitter resistance at the railroad embankment.



L, K and I Companies were continually harassed by snipers and bazooka men as they cleared a prodigious section of apartment buildings in moving towards the marshaling yards.



Finally, late in the day of the 19th, contact with the Seventh Infantry was established on the northern flank. Actually, only the inner walled city remained uncleared and that was hard squeezed.

That night the city's death rattle sounded with sporadic small arms fire as frantic Kraut fugitives ran into regimental outposts. A few artillery and mortar preparations were fired, but this was the death watch on Nurnberg. Last casualties were among riflemen who roamed through buildings "liberating" various items while looking for German hide outs.

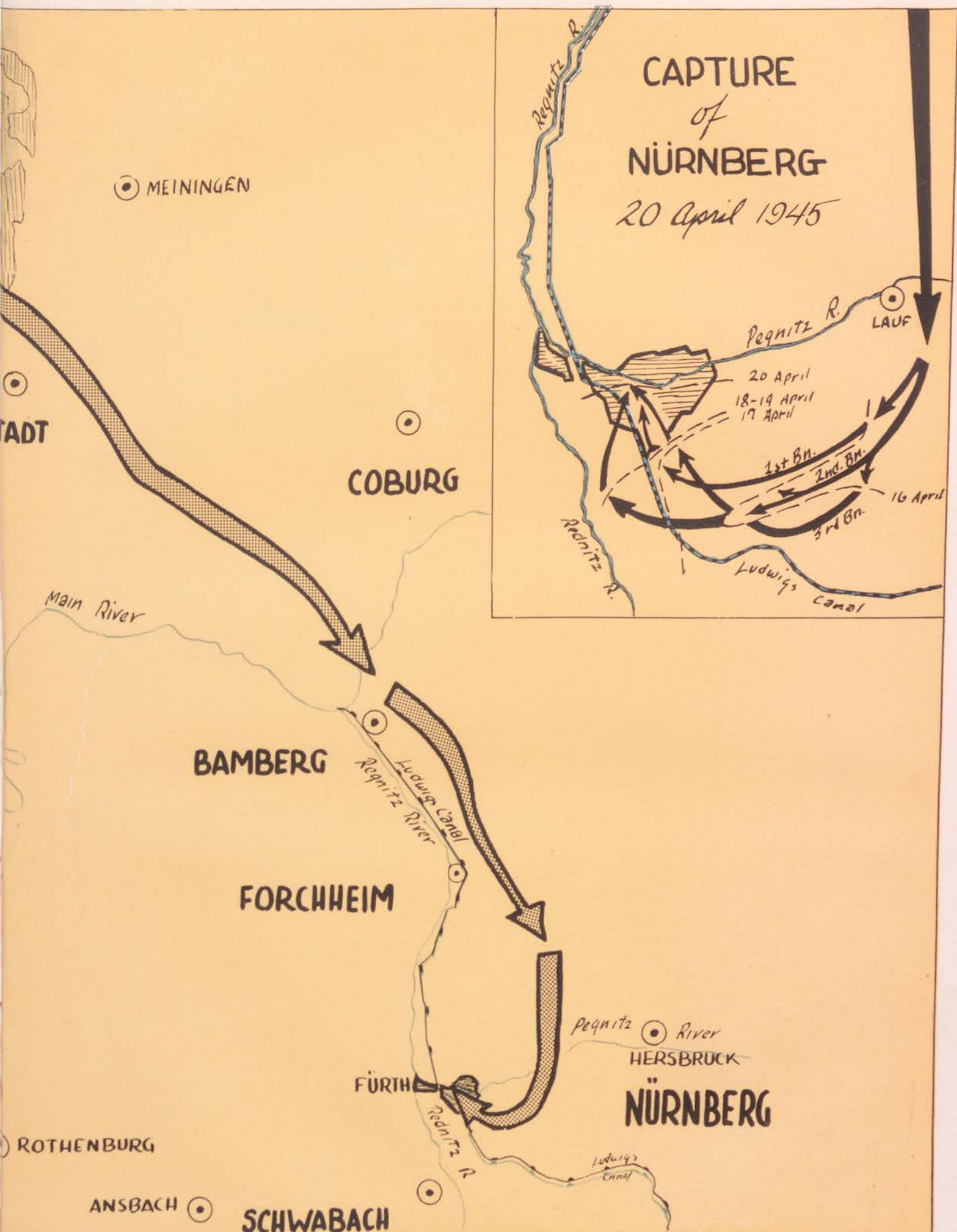
Organized resistance ceased on April 20th.

So men of the 157th celebrated a birthday. Hitler's birthday. They stood in the shambles of the great city that had been Der Fuehrer's pride and watched the American flag wave over the platform from which he had threatened and challenged and bullied the world. Now, along with his dreams of world domination, that city lay in ruins.

And the 157th Infantry Regiment cut another notch on its rifle stocks.

*Lt. Col. Ralph Krieger leads Third Battalion past reviewing stand in ceremony in city of Nurnberg.*





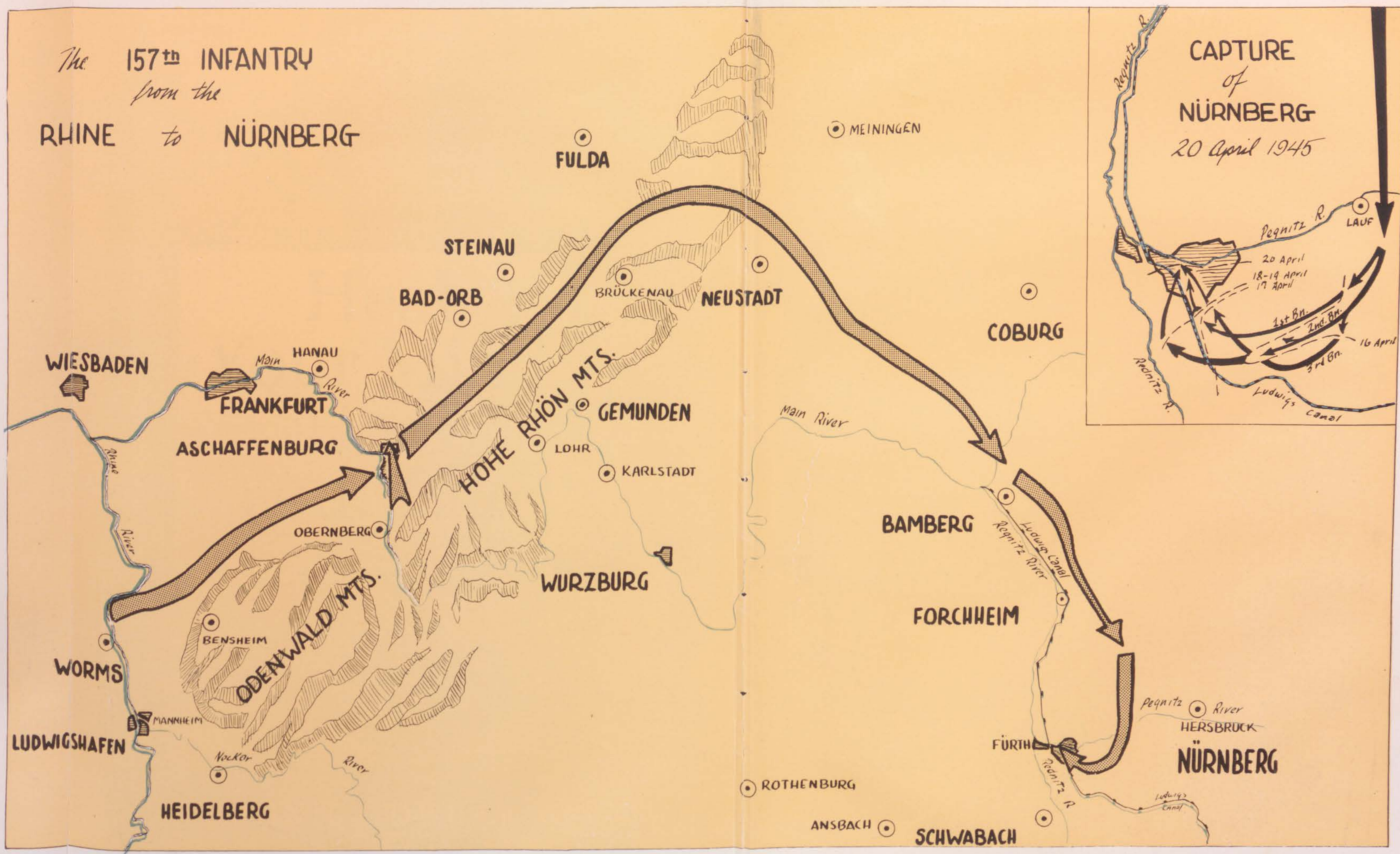


The 157<sup>th</sup> INFANTRY  
from the  
RHINE to NÜRNBERG





The 157<sup>th</sup> INFANTRY  
from the  
RHINE to NÜRNBERG





*There are no words for Dachau, and even the pictures of its horrors are pale beside its realities.*

*Veterans of six campaigns to whom death was commonplace, sickened and vomited at Dachau. Not the sight and smell of death did this, but the decaying evidence of human cruelty that was beyond the understanding of the normal mind.*

*Dachau was rot and stench and filth.*

*Dachau was Hitler and the SS.*

*And, deny it though its people did with every breath, Dachau was Germany of 1933-45.*

*Let Dachau live in our memories. . . .*



## 15. DACHAU

**T**HE rumor was loose. It was the same old rumor that had swept the boats before the invasion of Italy and that had echoed and re-echoed through many a weary mile, but it seemed to thrive on the rough going. It was bigger and louder than ever.

"The war's finished. The shootin's over. . . ."

"We're going to occupy Nurnberg. . . ."

That was a rumor that didn't even get a good start, for the regiment passed through Nurnberg and swung southward while many of the battered buildings were still smouldering.

"Munich! That's where we're going. Munich!"

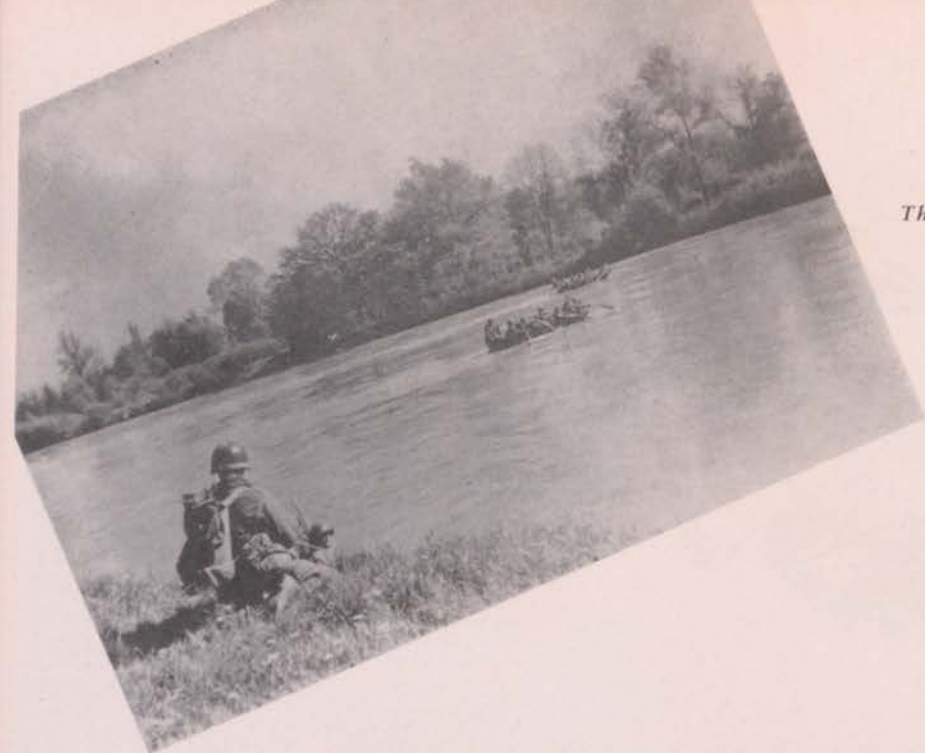
"Yeah, and I'll tell you someplace else we're going," came the dead voice of the bitter veteran. "We're going to fight through Austria and probably through Czechoslovakia and then up to Berlin. And then we're all going to be told what great fighters we are and then we're going to go to the South Pacific and fight the Japs. That's where we're going."

Leaving Nurnberg the regiment was split into task force units for the drive towards the Danube. Third Battalion's set-up was typical as it moved out in two forces on the 21st of April.

On the right, L Company led with a platoon of light tanks and a company of mediums attached; I Company followed with a similar set-up, and they were followed by mortars, B Battery of the 158th, medics, anti-tank guns. K Company led the left column some ten miles distant and had like support.

Plan of attack was simplicity itself. A list of numbered towns on the route to the Danube was given to the commanders and they were told to barrel through them, stopping only when forced to by Heinie opposition.





*The Danube.*

Then began a chariot race to the historic river that had no parallel in 157th history. Even the swift sweep through Southern France, and the gallop east from the Rhine River could not match the dizzy pace of the attacking infantry. Towns were a blur along the way, only the check points sticking in a few memories: Berolzheim, Alesheim, Rohrbach,

Trommetsheim, Bubensheim —distance markers in the home stretch.

The victory feel was in the air and the rout of the Hun was a different thing from his usual well prepared withdrawals. True, there were some points of resistance and a few tanks were knocked out, but casualties were few, and feelings of the old men were reflected by "Hell, you wouldn't know there was a war on if there weren't so damned many men in uniform. . . ." In front of this impetuous charge, the Kraut had little chance to get set, often finding himself attacked from three sides on occasions when he chose to stand and fight.

Third Battalion reached the Danube April 25 at Marxheim and called up engineers when it found the bridge blown. Farther up the river Second Battalion found an unprotected sector of the river and prepared to cross in assault boats.

Engineers threw their bridge across at Marxheim but only at a price for German mortars plastered the bridge site continually. However, next morning when First Battalion passed through Third to continue the attack, the Krauts had pulled back and only sniper opposition was met.

In all their travelings, men of the 157th had never experienced such a let down as they experienced when they found the "beautiful blue Danube" to be little more than a muddy creek. Some few remembered the legend in which it only looked blue to those in love, but there was little time to wonder about legends just then.

The victory feel was in the air. The chase resumed.

And then came horror!

Warning of it came to the Third Battalion April 28 with the following notice:

"Tomorrow the notorious concentration camp at Dachau will be in our zone of action. When captured, nothing is to be disturbed. International commissions will move in to investigate conditions when fighting ceases."

"International commissions" "nothing to be disturbed" "investigate conditions" strange words, these, to front line troops.

The regiment rampaged ahead, Third Battalion with three companies on line. April 29 came another order to the lead elements.

"Upon capture of Dachau by any battalion, post air tight guard and allow no one to enter or leave."

Dachau!?

Fusilades from the tanks riddled occasional pockets of snipers and L Company was within six kilometers of Dachau before a blown bridge stymied it temporarily. But another crossing was found and the city of Dachau entered. On all sides were evidences of a hasty Kraut retreat so the column made ready to smash straight through to Munich.

Directed by civilians, light tanks charged for a bridge but it was blown when the armor was within 100 yards of it. Up with it went Heinies who hadn't been able to get across in time. Another bridge was found guarded by a lone machine gunner who fired one belt of ammunition before changing his mind about dying for Hitler. He fled as L Company crossed the bridge and held up to allow I Company to pass through to the concentration camp.

So it was this company that first saw the sickening horror that lay behind the pomp of Nazi Germany.

Forty box cars were on the railroad tracks leading into the camp. Most of them were roofless and they were filled with the remnants of human bodies.

*Forward elements enter the woods leading to Dachau Concentration Camp—and horror! Signal Corps photo*







*Lt. Bill Walsh (with goggles) leading Company I in round-up of Dachau guards. Chaplain Loy at right.*

The fields on each side of the track were littered with dead, for some had been strong enough to leave the cars and totter a short distance before dropping and dying. All were starved to their skeletons. This trainload of living dead had arrived in Dachau some time earlier but the onrush of American troops had panicked the keepers of the concentration camp and they had evacuated before they were able to destroy this damning evidence.

But there was more, much more. These dead outside the camp were not the worst horrors found. Death was far from the worst evil at Dachau.

Only a token force of SS guards and medical personnel had been left behind. They put up no fight. In fact, the only "resistance" was met by the left flank platoon of I Company which was pinned down by fire from the 42nd Division moving up in an adjacent zone.

Heinrich Himmler had personally ordered that all evidence of Dachau activities be destroyed before the camp was abandoned by SS officials, but German command sadly underestimated the speed of the American advance and left behind some damning sights. In the hospital itself were "patients" undergoing experiments of unspeakably inhuman nature.

*Bodies of Nazi guards at Dachau lie on banks of canal. Others can be seen in water. Many were killed by crazed inmates of concentration camp.*







*Bodies above were stacked up like cord-wood waiting cremation at Dachau. They were of victims who had been tortured or murdered in medical "experiments" conducted here by the thousand. At right are two scenes of trainload of bodies on siding as 157th liberated camp. Dachau was most notorious camp in Germany.*

Many were kept on the verge of death to determine what punishments the body could stand without actually dying. Others were infected with diseases so that effectiveness of various treatments could be tested.

The various gas chambers, the crematorium, instruments of torture all showed signs of recent use. In one room, bodies were stacked like cordwood, waiting disposal. "Time" magazine headed its story of this camp with the simple statement: "When all other concentration camps have been forgotten, the name of Dachau will live." Yet in spite of the reports and pictures of these things that flooded the world, there were many who refused to believe that such things could be done to human beings by other human beings. Men of the 157th believed. Veterans of innumerable battles, men to whom death was an everyday occurrence in one form or another couldn't stand the sight of death at Dachau. Even Graves Registration men, calloused by their job of handling hundreds of corpses, sickened here. One letter home told the story:

"No matter how terrible, revolting or horrible any newspaper reports are about Dachau; no matter how unreal or fantastic any pictures of it may seem, believe me, they can never halfway tell the truth about this place. It is something I will never forget."

*Recently liberated inmate of Dachau Concentration Camp aids 157th rifleman in rounding up Nazi guards who rapidly abandoned their bullying manner.*







General Fredericks, commanding 45th Division, interrogates Nazi guards and medics at Dachau.



Colonel O'Brien, commanding 157th Infantry, is shown through Dachau chambers by ex-prisoner.

#### NUMBER OF INTERNEES PROCESSED THROUGH DACHAU

From 1933 to 1939 (Numbered card index system) .....	39,000
From 1933 to 1939 (Unnumbered cards) .....	21,000
From March 1940 to 26 April 1945 .....	161,930
(From card index system established March 1940. Cards numbered from No. 1 and continued up to 26 April 1945)	
Transports arriving three weeks prior to American occupation .....	7,000
(No permanent records kept due to confusion and breakdown of the administrative departments during the attempted evacuation)	
Total .....	228,930

#### NATURAL DEATHS AT DACHAU\*

1945: January .....	3,800
February .....	3,200
March .....	3,700
April .....	4,000

\*Note: Compiled from card index system.

#### EXECUTIONS\*

Total number of Jews brought in from other concentration camps for executions from June 20, 1944 to November 23, 1944 .....	29,138
Non-Aliens (Germans from foreign countries)	
1945: Jan., Feb., Mar. ....	4,861
1944: .....	1,987
1943: .....	1,108
1942: .....	5,194
1941: .....	2,898
1940: Oct., Nov., Dec. ....	669
Total .....	16,717

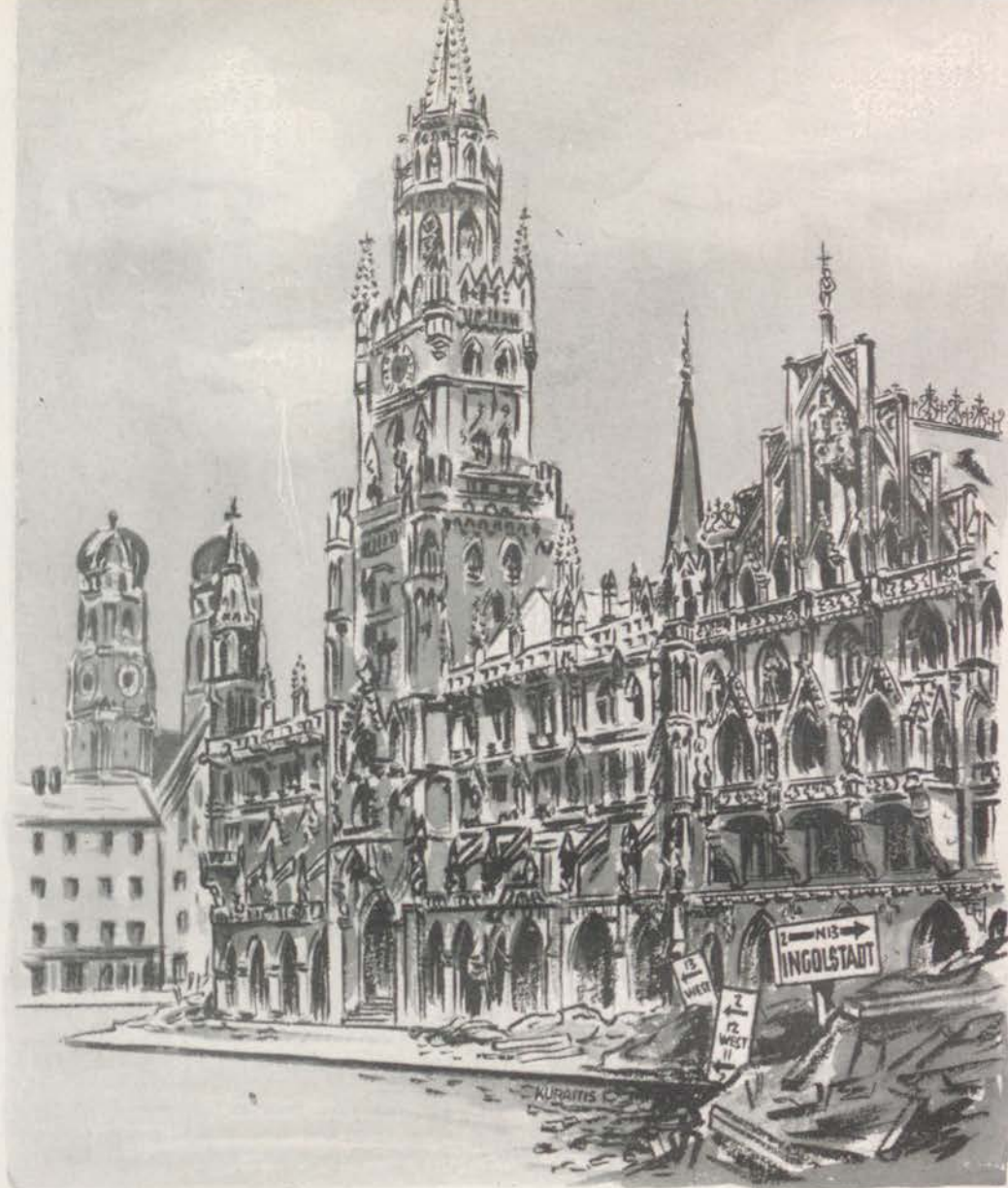
\*Note: Partial figures compiled from accurate records. However, the most important and complete records of Dachau Concentration Camp were destroyed three week prior to American occupation.

SURVEY OF INTERNEES AT DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP  
BY NATIONALITIES AT LIBERATION—29 APRIL 1945

German Nationals .....	(including 6 women)	1,173
Belgians .....		848
Danes .....		1
British .....		8
Estonians .....		11
French .....		3,918
Greeks .....		195
Italians .....		2,184
Croats .....		103
Serbs .....		79
Slovenes .....		2,907
Latianis .....		27
Lithuanians .....		39
Alsace Lorraines .....		36
Luxembourgers .....		133
Dutch .....		558
Norwegians .....		79
Poles .....	(including 96 women)	9,082
Rumanians .....		50
Russians .....	(including 9 women)	4,258
Slovaks .....		44
Albanians .....		30
Americans .....		6
Maltese .....		1
Arabians .....		1
Armenians .....		2
Finns .....		1
Iraqs .....		1
Irans .....		1
Turks .....		3
Spaniards .....		194
Exiles .....		21
Czechs .....		1,632
Hungarians .....	(including 34 women)	670
Bulgarians .....		8
Portugese .....		4
Swiss .....		2
Austrians .....		253
Annex-Germans .....		2
Sudetens .....		3
Jews .....	(including 225 women)	2,539
Total .....		31,432







## 16. MUNICH

**F**ROM Dachau to Munich is but 20 kilometers. First and Second Battalions covered that distance April 29 against light and scattered resistance while Third Battalion remained in Dachau. The attackers were looking for trouble in a way they never had before. Practically every man had inspected the concentration camp at Dachau and their reaction was uniform; they wanted to kill. Probably for the first time they realized the full evil of the thing they were fighting. They had seen with their own eyes what happened to defenseless people under the Nazis and the urge for revenge was in each man's trigger finger. It was just as well that the great city of Munich was not prepared to resist the coming attack, for the resulting slaughter would have been historic if the feelings of the riflemen were any guide. By nightfall the battalions were on the edge of the city.



Next morning First Battalion continued the attack through yet another concentration camp holding 8,000 prisoners. While A Company remained to guard this camp, B and C Companies pressed forward, joined elements of the 42nd Division and entered Munich. Second Battalion also moved in to aid in wiping out several pockets of resistance and by late afternoon the city had fallen.

Then the really hard fighting started as the various outfits in the city raced for choice quarters. For once there was plenty for everyone in this, the third largest city of Germany. The few Germans who showed any signs of objecting to billeting of troops in their homes, were told that they could find plenty of room for themselves now at Dachau. Just the mention of the name was enough to close the conversation.

There was little objection by any of these beaten people, however. Only in the last days of the war did they realize how great were the lies in Doctor Goebels' propaganda. Expressions on the faces shown in these two pictures were common throughout Germany as that country felt the destruction of ground warfare for the first time; and for the first time saw the endless line of tanks and guns and trucks and supplies that made up the flood of allied power. As these

*"Mein Gott in Himmel!" . . . an elderly woman looks at the ruin of her neighborhood in Nurnberg as the infantry slogs by towards the next objective. Her expression is typical of the amazed despair on the faces of Germans everywhere as the might of Allied men and equipment rolled through and over their houses and lands. Evidently Herr Goebels had done his job well of convincing Germany that the Allied drive would fail, that the democracies could not fight, that the final victory would be for the Reich. But no propaganda could stand against the final drive into Germany when entire cities were flattened and devastated by the advance of men and tanks and guns and planes that flooded.*







*The 157th Infantry passes in triumphal review in the historic Königsplatz of Munich. (Signal Corps)*

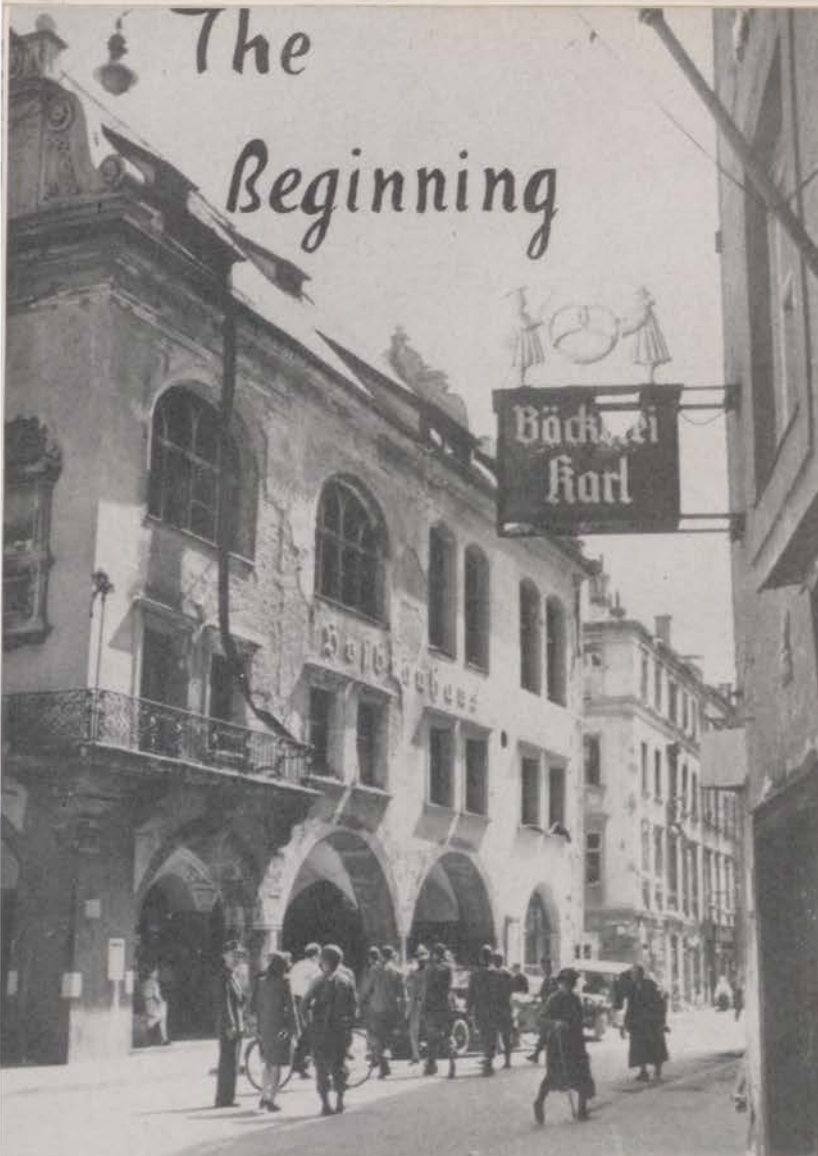
sights became commonplace the will to fight on the part of the German people rapidly disappeared.

In Munich had been the start, and in Munich the end was near. Here Hitler had made his first bid for power in the "Beer Hall Putsch" of November 8, 1923. Captain Anse Spears, regimental adjutant, was first to the very beer hall from which that push started, and splashed it with paint reading: "CP—157th Infantry." Soon the other shrines of the Nazi Party were plastered with signs and insignias of conquering regiments.

Then from this great city started the long lines of German prisoners to join the swelling ranks of Hitler's armies behind wire. Mostly they were a sorry lot, these last fighters in a lost cause and little attention was paid to them as they filed endlessly through and out of the city. The end was near.

The regiment settled down to what was almost a rest period while the rumors grew wilder: "Hitler's dead! The SS are digging in up in the Alps for a last stand!" Holding down a few road blocks, men waited in a luxury unknown to combat. Regular hot meals served on good chinaware! Tablecloths! Baths! Liquor! They played ball and talked, mostly of how many points they had and when they'd get out of the army. It was May and spring was ripe. Someone remarked that the German women seemed to have even better looking legs than the French women. Then someone said there wasn't supposed to be any fraternizing. Then everybody laughed.





# The Beginning

To the left is the Hausbrauhaus in Munich, Germany, where one Adolph Hitler led his gang of bullies in his first abortive attempt to unseat organized government by violence. His Putsch from this beer hall was a dismal failure and ended with Der Fuehrer flat on his face dodging bullets a few blocks from the spot where he declared to his followers that he would win or die. On April 30, 1945, Munich fell before elements of the 45th and 42nd Divisions. The 157th Infantry won the race for the Hausbrauhaus and their CP sign was the first to be placed on it.

Through the streets of Hitler's favorite city plod the pitiful remnants of his once great armies. Day after day they shuttle to the rear towards Allied PW camps, living symbols of the collapse of the Th'rd Reich. Unlike the German armies of World War I who marched back to Berlin in semblance of triumph, these weary soldiers of the Wehrmacht are thoroughly and completely beaten. Their cities have fallen before their eyes, and each backward step reveals additional evidence of the allied power.



# The End





*Scenes from Memorial Day Services in the Königsplatz, Munich, dedicated to battle dead. (Bill Walsh photos)*

Special Service under Captain Charles Stanley was operating in high gear. They had taken over swimming pools, show houses, gymnasiums, ball grounds, photo labs, to say nothing of laundries, dry cleaners and a brewery. High point in the operations came when fuel was unobtainable for the various activities and Special Service requisitioned a coal mine to insure continued supply.

They were pleasant days for men who knew but few pleasant days in many months. But everywhere was the tension of waiting, the suspense of "when will the word come?"

Word that the official shooting was over came to Munich on the evening of May 8. There was little cheering, there was little evident celebration. Mostly there was a sense of unreality, of unbelieving as men looked at each other and said "Well, it's over." They had experienced too much, they had waited too long for this news and the taste of it to their ears was nothing like they thought it would be. For days, months, years these men had planned on this day and there were many who didn't believe they'd be alive to see it. But now it was here, the only effect was an emptiness inside somewhere.

That night shades were lifted and the lights of Munich shone out for the first time in many years. It was the first tangible evidence that the war was indeed over.

Bull sessions were long that night as veterans got together over a bottle or two. Names of men long dead were spoken as story piled on story. Names of towns long fought over traced the route of a fighting regiment's campaigns. Again the familiar refrain: Sicily, Comiso Airport, Bloody Ridge, Tobacco Factory, Winter Line, Anzio, Push to Rome, Southern France, The Vosges, Alsace, The Siegfried, Aschaffenburg, Nurnberg, Dachau, Munich:—a litany of death and victory.

Yes, the bull sessions were long that night.



*Meet the winner—and still champion—a rifleman in the Army of the United States. He's probably not the same fighter we pictured at the beginning of this history, for not many riflemen who sailed from Hampton Roads were with the regiment on the day of victory in Munich, almost two years later. Five hundred and eleven days in combat take their toll.*

*But this soldier saw plenty. He saw enough in one day to last him for an entire lifetime. In one hour he saw and heard and felt enough to twist his cocky grin. One close miss brought the beginning of a fear that deepened with his every day in combat. And the first firefight brought the infantry slouch, did away with the springy step, for fatigue in combat is far more than physical.*

*He has looked on death in many forms and has been shot at by most weapons of war. These things have left their marks on his mind and on his body.*

*But one thing he has done above all others: he has shown the world that the Armies of Democracy, when aroused, are machines of terrible destruction.*

*Well done, soldier. . . .*





## EPILOGUE

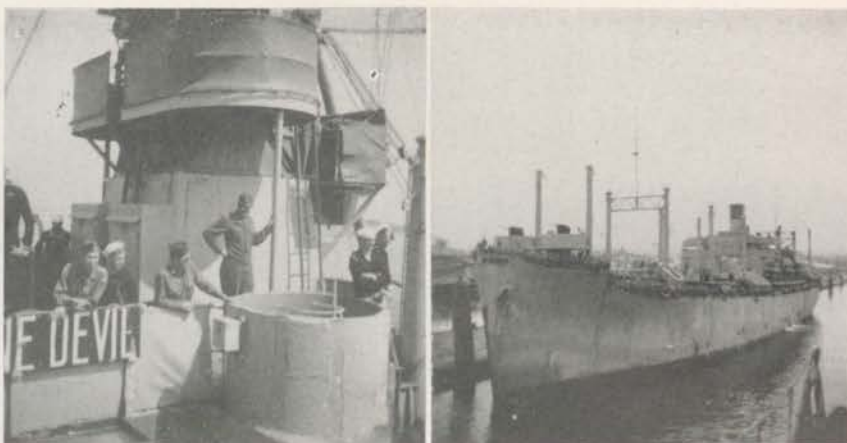
The first post-war weeks in Munich were spent basking in the sun while one question grew louder and louder to the replacements who had seen little service: "What next?" Japan was still in the ring and everyone believed that some outfits would sail from Europe to be in on the kill in the Pacific.

A break in the situation came with transfer of the 45th Division from the Seventh to the Third Army, making many changes necessary in the comfortable set-up established by the Thunderbirds, who had practically taken over the battered city of Munich. On June 12 the regiment, along with the rest of the Division was shunted out of the metropolis and took up quarters in small towns along the autobahn, with regimental CP located in Friedberg, about twenty miles out. There was considerable bitching for it meant another move by men who had moved enough already, but this ouster turned out fairly well. The season was summer, the countryside beautiful, and soon the crack of baseball bats resounded over the Bavarian farmlands.

During the week-end of July 4 there was a redeployment of high-point men within the division to the 9th, 103rd, and the 14th Armored Division. At the same time, lowpoint men from these units flooded in to bring the 45th up to strength. It became all too evident that more shooting was scheduled for the Thunderbirds. The redeployment of these veterans came with such suddenness that a full explanation of the move could not be made in all cases and some bitterness resulted. It was a hard thing for many who had worn the Thunderbird through Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany to have to replace it with a strange patch. "I

*Softball Leagues were quickly organized when 45th Division News convinced skeptical GIs war was over.*





*Above: SS MARINE DEVIL and SEA OWL on which 157th came home.  
Right: Wm. P. Grace took command of 157th at end of the war.*



feel like I'm wearing a foreign uniform," said one old-timer looking sadly at the cactus on his left shoulder.

And the story of the train ride that took the old elements of the 45th to their new outfits can be written only with a blow torch on asbestos.

Then the big news sounded and those who had left the division didn't feel so bad, for it was made official that the 45th was to be redeployed to the United States for recuperation, additional training, and return to active duty. That spelled "Jap" in anybody's language. At this time Lt. Col. William P. Grace came from the 179th Infantry to take command of the 157th while Lt. Col. Brown went over to the 179th.

Days were nightmares filled with packing boxes, shipping regulations, and rumors as the advance party took off to the northwest. Finally, on the 18th of July the regiment started to leave Germany, the majority by train, some lucky few in the remaining vehicles. Camp St. Louis was strictly a tent city with streets noted for their absence. But the gripes were at a minimum. There was the feel of big news in the air.

Early in August came the guarded reports of the atomic bomb attack on Japan and then—V-J Day! The tent city of St. Louis almost collapsed in the wild celebration, but things cooled off considerably with the radio announcement that all redeployment plans were frozen. It was a gloomy Thunderbird that moped around the tents until later report officially stated that the 45th Division would continue its redeployment to the States. Then all hell did break loose.

Another step towards home was taken later in August when the division moved to Camp Herbert Tarryton near the port of Le Havre, but the uncertainty grew worse as three successive sailing dates were cancelled.

September second was the big day. The regiment broke up and boarded the SS MARINE DEVIL and SS SEA OWL, and took off on the great Atlantic.





*Ship scene en route, and arrival in Boston Harbor on September 10, '45 are shown above. (Walsh photo)*

On board, the relief was as deep as the sea itself, for only when land faded would many believe that they were actually homeward bound.

Mercifully calm was the Atlantic. The sturdy ships wallowed well. On September 10th the shores of America were sighted and it is doubtful if Columbus and his crew were more jubilant than these men of infantry seeing home again. The regiment disembarked at Boston and within forty-eight hours had been put through the miraculously efficient mill at Camp Miles Standish and was enroute to three thousand separate homes throughout the United States.

A forty-five day leave period intervened before the 157th reassembled in Camp Bowie, Texas but it was not the outfit that had landed in Boston. Many of the veterans received their army discharges from local separation points and many more of those arriving in Camp Bowie were already eligible for discharge under the rapidly lowering requirements. Most of the month of November was spent in preparation for inactivation of the 45th Division, now under command of Brigadier General H. D. Meyers. Men and officers not eligible for discharge were gradually sifted to other outfits in other camps.

December third, Adjutant Joe F. Meis brought the final inactivation papers to Colonel Grace and the 157th Infantry Regiment (Rifle) ceased to exist.

*"Home Sweet Home," at last, and no words can tell the feelings of those who walked down gangplank.*



# B A T T L E H O N O R S

Campaign Battle Stars (Sicily, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno, Southern France, Rhineland, Central Europe) .....	6
Days in Combat .....	511
Congressional Medal of Honor .....	3
Distinguished Service Cross .....	20
Legion of Merit .....	16
Silver Star Medals .....	361
SSM Clusters .....	15
Bronze Star Medals .....	1022
BSM Clusters .....	32
Soldier's Medal .....	12
Presidential Citation .....	2
Division Commendation .....	27
Meritorious Service Plaque .....	1
Croix De Guerre .....	5
English Military Medal .....	1
USSR Soviet Award .....	1
Purple Heart Medals .....	1694

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\*Only actual awards are listed. Many additional awards are now under consideration by War Department.



# CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR



## ALMOND E. FISHER

Second Lieutenant ALMOND E. FISHER, 01323063, 157th Infantry, Army of the United States, on the night of 12-13 September 1944, near Grammont, France, in the darkness of early morning was leading a platoon of Company E, 157th Infantry, in single column to the attack of a strongly defended enemy hill position. At 0230 the forward elements were brought under enemy machine-gun fire from a distance of not more than 20 yards. Working his way alone to within 20 feet of the gun emplacement Lieutenant FISHER opened fire with his carbine and killed the entire gun crew. A few minutes after the advance was resumed heavy machine gun fire was encountered from the left flank. Again crawling forward alone under withering fire, he blasted the gun and crew from their positions with hand grenades. After a halt to replenish ammunition the advance was again resumed and continued for one hour before being stopped by intense machine-gun and rifle fire. Through the courageous and skillful leadership of Lieutenant FISHER the pocket of determined enemy resistance was rapidly obliterated. Spotting an emplaced machine pistol a short time later, with one of his men, he moved forward and destroyed the position. As the advance continued, the fire fight became more intense. When a bypassed German climbed from his fox hole and attempted to tear an M-1 rifle from the hands of one of his men, Lieutenant FISHER whirled and killed the enemy with a burst from his carbine. Some 30 minutes later the platoon came under heavy fire from machine guns across an open field. Lieutenant FISHER, disregarded the terrific fire, moved across the field with no cover or concealment to within range, knocked the gun from the position, and killed or wounded the crew. Still under heavy fire he returned to his platoon and continued the advance. Once again heavy fire was encountered from a machine gun directly in front. Calling for hand grenades he found only two remaining in the entire platoon. Pulling the pins and carrying a grenade in each hand, he crawled toward the gun emplacement, moving across areas devoid of cover and under intense fire to within 15 yards when he threw his grenades, demolished the gun, and killed the gun crew. With ammunition low and day-break near he ordered his men to dig in and hold the ground already won. Under constant fire from the front and from both flanks, he moved among them directing the preparations for defense. Shortly after the ammunition supply was replenished the enemy launched a last determined effort against the depleted group. Attacked by superior numbers from the front, right and left flanks and even from the rear, the platoon in bitter hand-to-hand engagements drove back the enemy at every point. Wounded in both feet by close-range machine pistol fire early in battle, Lieutenant FISHER refused medical attention. Unable to walk, he crawled from man to man encouraging them and checking each position. Only after the fighting had subsided did Lieutenant FISHER crawl 300 yards to the aid station from which he was evacuated. His extraordinary heroism, magnificent valor and aggressive determination in the face of point-blank enemy fire were an inspiration to his organization and reflect the finest traditions of the armed forces.

\*Only actual awards are listed. Many additional awards are now under consideration by War Department.

## JAMES D. SLATON

By direction of the President, under the provisions of the act of Congress approved 2 July 1918 (Bull 43, WD, 1918), a Medal of Honor is awarded by the War Department in the name of Congress to the following named enlisted man:

Corporal JAMES D. SLATON, Army Serial Number 34278962, Company K, 157th Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy in the vicinity of Oliveto, Italy, on 23 September 1943. Corporal SLATON was lead scout of an infantry squad which had been committed to a flank to knock out enemy resistance which had succeeded in pinning two attacking platoons to the ground. Working ahead of his squad Corporal SLATON crept upon an enemy machine gun nest and assaulting it with his bayonet succeeded in killing the gunner. When his bayonet stuck he detached it from the rifle and killed another gunner with rifle fire. At that time he was fired upon by a machine gun to his immediate left. Corporal SLATON then moved over open ground under constant fire to within throwing distance, and on his second try scored a direct hit on the second enemy machine gun nest killing two enemy gunners. At that time a third machine gun fired on him 100 yards to his front, and Corporal SLATON killed both of these enemy gunners with rifle fire. As a result of Corporal SLATON'S heroic action in immobilizing three enemy machine gun nests with bayonet, grenade, and rifle fire, the two rifle platoons which were receiving heavy casualties from enemy fire were enabled to withdraw to covered positions and again take the initiative. Corporal SLATON withdrew, under mortar fire, on order of his platoon leader at dusk that evening. The heroic actions of Corporal SLATON were far above and beyond the call of duty and are worthy of emulation.

## VAN T. BARFOOT

Second Lieutenant VAN T. BARFOOT, 01683485 (then technical sergeant), Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty on 23 May 1944 near Carano, Italy. With his platoon heavily engaged during an assault against forces well entrenched on commanding ground, Sergeant BARFOOT moved off alone upon the enemy left flank. He crawled to the proximity of one machine gun nest and made a direct hit on it with a hand grenade, killing two and wounding three Germans. He continued along the German defense line to another machine gun emplacement and with his tommy gun killed two and captured three soldiers. Members of another enemy machine gun crew then abandoned their positions and gave themselves up to Sergeant BARFOOT. Leaving the prisoners for his support squad to pick up he proceeded to mop up positions in the immediate vicinity, capturing more prisoners, and bringing his total count to 17. Later, after he had reorganized his men and consolidated the newly captured ground, the enemy launched a fierce armored counterattack directly at his platoon positions. Securing a bazooka, Sergeant BARFOOT took up an exposed position directly in front of three advancing Mark VI tanks. From a distance of 75 yards his first shot destroyed the track of the leading tank, effectively disabling it while the other two changed direction toward the flank. As the crew of the disabled tank dismounted, Sergeant BARFOOT killed three of them with his tommy gun. He continued onward into enemy terrain and destroyed a recently abandoned German fieldpiece with a demolition charge placed in the breech. While returning to his platoon position Sergeant BARFOOT, though greatly fatigued by his herculean efforts, assisted two of his seriously wounded men 1,700 yards to a position of safety. Sergeant BARFOOT'S extraordinary heroism, demonstration of magnificent valor, and aggressive determination in the face of point-blank enemy fire are a perpetual inspiration to his fellow soldiers.

\*Only actual awards are listed. Many additional awards are now under consideration by War Department.



## SECOND BATTALION

The SECOND BATTALION, 157TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action, during the period 16 February to 23 February 1944 near Carroceto, Italy. Approximately 2½ hours after this battalion had completed the relief of United States and British units in a strategic sector near Carroceto, Italy, the full force of an all out German offensive was launched against it. Attacks followed unrelentingly for eight days, and although the Second Battalion suffered overwhelming losses, the unit held together and yielded less than 1,000 yards of ground during the entire action. Wave after wave of fresh enemy troops were thrown against the position in repeated attempts to breach the Carroceto defenses. In all, a total of four to six German Infantry battalions were employed against the sector, and each assault was preceded by extremely heavy artillery concentrations. Repeatedly enemy tanks penetrated the forward areas on one flank or the other, isolating small elements of the battalion, and disrupting lateral communications. To counter nightly infiltrations by German patrols, practically the full strength of the unit was required in the front lines to engage in vicious hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. At one time German machine guns were set up within 40 yards of the battalion command post. The determined, heroic stand was climaxed when the courageous defenders called for artillery fire on the very caves and bluffs which members of the battalion occupied as the enemy closed in on the position. Losses inflicted on the enemy were known to be considerably in excess of the SECOND BATTALION'S total initial strength. On the last night, while a British unit was attempting relief of the battalion, the sector was completely surrounded by an enemy envelopment, but the depleted battalion fought its way out of the encirclement through withering cross-fire from German machine guns and automatic weapons and under heavy artillery fire. The fortitude and intrepidity displayed by officers and men of the SECOND BATTALION, 157TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, reflect the finest traditions of the Army of the United States.

## COMPANY I

COMPANY I, 157TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action from 17 to 21 February 1944 near Carroceto, Italy. On the night of 16 February COMPANY I took up positions in front of an overpass which marked the cross-roads of intersecting supply routes. Original orders directed the company to hold this position

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\*Only actual awards are listed. Many additional awards are now under consideration by War Department.

during the night and the following morning. Rations, water, and ammunition were provided for this period only, but increased enemy activity made it necessary for the company to prepare defenses against an expected large scale assault. At dawn the enemy loosed tremendous artillery concentrations which continued relentlessly through the day on COMPANY I positions. Wire communications between the company and battalion were disrupted completely. At dusk the enemy launched an infantry assault which was repulsed after severe fighting. During the days that followed COMPANY I was subjected to heavy and repeated artillery concentrations. Enemy infantry infiltrated through draws and along ditches, and from positions of defilade harassed COMPANY I troops with machine gun and machine pistol fire. The enemy launched five small scale assaults which COMPANY I suppressed with machine gun and rifle fire. Enemy tanks fired directly upon the exposed positions from ranges of 300 to 1,400 yards. Despite heavy enemy fire and constant enemy-pressure, exposure to inclement weather, and, at times, insufficient water, rations and ammunition, the officers and men of COMPANY I held their positions to eliminate a threat to the solidarity of the beachhead. The determined courage, fortitude, and fighting spirit displayed by members of COMPANY I reflect the finest traditions of the Army of the United States.

## SERVICE COMPANY

### AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE

Under the provisions of War Department Circular Number 345, 1944, the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque is awarded to the following-named organization. Individuals assigned or attached to this unit are entitled to wear the Meritorious Service Unit Insignia only so long as they remain assigned or attached:

SERVICE COMPANY, 157TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, for outstanding devotion to duty in the performance of exceptionally difficult tasks during the period from 15 August to 8 November 1944 in France. During the rapid advance of its regiment from the beaches of Southern France to the foothills of the Vosges Mountains, this company maintained an adequate flow of supplies to the units of the regiment, shuttled troops, maintained its equipment, and carried on its administrative functions in a superior manner. The company was frequently required to maintain a flow of supplies from dumps located more than a hundred miles to the rear. Although all vehicles were kept in virtually constant operation, accidents and breakdowns were held to an absolute minimum. During this period the company improvised additional equipment, including a portable shower unit, for the welfare of the regiment. During twenty-five days of the period, the company operated a regimental rest area in which every frontline soldier of the regiment received a minimum of two days of rest and recreation. The splendid manner in which this company not only performed its assigned tasks in a superior manner in spite of heavy difficulties, but also contributed to the welfare and morale of the regiment, reflects the devotion to duty demonstrated by each member of the company.

By command of Major General FREDERICK.

KENNETH G. WICKHAM

Col., GSC

CofS

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\*Only actual awards are listed. Many additional awards are now under consideration by War Department.





## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

1. Ankcorn, Charles M.	Colonel	157th Inf.
2. Mitchell, Merle M.	Major	Hq. Co., 3rd Bn.
3. Cannon, Robert W.	Captain	A. T. Co.
4. Evans, James G.	Captain	Co. I
5. Lemon, Stanley S.	1st Lt.	Hq. Co., 2nd Bn.
6. Conner, Charles F.	1st Lt.	Co. A
7. Haynes, Warren E.	2nd Lt.	Co. B
8. Alle, Joseph D.	1st Sgt.	Co. C
9. Rutledge, James A.	T/Sgt.	Co. L
10. Birkner, Oliver R.	S/Sgt.	Co. F
11. Garcia, Fortunato	Sgt.	Co. E
12. Hight, Willard R.	Sgt.	Co. A
13. Edwards, William P.	Sgt.	Co. F
14. Trumpaitis, Anthony D.	Sgt.	Co. K
15. Howe, Wesley E.	Pfc.	Co. A
16. McGee, George A.	Pfc.	Co. A
17. Olsen, William B.	Pfc.	Co. A
18. Yuhasz, Theodore	Pfc.	Co. B
19. Blanco, Luis	Pvt.	Co. A
20. Gates, Eugene D.	Pvt.	Co. G

## LEGION OF MERIT



1. Brown, Lawrence C.	Lt. Col.	Hq. Co., 2nd Bn.
2. James, Chester	Lt. Col.	157th Inf.
3. Knight, Elmer L.	Lt. Col.	Hq. Co., 2nd Bn.
4. Krieger, Ralph M.	Lt. Col.	Hq. Co., 1st Bn.
5. Noble, Kenneth L.	Major	Hq. Co.
6. Edwards, Charles R.	Captain	Hq. Co., 1st Bn.
7. Glasgow, Frank J.	Captain	Hq. Co.
8. Cody, Willard E.	2nd Lt.	Co. I
9. Vocke, Harvey E.	1st Sgt.	Co. E
10. Daniels, William R.	1st Sgt.	Co. M
11. Hosey, Kenneth R.	1st Sgt.	Hq. Co., 1st Bn.
12. Johnson, Dwight E.	1st Sgt.	Hq. Co., 2nd Bn.
13. Tekely, Edward J.	1st Sgt.	Co. D
14. Starbuck, Harold B.	T/Sgt.	Hq. Co., 3rd Bn.
15. Davis, Alvin A.	S/Sgt.	Med. Det.
16. Elliott, Robert J.	Sgt.	Co. G

\*Only actual awards are listed. Many additional awards are now under consideration by War Department.

# SILVER STAR



Affley, Frank W., Capt.  
 Albright, Donald E. 2nd Lt.  
 Alter, William H., S/Sgt.  
 Amidon, Richard H., Pvt.  
 Atkinson, John M., Capt.  
 Asplund, Warren S., S/Sgt.  
 Austin, Clifford R., Capt.  
 Bancroft, Walter A., Pvt.  
 Bania, Stanley J., Cpl.  
 Baranchik, Andrew E., S/Sgt.  
 Barber, Fred A. Jr., S/Sgt.  
 Barfoot, Van T., 2nd Lt.  
 Barker, Charles F., Jr., 1st Lt.  
 Barnes, Clay A., Capt.  
 Barnes, Granville B., Sgt.  
 Barnes, William T., Capt.  
 Barry, Joseph D., Capt.  
 (Chaplain)  
 Bass, Solomon, M/Sgt.  
 Beacon, Stanley M., Pfc.  
 Beckwith, Thomas R., 1st Lt.  
 Beldon, Clair L., 2nd Lt.  
 Bennett, Charlie L., 2nd Lt.  
 Batters, Herbert D., Pfc.  
 Berry, Robert G., S/Sgt.  
 Benson, Joseph H., Pfc.  
 Berker, Phillip C., 2nd Lt.  
 Bingham, Clifford L., T/4  
 Bishop, Charles H., Pfc.  
 Bishop, James W., Pfc.

Black, Badie, Pfc.  
 Blagden, Crawford, 1st Lt.  
 Blumberg, Jack H., 2nd Lt.  
 Bolton, Robert M., Pvt.  
 Bolz, George C., 1st Lt.  
 Bombard, Alfred R., S/Sgt.  
 Bondi, Jack J., T/Sgt.  
 Boone, Norby R., Pfc.  
 Bossert, Eusebius, 1st Lt.  
 Boyd, John G., Maj.  
 Boylan, Jack J., 2nd Lt.  
 Bragalone, Alfred A., 1st Lt.  
 Brainard, Lloyd, T/Sgt.  
 Brazier, Claude E., Pfc.  
 Brenneman, Karl, Pfc.  
 Bridges, James H., S/Sgt.  
 Brinker, Matthew N., Pfc.  
 Britto, Jose S., S/Sgt.  
 Brown, Leon, Pvt.  
 Brown, Theodore S., Pvt.  
 Brownlee, John G., S/Sgt.  
 Bushyhead, Jack, 1st Lt.  
 Byas, Carl W., 1st Lt.  
 Cain, Edward M., 1st Lt.  
 Caldwell, Adrian B., 2nd Lt.  
 Campos, Francis T., Sgt.  
 Cardy, Jim F., S/Sgt.  
 Cary, Robert L., 1st Lt.  
 Castro, Alfonso A., 1st Lt.  
 Casucci, Louis, Pvt.

Cirino, Joseph, S/Sgt.  
 Clinger, Melvin L., Sgt.  
 Cody, Willard E., 2nd Lt.  
 Coffey, John D., Sgt.  
 Collins, John J., Cpl.  
 Collins, Walter R., T/5  
 Conway, Edward A., Cpl.  
 Cookingham, John P., 2nd Lt.  
 Corbin, Raymond D., Pfc.  
 Cordova, Louis, Pvt.  
 Cote, Raymond L., 2nd Lt.  
 Creel, Rolla T., Pfc.  
 Cromer, Elmo F., 1st Sgt.  
 Crucitti, Martin, Pvt.  
 Dahlstedt, Wayne W., 2nd Lt.  
 Dalphonse, Carmen B., Cpl.  
 Daly, John F., Capt.  
 David, Martin F., Pfc.  
 Davis, Alvin A., S/Sgt.  
 Davis, George M., 1st Lt.  
 Deris, Joseph E., Pfc.  
 Deutschendorf, Robt. O., Sgt.  
 Dewolf, Charles D., Pvt.  
 Dill, Carl E., Pvt.  
 Disanto, Daniel A., Pfc.  
 Dobranski, George M., Pvt.  
 Dolan, John L., Pfc.  
 Dorrance, Alfred A., Sgt.  
 Downey, George E., Pvt.  
 Dubay, Carlton W., 2nd Lt.

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Duff, Earl, Cpl.	Guriel, Allan J., Pfc.	Kimsey, Robert H., 2nd Lt.
Dulmovits, Frank, Sgt.	Hahn, Aaron C., S/Sgt.	King, Eugene C., Pfc.
Duprey, Frederick E., S/Sgt.	Hainline, William H., T/5	King, Reginal, 1st Lt.
Duscher, Donald L., Pfc.	Hallet, George, Sgt.	King, Louis P., Sgt.
Dwyer, Raymond J., T/5	Halsey, Herschel S., T/Sgt.	Kohl, Herman A., Pvt.
Ellett, Roy O., Sgt.	Hamelin, Arthur A., S/Sgt.	Kolas, George W., Sgt.
Elliott, Robert J., Sgt.	Hammers, George E., Cpl.	Kolodzieg, Stanley J., S/Sgt.
Elmer, Albert W., 1st Lt.	Hanson, Glen K., Sgt.	Kraft, Edward W., Sgt.
Erde, Herman S., T/3	Hanson, Harold C., Cpl.	Kremer, Vincent J., S/Sgt.
Farley, Francis P., 1st Lt.	Harling, Fred H., Pfc.	Krug, Louis H., Pfc.
Finkel, Joseph, T/5	Harness, Lois J., S/Sgt.	Ladd, Henry D., Pfc.
Finneran, Thomas J., Pfc.	Harvey, Brooks R., Pvt.	Ladislav, Alfred, Pfc.
Fish, Herbert L., Sgt.	Hammond, Robert R., 1st Lt.	Ladurini, John F., Sgt.
Fitch, Roger F., Pfc.	Haug, William K., Jr., Pfc.	Lamb, John D., 2nd Lt.
Flachbart, Robert K., Cpl.	Hays, Elmer K., S/Sgt.	Lampropoulos, C. L., S/Sgt.
Fletcher, Donald C., S/Sgt.	Hearn, Howard F., Pvt.	Langford, Jefferson T., Pvt.
Floyd, John H., 1st Lt.	Heit, Lorence, Sgt.	Laten, Frank, Pvt.
Foskitt, Howard, Cpl.	Hendrix, M. C., Pvt.	Lauer, Arthur L., Pfc.
Foskitt, Kenneth J., 1st Lt.	Herrera, Francisco J., Pvt.	Lawrence, Roy L., Pfc.
Foster, Harold A., 2nd Lt.	Hesler, Jesse W., Pvt.	Lawrence, William A., Pfc.
Fracul, Stephen J., T/4	Hodson, Frank H., S/Sgt.	Leach, William J., 2nd Lt.
Friedman, Edward, Pvt.	Hoffart, Eugene M., Pfc.	Leal, Paul G., Pfc.
Frost, William D., Pfc.	Holsey, Ralph N., S/Sgt.	Leffler, Kenneth R., 1st Lt.
Fuchs, Robert B., Cpl.	Hopfan, Robert B., 1st Lt.	Lewellen, P. R., S/Sgt.
Funk, Lt. Col.	Howard, Everett E., Cpl.	Lewis, George R., Sgt.
Furcht, Raymond H., Pfc.	Hricko, Joseph A., S/Sgt.	Lewis, Lonny, S/Sgt.
Gadqury, Maurice J., Sgt.	Huggins, Henry J., Capt.	Litsky, Howard, 2nd Lt.
Galotifiore, Louis M., Pvt.	Hunsworth, William D., S/Sgt.	Lively, Walter W., T/Sgt.
Geisen, John N., Pfc.	Irwin, John H., T/4	Lochman, Wilson D., Sgt.
Geraci, Fred C., T/5	Ivins, Ralph D., Pfc.	Long, Joseph E., S/Sgt.
Gerdes, Lawrence H., Pfc.	Jinkens, Walter, Cpl.	Lucas, Robert F., 1st Lt.
Gibson, Edwin C., 2nd Lt.	Jindrak, Clifford L., 2nd Lt.	Lusk, Robert C., Sgt.
Gifford, Eben G., S/Sgt.	Jones, George W., S/Sgt.	McAthers, Spencer E., 2nd Lt.
Gill, Richard F., Pvt.	Jones, John P., 2nd Lt.	McBee, Joe C., Pvt.
Grabie, James L., Sgt.	Kaplan, Max, Pvt.	McCraken, Palmer C., Pvt.
Grace, William P., Jr., Col.	Kaplan, Robert J., S/Sgt.	McDermott, William L., T/5
Graffagnino, Peter C., Capt.	Kelley, Donald D., Pfc.	McDonald, Harry A., S/Sgt.
Green, James R., 2nd Lt.	Kerr, James A., Pfc.	McFarlin, Dale D., 1st Sgt.
Griffith, Delmar W., S/Sgt.	Kessler, George D., Capt.	McMillion, Jack, T/Sgt.

McShane, William J., Cpl.	Porter, John E., Pvt.	Snackleford, Henry, Pfc.
Mahan, Lutie C., Pfc.	Pottle, Lawrence, Sgt.	Shapira, Jake, Maj.
Mancini, Purino E., Cpl.	Prinzbach, Anthony H., Sgt.	Shi, James D., Jr., Capt.
Markham, Harry B., T/5	Quick, Neil, 1st Lt.	Siedel, George J., 1st Lt.
Marks, William L., Pvt.	Racine, Raymond G., T/5	Smith, Conrad A., 2nd Lt.
Marlow, Thomas G., Pvt.	Rael, Henry J., S/Sgt.	Smith, Harold V., 2nd Lt.
Martin, Johnnie A., S/Sgt.	Rafalski, Peter J., T/5	Smith, John C., 1st Lt.
Martine, Socoro, S/Sgt.	Raley, Leroy W., Capt.	Simmonds, William O., Sgt.
Mason, William R., S/Sgt.	(Chaplain)	Smith, Gerald C., Pfc.
Miller, Noble R., Cpl.	Ramirez, Manuel G., Pvt.	Smith, Robert A., Cpl.
Miller, Robert J., T/Sgt.	Ray, Charles C., Pfc.	Snead, Gerald W., S/Sgt.
Morgan, Albert E., Cpl.	Railsback, Earl B., 1st Lt.	Solt, Jacob C., Pfc.
Morin, Hubert A., Pvt.	Ray, Charles C., Pfc.	Sparks, Felix L., Capt.
Moore, William E., Jr., Pvt.	Reese, Royal K., S/Sgt.	Spears, Anse H., 1st Lt.
Mulienax, Vee B. H., 2nd Lt.	Renales, Donald R., S/Sgt.	Spicer, Clarence E., Pfc.
Murphy, Preston J. C., Lt. Col.	Reynolds, William D., Sgt.	Spight, William A., Capt.
Nagel, Walter A., Sgt.	Rocha, Wendell, Pvt.	Splettstoesser, J. W., S/Sgt.
Nasif, Louis E., S/Sgt.	Rogers, Cecil F., Pfc.	Spurgin, Hubert A., Pvt.
Nation, Robert S., 1st Lt.	Roland, Harvey J., T/4	Staylor, Luther P., S/Sgt.
Nelsen, Nels M., Sgt.	Romano, Francisco A., Pfc.	Stemmons, Kenneth P., 1st Lt.
Nest, Joseph M., Pfc.	Rooney, Richard L., Pfc.	Stern, Stanley, Pvt.
Neuberger, Walter, S/Sgt.	Rosa, Ralph, Pvt.	Stevens, Andy E., S/Sgt.
Neuenschwander, Harold G., Pfc.	Ross, Alexander D., 1st Lt.	Steward, L. R., Jr., 1st Lt.
Nickels, Donald R., Capt.	Rotunno, James, S/Sgt.	Stimatze, Russell E., S/Sgt.
Nielson, Frank A., Cpl.	Ruder, George J., Pvt.	Stoffel, William J., S/Sgt.
Norden, Herman, Jr., T/Sgt.	Rusnov, Michael, 1st Lt.	Stikes, Bernie L., S/Sgt.
Norman, William H., Pfc.	Rutledge, James A., T/Sgt.	Story, William V., S/Sgt.
Osborne, Neely J., Cpl.	Sack, Mitchell, Capt.	Sturtevant, Gilbert A., 1st Lt.
Osmun, Richard L., T/Sgt.	Saenz, Mauricio, Pfc.	Sweet, Eugene K., Sgt.
Ostrander, Gilbert A., Capt.	Sanders, Frederick L., Pfc.	Talkington, Willis R., 1st Lt.
Owen, Edward E., 2nd Lt.	Santerli, Robert J., 1st Sgt.	Teitelbaum, Irving B., Capt.
Patterson, Cecil B., 2nd Lt.	Sarosy, George L., 2nd Lt.	Terry, Dean W., Pvt.
Paris, Robert E., T/5	Schaffer, John P. J., Cpl.	Terry, Glenn E., 2nd Lt.
Passig, Fritz W., Sgt.	Schimp, Robert H., S/Sgt.	Terzolo, John V., Pfc.
Pearce, Guy L., Pfc.	Schmitt, Henri A., S/Sgt.	Tobin, James F., Cpl.
Peele, Lloyd E., Pvt.	Schrecengost, Morris F., Pvt.	Tribsch, Charles G., Sgt.
Perrone, Edward P., Cpl.	Schweim, George E., Cpl.	Trostel, Joseph J., Sgt.
Petersen, Raymond L., Cpl.	Scott, Leland A., Sgt.	Turner, Leslie C., T/Sgt.
Podany, Richard J., Pfc.	Service, Antone W., T/Sgt.	Underwood, Boyd F., T/3



Unterberger, Jean M., 1st Lt.	Weill, Halbert, Pfc.	Witt, Cecil A., Sgt.
Upchurch, Recy W., Sgt.	Weinelt, Howard F., Pfc.	Woodmancy, Ed. D., S/Sgt.
Vanderpool, Ervin W., S/Sgt.	Wendling, Clarence C., Sgt.	Wolfe, Carrol P., T/Sgt.
Vaughn, Adron, Pfc.	Wentworth, Malcolm G., Cpl.	Woodhams, William E., Sgt.
Voth, Emerson, S/Sgt.	Werner, Clyde W., Pfc.	Wozniak, Stanley A., S/Sgt.
Walker, Alvin P., Pfc.	White, Stanley W., Capt.	Wright, Clarence G., Sgt.
Walters, Leroy, Jr., Cpl.	Whitlock, John F., S/Sgt.	Wrubel, Louis J., Pfc.
Ward, William E., Sgt.	Williams, Vere L., Sgt.	Yackel, Eugene C., Sgt.
Wardrop, Earl D., Pfc.	Wilson, Daniel, Pfc.	Youngpeter, Arthur, S/Sgt.
Watson, Truman, Cpl.	Wilson, Joseph F., Cpl.	Zabadal, John E., Cpl.
Waugh, Donald L., 2nd Lt.	Winright, Walter C., S/Sgt.	Zankel, Leonard G., 2nd Lt.
Wehrly, George G., S/Sgt.	Wisecarver, Jackson M., Pfc.	Zeek, Virgil L., Sgt.



# EARLY HISTORY OF THE 157TH INFANTRY

When Colorado was admitted to the Union in 1876, some of the Western Indian tribes were still unfriendly. Their frequent attacks retarded the development of the cattle raising and mining for which the territory was noted. To quell such uprisings, many mining camps organized militia companies bearing such names as "Queens Emerald Rifles" "Georgetown Light Infantry" and "Wolfstown Guards." These organizations were the nucleus of what later became the 157th Infantry Regiment.

The unit was first organized in 1881 and was known as the First Colorado Infantry. It saw its first action in the Spanish American War of 1898 when it landed on Wake Island against no opposition. It assaulted the beaches near Manila from barges which had been lowered from the troop-carrying transport vessels and took part in the battle for the city of Manila. It was the adjutant of the Colorado unit who raised the first American flag over the walled capital of the Philippines. Of interest is the fact that the regimental band followed in direct support of the attacking troops and while the battle raged the musicians attempted to rouse lagging spirits by playing "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." The song since has become the regimental march.

In the decade following the regiment's return from the Philippine Islands, the troops performed guard duty in the Colorado mining camps. Then shortly before the entrance of the United States into the first World War, it again was called into service and at that time redesignated the 157th Infantry. The regiment moved to the Arizona-Mexico border, where it took part in the clashes with Pancho Villa's raiders, then returned to Colorado, where it was to be demobilized. At that time, however, the United States entered World War I and the 157th Infantry traveled overseas to France with the 40th "Sunset" Division. As a unit, it never saw action in the first great war, although many of its men served as replacements for other organizations.

A presidential proclamation in September, 1940, called the regiment to the colors as a part of the 45th Infantry Division and it was mustered into service that month at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for action in World War II. The troops unloaded from trains to find their first training camp a barren, dusty plain. They remained at Fort Sill five months, then moved by truck to Camp Barkeley, Texas. Here the regiment engaged in extensive training and that year took part in the Louisiana maneuvers, in which it gained national acclaim with a prolonged flanking movement that brought about the capture of 1,300 "prisoners."

The 157th Infantry remained at Camp Barkeley for more than a year. In April, 1942, it moved by train to Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Six months later it moved to Pine Camp, New York, and in January, 1943, it began five months' training at Camp Pickett, Virginia. During that time, the troops practiced amphibious landings in maneuvers in Maryland and underwent extensive mountain training in western Virginia.

On June 3, 1943, the 157th sailed from Hampton Roads, Virginia.



# THE STAFF

## EDITORS AND WRITERS

George P. Smith  
Jack Hallowell  
Joe F. Meis

Robert LeMense  
Al Morgan  
Irving Kintisch

Clerical . . . . . Robert Bolz, Oscar Paul, George Decker  
Art . . . . . John Sylvasi  
Photographic . . . . . Jack Harper

## HISTORY OF THE HISTORY

The many shortcomings of this book are probably more apparent to the men responsible for its publication than to anyone else, so we add this tail-end piece as a general "mea culpa" for all our sins of omission.

Unfortunately, the 157th Regiment gave little thought to the recording of its deeds until its history in World War II was well developed. And when it did get around to establishing Hallowell in the hazy capacity of PRO and Historian, it managed to keep his capable hands so full with the business of writing individual and unit citations, that historical activities were limited to production of the monthly journal. Then came that pell-mell rush through Nurnberg, Dachau, and into Munich where the collapse of the Reich ended the misery of combat and started the misery of editing the history.

So, in the third largest city in Germany, a staff was gathered together and given the task of publishing a book. The first meeting of this august body would have shamed a story conference of Hollywood producers. At a huge T-shaped table the writers sat down with furrowed brows and whirling brains, to the business of producing a history. With a rashness that would have staggered the head of a publishing firm, these infantrymen met and airily dispelled the ten thousand difficulties that later were to gray their hair and palsy their hands. They were heady with enthusiasm, reeling with inspiration as they made their start.

While Hallowell, Morgan, and Kintisch manned the typewriters, Smith spread the word through the regiment that the book was in the making at a cost of four bucks per. The results were immediate. From all corners came marks, francs, and dollars, in such quantity that before long they couldn't be simply stuffed into a pocket. The necessity for bookkeeping procedure became apparent. This brought Paul into the firm as vice-president in charge of finances. With a thoroughness that was staggering for this group, Paul set up such a tight system of double-entry and cross-indexing that it became almost impossible to gouge an air mail stamp out of the fund for official correspondence.

In the meantime, Le Mense had arranged with one of the great printing

establishments in Munich to publish the book. His method of bargaining was simple. He spoke little German and simply refused to understand any price arrangement that seemed too high. The fact that the American troops were still carrying weapons may have had something to do with his success.

Then we thought of the many former members of the 45th who had been separated from the Division for one reason or another, and again enlarged our staff to solicit their orders. Decker cut stencils and did other stenographic work in his quietly efficient manner while Bolz managed the complications arising from running American stencils on a Heinie duplicator. This will interest many of our subscribers who wrote to ask why in hell we sent them a piece of blank paper.

So there we were with the writing progressing, the money pouring in, and the presses waiting. But when we say the writing was progressing, we exaggerate somewhat for after the first burst of creation, Morgan and Kintisch, in the way of all writers, began to show signs of what would be diagnosed as combat fatigue had not combat ended some time before. Supposedly they were gathering what they coyly referred to as 'local color' from the remaining members of the original 45th. It seems these tough fighters would not give out with this local color unless encouraged more than somewhat by inhalations of cognac—supplied from the regimental supply, which was then plentiful. However it began to be noticed that great quantities of cognac were being consumed and the only local color produced was a decided ruddiness in the complexions of the writers.

About this time someone said something about pictures and it suddenly struck us that we had few if any pictures for our epic history and as Alice-in-Wonderland sagely remarked, "What good's a book without pictures?" So we hurriedly sent Morgan to Paris to prowl around in search of pictures, and possible technical help from some of the famous Parisian printers. Days later, Morgan reappeared with a pocket full of French postcards and a story of touring Paris with a deaf interpreter. In the meantime, Kintisch had practically abandoned his typewriter in favor of the shot-put, for the high point winner in track meets got a free trip to Paris those days. Kintisch not only put the shot, but he also threw the javelin, dashed the dashes, hurdled the hurdles, and won so damn many points in every track meet that he practically commuted to Paris. All this was very fine for the Kintisch muscle and the Morgan sightseeing, but the effect on the history was hardly stimulating. So we finally appealed to Adjutant Meis, known as "Little Joe" or "The Law East of the Rhine." He chained the writers to their desks, and the history progressed.

An even twenty trips to Augsburg and the Seventh Army Headquarters, coupled with the diplomacy and intrigue worthy of Richelieu, obtained many of the Signal Corps pictures appearing in this book. Others were turned in by



Jack Harper, a long-time member of the 45th, who was so enthusiastic in his photography that he had a habit of rearing up with a camera to try to catch pictures of enemy snipers. And that's not so remarkable as the fact that he lived to tell of it. John Sylvasi did masterful work in outlining maps.

The only thing needed to complete the collection of pictures were some from the files of the Fifth Army in Rome, so orders were cut for Smith to fly down and pick them up.

That flight was never made, for before the ink was dry on the orders, the 45th was ordered back to the States for possible reshipment to the Pacific. There was a wild re-assortment in which high-point men, Morgan, Kintisch, and Bolz, were transferred to other units. All was chaos, especially with the regimental history. From the writers came pages and pages with frantic instructions: "... better check up on this. Second Battalion's going to give you more dope on this ... we're not quite sure of this point ... !!!" And over in a corner, Hallowell was huddled in mental misery as Paul explained the book-keeping. "Nothing to it. You just enter the odd figures in the third and fifth column and the even in the first and fourth, double-entring on the vertical, of course..."

So the writers and the bookkeepers went away and those remaining looked at each other and quietly reached for the cognac. On the day of departure, Morgan came down with a temperature, was hospitalized, and when last heard of couldn't get out of the hospital because someone had stolen his pants.

The scene shifted to the U. S., four months later, when the remnants of the staff met again in Camp Bowie, Texas. The Japanese War had ended and all talk was about the number of points needed to get out of the army. However, between discharge stood the regimental history, for by this time hundreds of letters regarding it had been received and some action was imperative. But although the total amount of money in the vault was very impressive to us, it was by no means so impressive to a number of printers and engravers who expressed no interest, what with shortage of labor and materials. So we were just deciding to return the gold and call the whole thing off, when the Army & Navy Publishing Co. appeared and put our troubles to rest—for a fee—and with the results that you now hold in your hands.

We heartily wish that this book could have contained the picture of every man who fought with the 157th; that the scene of every battle could have been shown; and that official War Department statistics could have been included to make the history complete. Such could not be and we had to satisfy ourselves with the material at hand. So it was with an overwhelming sense of relief that, 7000 miles and twelve months away from its conception, we finally delivered the baby.

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THE 157TH INFANTRY REGIMENT  
*Typography, engravings and printing by*  
Army & Navy Publishing Company Building  
*Army & Navy Publishing Company*

234 Main Street

Baton Rouge, Louisiana









