

XII.

TAKING AND HOLDING THE SAAR VALLEY

With the fall of Metz, Patton's Third Army continued to advance from the Moselle River across Lorraine to the German frontier and into the important Saar Basin. In the initial phases of the operation to reach the Saar River, the infantry captured Boulay and drove north to outflank the Maginot Line. The initial moves—the same day-after-day sequence of attack, advance and hold—which this time brought our infantry to the banks of the Saar, were similar to the moves made by our troops in the battles through Normandy.

Company A, attached to the 399th Infantry, 95th Division, found itself, on November 24, in Gomelange, located on the flooded Neisse River. Elements of the Maginot Line were located on the eastern banks of the Neisse. Resistance was rapidly overcome, and missions were limited to harassing fires on the town of Valmunster, and HE missions against pillboxes and enemy personnel digging in near Valmunster.

In this period, B Company played a more significant part than in any other operation in which it had engaged since the Battle of the Hedgerows. The company moved, on November 25, in support of the 377th Infantry, 95th Division, which was fighting near Boulay sur Moselle. From this time, until the 3rd of December, when the company moved to the west bank of the Saar, the old familiar pattern of the Normandy breakthrough was repeated. Resistance stiffened, for a few days, while the Germans withdrew the main body of their troops across the Saar. B Company remained in a static position in Guisingen until this resistance was crushed. A few days later, however, in Niederlimberg (a suburb of Wallerfangen), the company began the long unceasing effort to keep its mortars firing day and night in support of the infantry fighting a bitter, violent battle for Dillingen and a bridgehead across the Saar.

Meanwhile, C Company continued to support the 10th Armored's drive. At this time, Lt. Andrew Baker and Cpl. Frank Ferrara distinguished themselves by crawling forward to a knocked-out tank under fire, dragging several wounded tankers from inside, and pulling them to safety. Both received the Silver Star for their gallantry in this action. A decoration came to Lt. Baker from the enemy side as well, for while at an OP a cry for help was heard; crawling forward to investigate, Lt. Baker found a German FO, also a 1st Lt., seriously wounded. Baker dragged the wounded officer to the safety of the

American lines and the grateful German presented him with his own Iron Cross.

The platoons continued to fire many missions, saving the armor much trouble on the flanks. Many non-battle casualties were evacuated at this time, due to the extremely rigorous weather conditions. Trench foot and colds ran right through the company, although all men made every effort to combat these menaces.

Company C was attached to the 90th Infantry Division on November 26. The company left the 10th Armored Division and moved into position south of the tankers, on the Saar River. Shortly after this, the company was shocked to learn of the death of Captain Gates, company commander, who was accidentally killed by a gunshot wound. First Lt. Lee H. Boyer, executive officer, assumed command of the company.

Metz was the jumping-off place for D Company in the attack on the Saar Valley. On November 24, the company joined the 378th Infantry, 95th Division, and advanced using the leapfrog system once more. The enemy again adopted a hit-and-run defense, subjecting the company to intense fire along the route of advance. Fire was so heavy on two towns, Narbfontaine and Niedervisse, that it was necessary to evacuate the ammunition vehicles. The towns of Coume and Hargarten were fired upon and occupied, and the towns of Dalem, Varize, and Denting were entered without incident, after being reduced by the infantry. The towns of Falck, Remering Berweiler, and Sauleavon fell before the advancing doughboys.

In the town of Falck, on November 28, the 1st platoon of D Company acted as infantry, beating off fierce counterattacks from the hills dominating the towns. Enemy fire became so intense that the company withdrew from Falck. Later on in the day a direct hit was scored on one of the company's ammunition jeeps in Saule. Two men were slightly injured, but more casualties were averted by the courage of Pvt. Myrick, who kept the fire under control with a fire extinguisher; meanwhile the enemy continued shelling.

Company A advanced through Boulay to Momerstroff, on November 28, where it was attached to the 377th Infantry. The next day, at 1540, the company entered Germany for the second time, near the town of Ittersdorf, west of Saarlautern. Here the company had a noisy reception when shells landed in a field next to the OP, a bulldozer set off a mine at a road intersection, and a barracks thirty feet from the OP blew up. Missions were confined to harassing fires on Felsburg, the roads leading to the town, and high ground above it.

Company B was in position at Niederlimberg, on December 5, in support of the 358th Infantry, 90th Division, which was preparing to make an assault crossing of the Saar River. At 0430 hours, December 6, the infantry crossed and attacked the towns of Dillingen and Pachten. At daybreak the enemy laid a heavy concentration of artillery on the footbridge, which was being screened by a smoke generator company, making it impossible for the "smoke" men to maintain the screen. At 1130 hours, B Company was called upon to take up this screen, and under difficult conditions maintained it until dark that night. The ground was extremely marshy and more than one mortar could seldom be kept in action at a time. Since this footbridge was the only one in use, the others being under extremely heavy shell fire, the success of the crossing was attributed in no small measure to the 4.2 mortars. During that day of firing, the company expended 86 rounds of HE and 1,070 rounds of WP.

Company C, meanwhile, was moved towards the Saar and took up positions in Buren and Itzbach to support the north flank of an assault crossing of the river to be made by the 90th Division. In order to give closer support, the platoons moved up to the town of Rehlingen, on the very banks of the river. The road to Rehlingen was "hot," but no hotter than the town itself. The enemy had excellent observation on all of Rehlingen and movement within the town had to be kept to a minimum. It was found necessary to keep all but a few of the jeeps in Buren and haul up ammunition at night, running the gauntlet by day whenever necessary. The FDC was maintained in Buren with OPs established across the Saar.

By December 1, D Company was again firing on German soil in the attack on the town of Bristen, Germany. Alt-Forweiler, Neu-Forweiler and Holzmuhle were next on the list of fiercely contested German towns. From Neu-Forweiler, the company fired a smoke-screen in support of the 378th Infantry attacking Lisdorf on the western bank of the Saar. Holzmuhle, like every other town along the Saar in this sector, proved to be no vacation spot. The company remained in firing position in this town from December 4 to December 22, 1944, and every day of its stay it was subjected, at irregular intervals, to shellings from across the river. Near misses in the area caused many flat tires and shrapnel holes in the vehicles.

On December 5, the infantry crossed the river to Ens Dorf, on the east bank, and the initial assault units moved out in assault boats under cover of darkness without preparatory artillery fire. Lt. Costello, FO, and Pfc. Leslie Palmer, with the assault company, were

stranded in Enseldorf for three days when enemy artillery knocked out the only bridge. Street fighting and tank attacks raged in Enseldorf all during that period. Enemy strongpoints east of Enseldorf, and pillboxes dominating the town were fired upon, and diversionary smokescreens furnished.

The enemy fought bitterly to defend the Saar: thus the mortar targets were numerous and varied. An immense slag pile on the east bank of the river, north of Enseldorf, was fired on continuously to deny the enemy its use as an observation post. The town of Griesborn, and the eastern outskirts of Enseldorf were fired on many times. Attachment was changed, on December 7, to the 358th Field Artillery Battalion, 95th Division, so that more closely-coordinated fire could be achieved. Harassing fire was poured upon suspected enemy positions during the hours of darkness, to keep enemy movements down to a minimum.

The battalion rear command post had meanwhile moved to Ebersviller, France, from Fontoy. A report on ammunition difficulties was rendered to higher headquarters by the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Lipphardt, together with several defective specimens in an effort to remedy this situation.

Company A first supported the bloody attack on Saarlautern from Oberfelsberg, where it took up position on December 1; moving the next day to a former military camp, nearer Saarlautern, while still attached to the 377th Infantry. Here the company CP, FDC, and OP were all established in one school house. Interdictory fire was directed on Saarlautern Roden, a suburb of Saarlautern, located on the east bank of the river. On December 4 the infantry pushed into Saarlautern Roden, supported with fire from the 4.2s. On December 7 the company moved into Saarlautern proper; here it was on the receiving end of numerous mortar and artillery TOTs which caused several casualties.

Facing a very strong part of the Siegfried Line, Company A was called upon for night and day missions. Sometimes as many as seven different targets a night were fired upon. HE and WP shells were used to burn houses, harass enemy OPs and supply routes, and button up the numerous pillboxes lining the banks of the Saar. The company also participated in many TOTs, and fired missions observed by infantry and artillery personnel.

Company B remained in position at Niederlimberg for the greater part of December. During the two weeks following the infantry's crossing of the Saar on December 6, the mortars were kept firing

night and day under difficult conditions, averaging nearly 2,000 rounds per day. In one twenty-four hour period, ending at midnight December 8, the company fired 2,925 rounds in support of the 358th Infantry fighting across the river. Day-long screens to cover the engineers' attempts to span the river with footbridges, as well as screens to cover the movement of the ferries crossing with supplies and returning with wounded, were fired by the company. In addition to this, HE and smoke missions were furnished in support of the infantry. Night harassing and interdiction fires, in Dillingen and its approaches, were also fired.

During this period, every man in the company not actually engaged in firing worked hauling ammunition, unloading the ammo trucks, and preparing the rounds for firing. On December 9, between 1615 and 1730 hours, 936 rounds were fired to engage twenty targets requested by the infantry regiment. Company B's firing was the heaviest in the battalion during the month of December; in the first seven days, almost 14,000 rounds were expended.

All during the company's stay at Niederlimberg, the mortar positions were under enemy artillery and mortar fire from across the river, but fortunately only light casualties were suffered. One serious loss was suffered, however, when a fire broke out in a storage room in which prepared rounds were stored, ready for use in night harassing missions.

General Van Fleet, 90th Division commander, paid a visit to the company on December 12, to express his satisfaction and appreciation for the firing which the company had accomplished in support of the Dillingen operations. The pace of this day and night firing began to slacken somewhat on December 16, when only 429 rounds were fired.

During the period of its stay at Rehlingen, C Company fired more ammunition than in any other period of comparable length. The infantry had to fight to the utmost to preserve their bridgehead and every round fired in their support helped. Counterattacks were fierce and heavy and often supported by tanks. Pinpoint concentrations to stop these counterattacks were often necessary and were fired at all times of the day and night. Actual ammunition expenditures averaged close to 2,000 rounds daily. WP was used primarily as an anti-personnel and incendiary agent. Several local towns were reportedly set on fire. Most of the enemy were in pill-boxes and thus not vulnerable to mortar fire. Jerry did run in a couple of mortars or a self-propelled gun for a while, fire, and then pull out. Concentrations of HE were particularly effective against these

targets of opportunity. During this period, T/4 Harvey and T/5 Cleary were seriously wounded and Pvt. Arnold was killed when a land mine exploded near a knocked-out 6 x 6 truck they were inspecting for spare parts. The telephone wire from Buren to Rehlingen was knocked out several times a day by enemy shells, but despite the necessity of working under heavy fire the communications section did a splendid job in keeping the lines in operation.

The companies were now entrenched firmly along the west bank of the Saar River, from Saarlautern towards Mondorf, when the plan of operation was changed from an offensive one to a holding action. The reason for change in tactics was the "Battle of the Bulge" being waged further north.

In the face of fast-diminishing manpower and equipment, Hitler decided to stage one last counter-offensive, planning to carry the German line to the Meuse in two days and Antwerp in three weeks. If successful, thirty-eight Allied divisions would be cut off and the Germans given the respite they were seeking. Von Rundstedt in an acknowledged "all out" gamble struck, on December 16, at the weakest part of the Allied line; south of Liege and northeast of Bastogne. By December 23, the Germans had broken through in an area extending just south of Monschau to Wiltz. Only the courage and steadfastness of American troops, like the 101st Airborne at Bastogne and the 9th and 10th Armored, stopped the German steamroller in the Ardennes. Allied forces were quickly regrouped by General Eisenhower to squeeze the top and bottom of the Bulge, and a greater portion of Patton's Third, spearheaded by the 4th Armored Division, were pulled from the Saar Basin in the south to help relieve the pressure.

As a result, only a holding force was left along the Saar River, and the Siegfried Switch Line extending from Merzig west to the Moselle River. The infantry remaining was pulled back to the west bank of the Saar River into defensive positions, and only the bridgehead at Saarlautern was maintained. The front along the Saar, from north of Merzig to south of Saarlautern, was held by only two divisions all during those two hectic weeks. Artillery ammunition was low, and consequently the mortars were called upon for the bulk of the fire missions.

In line with the regrouping of troops for defense, Company A retired to a safer position on December 25, where it could still reach the majority of its targets, with part of the company going to Souhof, and the remainder to Schonbruck. The company remained

in this static position for the remainder of the Ardennes offensive, firing for the most part only night harassing missions.

In B Company's sector, troops were withdrawn from Dillingen on December 21, the position being no longer tenable because of the thinly-held front. The withdrawal operations were covered again by smokescreens provided by B Company's mortars, and, on the 22nd, after the last troops had been evacuated, the company moved out under one of the heaviest and most concentrated shellings it had yet received.

Only a small holding force was left along the river; most of the 358th Infantry, and supporting units including B Company, moved north to the Siegfried Switch Line to take up positions along the section of the German border which formed the southern leg of the Saar-Moselle triangle.

From the 24th of December until the 22nd of January, when the initial attacks against the Saar-Moselle triangle were launched, B Company remained in static defensive positions at Schuerwald and Gangelfange. Alternate positions were chosen as the Division's plan called for a defense in depth in case of an enemy breakthrough of the thinly held lines. Christmas and New Years were celebrated by most of the battalion in the line, and as many festivities as possible were held in an effort to make the holidays pleasant, in spite of the combat conditions. Packages from home were shared and somehow, somewhere, a little bottled cheer was obtained. Deep snow covered the ground and the weather became quite cold. On January 4, Cpl. Penrod was the first man from B Company selected to go to the United States under the furlough plan.

The battalion rear command post did a splendid job in establishing and maintaining a rest camp at Fontoy, France, shortly after Christmas. Here the battle-weary mortar men enjoyed a few days of much-needed rest, recreation, and relaxation; each company sending back a few men at a time. Dances, movies, U. S. O. shows, super-chow, and the delights of the neighboring towns of Longwy and Villerupt did much to raise the men's morale.

On December 22, C Company moved to Mondorf, into a defensive position to the north, on the Saar, opposite Merzig. Close cooperation with the infantry was established in event of a counter-offensive in this sector. The very first night the company moved in, a heavy artillery barrage came down on the company CP. Since the barrage was very accurate, it was thought to have been observed by civilians in the town. Following this, all civilians were evacuated

and the town became extremely quiet. The main event was the excellent Christmas dinner served by the mess sergeant and his crew.

On the same day, D Company moved north to the town of Itzbach, opposite Dillingen. During the period of the Ardennes offensive, this company with the aid of a few infantry and cavalry troops held a front along the Saar of approximately two and a half miles. The enemy had reoccupied the towns of Dillingen and Pachten, after the withdrawal of the Americans, and re-manned all the pillboxes on the eastern bank of the Saar. Company D's entrance into Itzbach was greeted by a heavy shelling from enemy positions across the river. This was repaid many-fold in the days that followed.

A partly demolished railroad bridge, used by enemy patrols to cross the river, became one of the company's primary targets. One mortar at least was kept on it at all times and the company forward observers used it to show off the accuracy of the 4.2 to the artillery observers. Any movements seen by day or heard by night were subjected to immediate fire from the mortars. This was necessary, since if Jerry got across in force it would have meant a dangerous threat to the entire line. The route across the bridge denied, the enemy attempted to send patrols across by boat. Although camouflaged, the FOs picked out the boats and directed sufficient fire on them to render them useless. At this time an unusual mission was given the companies. The mission was to fire intermittently on the Saar River to keep the ice broken, thus denying the Krauts another method of crossing the river.

Shortly after coming to Itzbach, the FO party ran into a patrol of Germans that had crossed the river and occupied the OP during the night. T/5 Stejskal, a member of the party, opened fire on the patrol, killing two of the enemy and wounding another. The OP party withdrew and the wooded area was subjected to fire by the 4.2s. No more enemy patrols were encountered until January 3, 1945, when the command post received a radio call from the 733rd Field Artillery Battalion forward observer asking for help. The OP had been surrounded by a strong enemy patrol and one of the FO party had been wounded. A patrol was immediately formed and it proceeded to the besieged observation post. The enemy was engaged and dispersed, resulting in two enemy soldiers wounded and one taken prisoner.

One of the mysteries of the war occurred on December 31. The enemy was observed in what appeared to be a formal guard mount in Pachten. What they were doing nobody knows; at any rate, it

turned out fatally for the participants. Thirty-eight rounds landed in and around the ceremonial group, causing an estimated fifteen casualties.

Cpl. George Neu was the first man from D Company to be selected for a furlough to the United States; he was one of the original D-Day men who had been decorated for heroic achievement.

Company D's OP, overlooking the Saar, was used as a training ground for new officers of the battalion. Under the supervision of veteran forward observers these officers were instructed in precision firing, the building of smokescreens, and in the use of artillery methods of observation, using the Germans and their installations for targets. Platoon and squad sergeants were also given an opportunity to see the results of their work. Lt. Steffens, during one of these instruction periods, chose a cable used by the enemy to cross the river as a demonstration target, and managed to put it out of action with a round of HE: a fine feat of precision firing.

As the year came to a close, the battalion had expended 154,567 rounds of ammunition. Many outfits had made a great ceremony of firing their 100,000th round. The 81st was too busy firing to bother with such fol-de-rol.

On January 7, B Company was attached to the 301st Infantry, 94th Division, which took over the 358th sector. Part of the company moved up to Mittel Tunsdorf, Germany, on January 19, to support the attack of the 301st against the town of Orscholz on the following day. The attack lasted for two days and met with such fanatic resistance that the infantry suffered heavy casualties and was forced to withdraw, under cover of a smokescreen maintained by B Company throughout the day. The mortar company then withdrew from Mittel Tunsdorf, which was shortly thereafter overrun by the enemy. The first operation against the Saar-Moselle triangle had been a failure.

On January 22, the company was attached to the 302nd Infantry, 94th Division, which had pushed a thin wedge along the eastern bank of the Moselle and was holding this narrow bridge-head opposite the company's position in Klienmacher, Luxembourg. The first operations against the triangle were slow and costly and for almost a month thereafter the battle was little more than a holding operation, while sufficient forces were being brought up for a large-scale attack.

Company C's next important move came on January 9, when a

reattachment to the 94th Division necessitated a move to the Siegfried Switch Line, in the Saar-Moselle triangle. During this period, the platoons were in small towns north of Perl on the Franco-German border. As attachments within the division changed, the platoons moved from town to town. The company command post was usually at Pillingen or Wochern, while the town of Borg was continually used for an observation post as well as a mortar position.

The 94th's job was at first to create a diversion, then attempt to take part of the line, keeping the crack 11th SS Panzer Division, still in the vicinity, from entering the Ardennes offensive.

Later, with the assistance of the 10th Armored Division, the 94th did accomplish a major breakthrough.

XIII.

THE SAAR-MOSELLE TRIANGLE

After Von Rundstedt's offensive into the Ardennes had been smashed, at heavy cost of the enemy, the Third Army concentrated on cleaning up the triangle formed by the Saar and Moselle Rivers. The 94th Division now had the support of the 10th Armored Division, and other units released from the Bulge and from the Saarlautern area; among these B and C Companies of the 81st. Company A remained in the Saarlautern area during this operation. The Saar line itself was held by a mediocre Volksgrenadier Division, reenforced by the crack 11th SS Panzer Division.

During the first days of the campaign, B Company supported the infantry from positions in Kleinmacker and later from Remich, on the Luxembourg side of the Moselle. For the most part, the missions fired were smokescreens, although several targets of opportunity were effectively engaged. The numerous enemy pillboxes were most successfully attacked after smokescreens had been laid to cut off observation.

Lt. Eggert was seriously injured by a land mine while on an FO mission across the Moselle River during an attack on January 26; no other casualties were suffered.

On the following day, B Company moved up to Remich in support of the 302nd Infantry's advance and went into a static position, remaining there until February 18. The 301st Infantry took over this section on January 28, and the company continued in support of the relieving regiment. The 2nd platoon moved across the river on January 31 to Wochern, Germany, in order to provide closer support. As a result of the spring thaws, all bridges across the Moselle north of Thionville had been washed out, and the troops on the German side were virtually isolated, except for the bridge at Thionville.

S/Sgt. Young was the first enlisted man in B Company to receive a direct commission as 2nd Lt. being awarded the appointment on February 1.

The first of the large-scale attacks to occupy the east bank of the Moselle north of Besch, and ultimately clear the triangle, began on February 7. The platoon across the river moved into Nennig, in order to support the attack. This position was heavily shelled by the enemy during the time it was occupied. Several men were wounded and many vehicles temporarily put out of action. Sgt.

Byrnside was instantly killed, on February 8, when an artillery shell burst beside him in the street. In spite of heavy counterbattery fire, the platoon maintained smokescreens and fired all other missions called for by the infantry.

On February 13, Captain Herbert Levy left the company to go on temporary duty to the U. S. A., for rest and recuperation. He was still in the U. S. when the war in Europe ended.

As the companies swung north into the Saar-Moselle triangle the battalion rear command post remained at Ebersviller, France, and the rest camp was still maintained at Fontoy.

By January 22 the towns of Tettingen, Butsdorf, and Nennig, in C Company's sector, had fallen. This was the left flank of the line, but such success did not as yet constitute a major breakthrough. German shelling of the mortar positions was generally heavy. Until January 26 the platoons helped the infantry in beating off severe counterattacks. One infantry platoon leader personally expressed his appreciation for the effective fire furnished his unit.

Local attacks took place from January 26 to February 15. On this latter date the town of Sinz was taken. Screening support and HE were fired intermittently all during these operations, as were emergency missions against strong counterattacks, supported by tanks.

Meanwhile, D Company's attachment had changed to the 26th Division Artillery and, on February 1, 1945, Brig. Gen. Ross, artillery commander, visited the mortar positions and the FDC. He was pleased with the operation of the FDC and complimented the entire company for efficiency of operation. Other visitors during this period were Brig. Gen. Bullene, Office of the Chief, CWS, Washington, D. C.; Col. Day, Asst. Cml. Officer, ETOUSA; Col. Powers, 12th Army Group Cml. Officer; Col. Green, XX Corps Cml. Officer; and Capt. Paulson, technical expert from Edgewood Arsenal, who arrived February 15, 1945, to make a survey of faulty ammunition which the mortar companies had been encountering. After an inspection the group complimented Capt. Marshall on the performance of his company.

Company D kept steady pressure on the enemy from its position in Itzbach until February 18. On that the day, the company was notified of a change in Table of Organization which necessitated the disbanding of the company and transfer of the personnel to A, B, C, and Hqs. companies. It was with reluctance, but a feeling of

pride in a job well done, that D Company disbanded. All the men were determined to continue putting their best efforts forward in their new companies. Company D's contribution to the final destruction of Germany's armed might had been far from insignificant.

On January 29, A Company, still in the Saarlautern area, was attached to the 102nd Field Artillery Battalion of the 26th Division. Under this attachment the company was to have little spare time. Twenty-four-hour firing schedules were assigned, in addition to many missions fired by infantry observers, often within a hundred yards of friendly troops, but with excellent results. Since their ammunition was rationed, artillery observers fired the 4.2s considerably. To make the cycle complete, even the 81mm mortar observers fired several missions. It seemed everybody was firing the already over-worked 4.2 mortars.

The company moved back to Saarlautern on February 13, leaving Schonbruck an entirely different-looking place. Although the town was literally crawling with livestock when the company arrived, these strangely disappeared during the next few weeks; only a few decrepit goats being left to roam about. Evidently the lady who, on being evacuated, cried, "Who will take care of my chickens?" had many a volunteer. "Representative" Will Brent of Mississippi kept an attic full of chickens but failed to promote eggs on a wholesale basis. Just before coming to Saarlautern, Sgt. Collum's squad set a record by firing over 1,000 rounds without once digging out the baseplate; only a move to another mortar position discontinued the score.

Here was probably the most boring period Company A had experienced in combat. The time was marked by an increasing number of smokescreens for limited drives, and to shield tank and tank destroyer movements. Impounded ammunition was fired with lanyards. The rest camp at Fontoy proved to be a welcome escape from the drudgery of Saarlautern. The company attending a showing of a film on non-fraternization. Ironically enough the only inhabitants of Saarlautern, beside the American soldiers, were a herd of malodorous goats.

A week later, thirty-six men and three officers from the disbanded D Company joined this company and a third platoon was formed.

While at Saarlautern a second enlisted man from A Company received a commission. S/Sgt. Bartley Cranston, who had been with the company since June, 1942, was commissioned a 2nd Lt.

Despite the tremendous difficulties encountered, the men of the disbanded D Company were transferred and supplies turned in and redistributed with a minimum of confusion while the companies were still in the line. The feat of reorganization while in the line is perhaps the first time that any such thing has been done. This was made possible by the efficient operation of the companies and battalion supply sections. This reorganization was officially completed on February 22.

The first of the great attacks to clear the Saar-Moselle triangle began on February 19. At 0400 hours, after an artillery barrage comparable to those which preceded the attacks in Normandy, the 301st Infantry jumped off as part of the division attack; by nightfall the infantrymen had secured their first objective, the town of Faha. The attack was highly successful, resulting in heavy enemy casualties, many prisoners taken, and large quantities of German heavy equipment destroyed or captured.

Both platoons of B Company displaced forward on February 20 from Sinz to Faha, after the attack had again progressed on schedule. By early evening, the infantry succeeded in occupying most objectives around Freudenberg. Company B was responsible in no small measure for the comparatively light casualties suffered by the infantry in the attack. Two smokescreens were laid down and kept going in the manner of a creeping barrage, behind which our infantry advanced.

The objective for the next day was the Saar River. Late in the evening the river was reached and B Company displaced forward to occupy the towns of Perdenbach and Kastel; the mortars were laid to cover the river in case of a counterattack.

The 301st Infantry received orders to attack again on the 22nd of February, to establish a bridgehead across the Saar. Before this could be done, however, the small town of Krutweiler, on the west bank of the Saar, still in German hands, had to be taken. The 94th Reconnaissance Group was assigned this task and the 2nd platoon of B Company fired a four-hour smokescreen to prevent observation on this town from the town of Saarburg and from pillboxes on the west bank. Results were excellent; not one of the attacking group became a casualty from enemy fire although several were killed and wounded by S mines. Following this, the company fired a screen enclosing the entire bridgehead, from 1100 hours until dark, a feat which contributed greatly to the success of the operation.

The entire company crossed the river that night by ferry and by a bridge at Taben-Rodt; severe shell fire was encountered all along this route. The company then set up in static positions in Serrig. Later, one platoon moved back across the river to Hamm. Because of a freak bend in the river, Hamm actually was further east than Serrig, and thus offered a more suitable position with better range coverage. From here the company fired numerous HE missions for the 301st Infantry and 5th Rangers, on stubbornly resisting pockets of the enemy holding out in the broken and mountainous terrain. The opposing troops at this time were elements of the 11th SS Panzer Division and the 2nd Mountain Grenadier Division.

In C Company's sector on February 19, in conjunction with the 10th Armored, the 94th Division broke the line from the Moselle to Oberleuken, the later being taken by the 5th Rangers. By the 20th, the armor had rapidly driven to Saarburg and the northern tip of the triangle.

February 22 found C Company in Dittlingen and Kastel where men assigned from disbanded D Company arrived. While on reconnaissance to Saarburg, Capt. Boyer, Lt. Yorke and party captured sixty-nine prisoners. With the 1st platoon on the left and the 2nd on the right the advance continued to the Saar. The company CP moved to Saarburg while the 1st platoon, now attached to the armor, supported a Saar River crossing near Ockfen. The 2nd platoon, meanwhile, coordinated with the 87th Smoke Generator Company set up to fire a smokescreen south of Saarburg, near Hamm.

On the 26th of February the 2nd platoon crossed the river and advanced to the east, stopping eventually near the town of Zerf, on March 1, where exceptionally heavy resistance was encountered.

The 1st platoon crossed the river on the 27th by means of a ferry to Ockfen, and then advanced by short jumps toward Trier. By the 4th of March, this platoon had entered Trier, while the 2nd platoon was firing on a hot corner near Zerf. The armor had swung abruptly to the north on to the main highway here, and the Germans, from good defensive positions, were counterattacking with SS troops, supported by mortars, rockets, and artillery. In fact, at one time, the SS troopers cut the main supply route to the platoon.

On the 28th of February, Lt. Col. Lipphardt, battalion commander, established a forward battalion supply point in the triangle. This action provided the companies with a more accessible clearing point for the transmission of documents to the battalion rear and facilitated

the movement of supplies and spare parts forward.

The 76th Division, north of the Moselle opposite Trier, sent a regiment across a bridge, which had been captured intact, to help clean up the Trier area; the 1st platoon was attached to this, the 417th Regiment, 76th Division.

The 10th Armored Division's push north to clear the triangle was highly successful. The German resistance was quickly broken and, on March 4, American troops held all the ground between the Saar and the Moselle. The success of this operation paved the way for the drive to the Rhine and the great enveloping operation which destroyed the German XII Army Group.

At the end of this period the battalion had fired a total of 199,520 rounds.

XIV.

THE DRIVE TO THE RHINE

After the First Army had secured a bridgehead over the Rhine, at Remagen, the Germans naturally expected Patton to cross the Rhine and start rolling from this point. Instead he made a quick thrust, captured the junction of the Moselle and the Rhine, and then continued south into the rear of the German forces facing the Seventh Army. The XX Corps of the Third Army, meanwhile, attacked southeast from Trier and achieved a breakthrough as far as Kasierlautern. This corps made contact with the armor attacking from the Moselle and thus trapped the fragments of four German divisions. The companies of the 81st played an important part in this XX Corps operation. The drive began with the establishment of a bridgehead east of the Saar, near the Saarburg-Serrig area.

Company A remained in position in Saarlautern until March 12 when it moved to a point five miles east of Saarburg. Its mission was to support the 80th Division in punching a hole in the German defense line so as to permit the 14th Armored Division to race through and either drive the Germans back across the Rhine or trap them on this side of it.

The plan was to attack and take Schwarzwaldler Hochwald, beyond which lay flat rolling plains, ideal for tank operations. The attack, which started at 0300 on March 13, was preceded by a tremendous barrage from massed artillery. For two solid hours a stream of shells was thrown at the enemy. In one hour, A Company fired 353 rounds on the town of Greimerath; the WP caused several large fires.

The attack started slowly, but gradually picked up momentum. The company did not move until dark during the first evening, although subjected to heavy Nebelwerfer fire all that day. Mortar positions were so close to the front that two tanks were knocked out only a few hundred yards from where one platoon was set up. On March 15 the company displaced forward and fired WP on the town of Sheiden, which was completely destroyed. Artillery fire aided in burning this town.

By the next day, the speed of attack had increased to such a pace that the company made several moves. The roads all along the route of advance were littered with German dead, burned-out vehicles, and abandoned horse-and-wagon trains. That night the company stayed in Waldholzbach, where the enemy had abandoned

several 120mm mortars and a horse-drawn supply caravan. It was in Waldholzbach that the house occupied by CP rear burned down (origin unknown). Sgt. Jack Huntley, usually cool under enemy fire, ran upstairs and jumped out of a window when all he had to do was walk out of the front door, on the ground floor, to escape the flames.

The retreat rapidly became a route. By March 18 the company was making several moves a day and was not in contact with the enemy until reaching Kussel on the 19th. The withdrawing enemy troops attempted to escape across the Rhine, by way of Ludwigshafen, but the air force tore up their columns at Bad Durkheim, strafing and destroying thousands of vehicles. Burned-out vehicles, dead horses, and the litter that marks an army in flight could be seen for miles.

March 21 was a black day in the history of A Company. At 0710 hours, enemy planes attacked the company which at that time was serving breakfast, strafed, and dropped anti-personnel bombs over a wide area causing very heavy casualties. This occurred at Wachenheim, south of Bad Durkheim and west of Ludwigshafen. Lt. Campbell, Lt. Griffith, and Pvt. Bell were fatally injured; Capt. Baum, Lt. Koresdoski, and thirty-five men wounded. Forty battle casualties within ten minutes.

For its part in the drive to the Rhine, B Company was attached to the 94th Division. In preparation, the company moved out of position in the bridgehead across the Saar on March 9, remaining attached to the various regiments of this division until the banks of the Rhine were reached. The drive began on March 10 and progressed slowly at first, but gained momentum until marches of ten, fifteen, twenty, and finally thirty to forty miles a day were made without encountering serious opposition. The company captured so many prisoners that it became necessary to leave the ranking German officer or NCO in charge with instructions to surrender to the American rear elements. The speed of the advance was so rapid that it was impossible for the forward elements to handle the vast number of German prisoners, and long columns of them could be seen marching to the rear without benefit of guards.

After passing through Birkenfeld on March 19, part of the company set up and fired on some German vehicles and half-tracks, which could be seen from the mortar position on a hill about 900 yards away. The guns were laid directly and all fire was adjusted from the mortar position. This type fire-adjustment was unique in the combat history of B Company. By this time, the last recourse of the fleeing

Germans was to commit the remaining Luftwaffe in strength. Soon jet-propelled planes put in an appearance over the columns, strafing and bombing nearly every day. The 2nd platoon was subjected to several bombing and strafing attacks on March 21, causing injuries to several men. In spite of this, the platoon moved a total of forty-two miles during that day. The next day, the 1st platoon fired the company's first mission on a target across the Rhine from the town of Moersch. Meanwhile the 2nd platoon was firing from Oggersheim, in support of the attack on the important town of Ludwigshafen on the Rhine. The platoon position in Oggersheim, as well as all the adjoining streets, was constantly subjected to enemy artillery fire. It was here that the company suffered its last battle casualty west of the Rhine when Cpl. Harvey Colome was killed by the freak burst of an 88-armor-piercing shell exploding in the room directly above the cellar in which he was sleeping.

At the beginning of this period, the battalion rear command post remained at Ebersviller, France. Battalion forward command post consisted of three jeeps; the battalion commanding officer, battalion S-3, and battalion S-2. This party made contact with all companies daily. On the 13th of March, Brig. Gen. Rowan, Chief CWS, ETOUSA, Col. Powers, Twelfth Army Group Chemical Officer, and Col. Wallington, Third Army Chemical Officer, visited the battalion commander and staff. The rear group departed from Ebersviller on March, 21 after a three and a half months' stay, and proceeded to Urweiler, Germany. After a few days there it moved on to Gonsenheim, a suburb of Mainz. Because of the rapid and long advances, supply men and mail orderlies put in long hours on crowded roads to bring vital supplies and precious mail up to the rolling columns. Certain supplies were difficult to obtain and many a German vehicle was stripped of tires to replace those worn out on mortar vehicles; tires were fast becoming a critical item. During this time, firing was not too heavy since there was no longer a stable front.

After cleaning up the Trier area, Company C was attached to the "Yankee" (26th) Division for a part in the drive to the Rhine. First this division attacked down the east bank of the Saar, towards Merzig, while the company set up in towns on the west bank to cover the infantry across the river. This country was very rough, hilly, and difficult to fight through, and the platoons were kept busy firing against enemy personnel entrenched in the rocks and pillboxes.

A striking example of devotion to duty was displayed by Communications Sgt. Teirce who attempted to swim the fast-moving, ice-

cold Saar with a line tied to his waist, in order to get a communications wire across. The current almost carried Sgt. Teirce away when he was within ten yards of the opposite shore, and he had to be pulled back. However, the line was later carried across by other means.

The east bank of the Saar was cleared by March 17. The company crossed the river in support of two regiments of the 26th Division, which drove directly east towards Kaiserlautern and the Rhine.

Although resistance was scattered, small groups would at times held out stubbornly. The main towns passed through by C Company in this rapid advance, were Merzig, Urexweiler, Ottweiler, and Landstuhl. The infantry then swung south of Kaiserlautern into a great forest. The company joined regimental convoys and moved on northeast to Alzey through Winweiler and Kirchheim Bolinden.

Although close to the Rhine, C Company never did reach it on this drive. On March 24, orders came from the battalion for all companies to return to an assembly area near St. Wendel, Germany. Enemy resistance west of the Rhine had been utterly destroyed and the battalion now prepared for the forthcoming Rhine crossing and the swift campaign to finish off the remnants of the German army still in retreat east of the great river. In driving from the Normandy coast to the banks of the Rhine, the battalion had expended a total of 208,641 rounds of ammunition.

MOP UP TO AUSTRIA

Mainz fell on the 23rd of March to Patton's Army, with armored units forging ahead to cut the escape routes and isolate remaining enemy forces. The Third Army, working from a bridgehead established south of Mainz, drove from the east bank of the Rhine, reaching Frankfurt by the 26th of March, and a point seventy miles northeast of Frankfurt by April 1. Such a good job had been done of eliminating the German armies on the west bank of the Rhine, that this operation was carried out with comparative ease. Meanwhile the vital industrial Ruhr area had been encircled by elements of the First and Third Armies. This operation cut off the bulk of the enemy's remaining reserves.

General Eisenhower's strategy of great double enveloping movements, to cut off and destroy the main German army groups fighting in the Ruhr and in the south beyond Frankfurt, was by now a complete success. In late April, American troops began mopping up operations in Austria; the campaign for Germany was virtually at an end. The campaign had been characterized by long, swift advances. Occasional short, sharp infantry battles had been fought, but in only a few of these was heavy mortar support required.

Company B was the first in the battalion to cross the Rhine; an advance party passed over a pontoon bridge near Bausheim at 1600 hours on March 27, and the remainder of the company followed after dark that same night. The sight of navy crews running LCVs across the river brought back vivid memories of D-Day. At Bausheim the company was attached to the 905th Field Artillery Battalion, 80th Division. Moving with the artillery, the company advanced twenty-seven miles to the Main River, near its confluence with the Rhine. Little resistance was encountered here, although heavy artillery fire landed in the town of Bischofsheim, where the company set up to support the infantry about to cross the Main.

The next day, B Company crossed the Main River to Delkenheim; the days that followed were spent moving along the roads in motor convoy, trying to keep up with the rapidly advancing forward elements. There were no front lines, as such, for an advance of forty to fifty miles a day was not unusual. The excellent Reichsautobahn made possible these advances, in spite of the great volume of traffic. The general route of advance, after crossing the Main, was northeast between Wiesbaden and Frankfurt, along the Reichsautobahn head-

ing north towards Giessen, then northeast past Alsfeld and Hirsfeld, and finally swinging north to Kassel.

While approaching Kassel, near Guxhagen, on April 1, enemy tanks fired on the 1st platoon convoy, killing Pfc. Swenson. At this time the company was attached to the 319th Infantry, 80th Division; several missions were fired in support of this regiment's attack on the Kassel area.

By April 7, the drive had carried so far forward that B Company moved into an assembly area in the city of Gotha and remained there until the tactical situation should again require the use of 4.2 mortars.

Two days later, on April 9, Lt. Bartley Cranston realized the forward observer's dream when the Germans launched a strong counter-attack against the 319th Infantry then forming in Hocheim for an attack on the city of Erfurt. Lt. Cranston directed HE on the attacking force, repulsing it and forcing the enemy to withdraw, leaving approximately one hundred dead and wounded behind. The 1st platoon was at this time supporting the 318th Infantry's attack on Weimar. Upon its relief from this organization, on April 12, the Division Artillery Commander of the 80th Division commended B Company on the superior support it had furnished during the attachment.

Before leaving the Erfurt area, B Company personnel were shown the results of Nazi savagery at the Ohrdruf concentration camp. No one who saw this inhuman spectacle had any doubts thereafter as to what he was fighting against.

For B Company these were the last days of combat in the European theater. The company was placed on detached service with the AA Radar School, Fifteenth Army, at Chateau Reux, near Dinant, Belgium, as school troops. It remained at that station until shortly after hostilities ceased.

Company C was not very far behind B Company in crossing the Rhine. A few hours after B Company's crossing at Bausheim, C Company crossed at Mainz and drove all night on the autobahn, passing through Frankfurt on the way.

The advance started off in a northeasterly direction towards Kassel, following the route of the 11th Armored Division. Occasionally a German plane would bomb and strafe the column. The task force to which the company was attached was on the northern flank of the Third Army just beyond the Ruhr pocket. Prisoners

were continually being taken by members of the company as by-passed Germans were everywhere.

On April 5 the company pulled into Eschwege, a large town southeast of Kassel, where it was employed in guarding a hospital and large warehouses filled with military equipment; resistance was so slight that no mortar support was needed.

Meanwhile, on March 29, at 1740 hours, Company A crossed the 1,986-foot pontoon bridge at Mainz. That night the company stayed in Weisbaden, in luxurious dwellings, but was soon off again on a rapid advance toward Kassel. The nights were spent in houses, and in every position there was the usual mad rush for eggs and then for the best bed. By April 5 the company had passed through and beyond Kassel.

On April 1, the battalion rear followed A Company's route over the bridge at Mainz. With the situation changing so rapidly, and the forward elements moving at such a fast pace, it was necessary for the weapons companies to be on the road almost twenty-four hours a day in order to remain in close support of the 80th and 65th Divisions. The Reichsautobahns provided an excellent route of attack for the Allied steamroller. The battalion CP also made one-night stands through Eifa, Mosheim, and Gotha, finally setting up for a few days at Weimar.

Company A, still attached to the 80th Division, fired its first mission east of the Rhine on April 9, registering on the town of Tottelstadt. The next day several successful missions were fired. The first platoon, located in the town of Ermstedt, spotted 50 of the enemy approaching the town. The mortars opened up at a range of 675 yards, killing or wounding at least 15 Germans; the remainder were captured by the infantry. The same day, the 2nd platoon fired close to 150 rounds of WP on the town of Salomonsborn, burning most of the town and routing the enemy.

The next few days were marked by long jeep rides; many pistols and other souvenirs were secured; roads were clogged with German prisoners, liberated soldiers, and displaced persons. The company passed through several fairly large cities. The first platoon fired 70 rounds into Erfurt and then entered the city on April 12. The 2nd platoon reached Weimar the same day. The following day found A Company in the famous glass manufacturing city of Jena; by the 16th, the company reached the outskirts of Chemnitz.

Company C was attached, on April 4, to the 76th Division which

drove eastward through Mulhausen and Langensalza. At this time the 76th Division was closer to Berlin than any other unit of the U. S. Army. The general route of advance was directly east, passing north of Erfurt through Apolda, Zeitz, and Altenburg, then on towards Dresden to Lunzenau. Resistance was light, although one town was heavily shelled after it refused to surrender when issued an ultimatum. The guns were laid directly on the town from the mortar position while signal corps photographers took movies of the action. Intermittent strafing and bombing of towns and moving columns by enemy planes continued.

On or about April 18, Patton swung his forces south, using Chemnitz for a hinge, and headed toward the Danube River and Austria. The XX Corps boundary changed and the mortar companies took part in the drive to the south.

Company A travelled all night, on April 18, to join the 71st Division to which it was attached at Bamberg. The new plan was to drive south to the Danube, cross it, and then head for the so-called National Redoubt. A slight amount of opposition was met at Regensauf where the bridge across the Regen River had been blown. Mortars were set up near a warehousefull of prefabricated parts for airplanes and missions fired on the woods northeast of the town. The Regen River was crossed that night, while the company was staying in Regensauf. The next day the woods north of the Danube River were cleared, and the Danube reached by nightfall. As the infantry were crossing the river in assault boats, some of the company's HE commenced to land a few hundred yards in front of them. The inexperienced doughboys jumped from the boats into the stream, as this was their first contact with 4.2 shells.

On April 26, A Company fired 489 rounds in support of the Danube River crossing and the assault on Regensburg. A smoke-screen was laid, HE and WP missions fired at the enemy dug-in along the river and at troops trying to escape from the city. The company crossed the Danube at 0145 hours on April 27, and set up just south of the river, close to the target area of the previous day, about four miles east of Regensburg. Enemy dead lay where they had fallen and equipment was scattered everywhere.

While in the process of moving south, C Company stopped at Apolda. Many of the men had an opportunity to visit the Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar. Here, as in Ohrdruf, was concrete evidence of the inhumanity of the Nazi machine.

The move south was made through Coburg, to a town near Bauking, from which the drive continued cross-country towards Austria. The attachment was changed to the 71st Division, which the company supported until the end of hostilities. Just prior to this S/Sgt. Conroy of C Company received a battlefield commission as 2nd Lt.

The company passed near Nurnberg on its way down to the Danube, northeast of Regensburg. Here a crossing was easily made. Straubing and Landau came next. At Landau, the Isar River was crossed by means of a wrecked railroad bridge. The drive met negligible resistance and continued straight on towards Austria.

As the battalion neared the Austrian border all companies were attached to the 71st Division. Company A and Company C crossed the Inn River on successive days, May 2 and 3. The FO for Company A observed enemy personnel digging in near the river, obviously intending to defend it, but after nine HE shells landed nearby they soon abandoned the idea. A smokescreen was laid, which contributed to the successful crossing of the river. This was the last mission that A Company fired in the European war.

Passing Wels, the company continued on to the Enns River, there to await the Russians and V-E Day. The final combat positions of A Company were in Garsten and Ternberg, Austria, for the 1st and 2nd platoons, respectively.

On May 3, at 1435, the 1st platoon, C Company, crossed the Inn River into Austria, near the town of Ernig. The 2nd platoon, following foot troops, crossed a little later over a hydro-electric dam which served as a bridge. The company moved on in the same general direction, and crossed the Traun River, near Lambach, on April 5. The previous evening a few rounds were fired at a column of retreating Germans, but for fear of destroying a bridge a cease fire order was given.

The night of May 5, found the whole company near the Enns River, the boundary between the U. S. and Russian troops. The battalion command post crossed into Austria over the Inn River on May 4. At the cessation of hostilities, on May 8, 1945, the battalion, less B Company, was along the Enns River, one of the meeting points between the American and Russian forces. In the fight for the liberation of Europe the 4.2 mortars of the 81st had fired 212,572 rounds.

The war in Europe was over! The day everyone had been waiting for had arrived. The long, hard, bloody road from the beaches of Normandy, across the continent of Europe, was ended. Every man celebrated in his own way, but in the hearts and minds of each and every one was a thought for those comrades who had given their lives to make this day possible.

EPILOGUE

Shortly after V-E Day the battalion was detailed on Military Government work in Austria and Germany. The battalion was for a time the occupying force in Braunau, Hitler's birthplace, and neighboring towns. While there, the battalion was attached to the 5th Field Artillery Group, the companies occupying the towns of Degerndorf, Brannenburg, Oberaudorf, Raubling, and Redenfelden, near Rosensheim, in the Bavarian Alps. Some members of the battalion were sent home for discharge under the point system. The rest were "sweating it out." But no matter where the future finds them, the men of the 81st will always be, as they have been in the past, "Equal to the Task!"

Appendix

ACTUAL COMBAT

The following is the number of days each company had been on the line:

Company A	313 Days
Company B	297 Days
Company C	318 Days
Company D	246 Days

REST PERIODS

Company A

St. Martin Don, France	7-10 Aug.	4 Days
Ger, France	17-19 Aug.	3 "
Sees, France	23-24 Aug.	2 "
Porcher, France	24 Sept.-1 Oct.	8 "
Morfontaine, France	3-6 Nov.	4 "
Urweiler, Germany	25-26 Mar.	2 "
		<hr/> 23 Days

Company B

St. Martin Don, France	7-9 Aug.	3 Days
Ger, France	17-19 Aug.	3 "
Sees, France	23-24 Aug.	2 "
Brehain-la-Ville, France	4-6 Nov.	3 "
Urweiler, Germany	25-26 Mar.	2 "
		<hr/> 13 Days

Company C

St. Martin Don, France	5-9 Aug.	5 Days
Ger, France	17-19 Aug.	3 "
Sees, France	23-24 Aug.	2 "
Bievres, France	27-28 Aug.	2 "
	20-22 Sept.	3 "
Leitersweiler, Germany	25-27 Mar.	3 "
		<hr/> 18 Days

Company D

St. Martin Don, France	7-12 Aug.	6 Days
Ger, France	17-19 Aug.	3 "
Sees, France	21-24 Aug.	4 "
Bievres, France	27-28 Aug.	2 "
Disbanded	22 Feb. 1945	
		<hr/> 15 Days

RECAPITULATION OF CASUALTIES

The following is a recapitulation of casualties for the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion from the 6th of June, 1944, to the present time:

Type	Battle		Total
	Officers	Enlisted Men	
Killed in action.....	7	26	33
Died of wounds.....	3	5	8
Prisoners of war.....	2	2	4
Seriously wounded.....	8	26	34
Slightly wounded.....	8	101	109
Seriously injured.....	1	4	5
Slightly injured.....	-	9	9
Totals.....	29	173	202

Non-Battle

Officers—20

Enlisted Men—196

ATTACHMENTS

Divisions supported by companies of the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion:

First U. S. Army

V Corps	XIX Corps
1st Div.	29th Div.
2nd Div.	30th Div.
5th Div.	90th Div.
35th Div.	4th Div.
80th Div. (inactive)	28th Div.

Third U. S. Army

XX Corps

90th Div.	94th Div.
5th Div.	26th Div.
7th Armored Div. (inactive)	65th Div.
95th Div.	80th Div.
10th Armored Div.	76th Div.
83rd Div. (inactive)	71th Div.

AMMUNITION EXPENDITURE

The following is a recapitulation of ammunition expenditure from 6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945, inclusive:

	HE	WP	FS	Total
Company A.....	30685	17335	—	48020
Company B.....	30011	33615	—	63626
Company C.....	36889	23329	367	60585
Company D.....	19509	30832	—	40341
(Disbanded 22 Feb. 1945)				
Grand Totals.....	117094	95111	367	212572

PRISONERS OF WAR

The companies of the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion captured the following number of prisoners between the 6th of June 1944 and 8 May 1945, inclusive:

COMPANY	OFFICERS	EM	TOTAL
Hq.	10	238	243
A	5	126	131
B	—	185	185
C	3	376	379
D	—	17	17
Totals	18	942	960

The number of prisoners taken by the weapons companies is much higher than shown, but only those shown on historical records are in the total. It is estimated that an additional 1000 prisoners were taken by the companies and immediately turned over to the infantry to be marched back to a cage.

DEAD OF THE 81ST CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION

Mann, John R.	- - - - -	1st Lt.
Cook, Ray J.	- - - - -	T/Sgt.
Mason, Leo M.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Skaleski, Raymond R.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Knott, John J. Jr.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Ward, Thomas H.	- - - - -	Cpl.
Hughes, Lucian D. Jr.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Frausto, Margarito C.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Croak, John E.	- - - - -	T/5
Winston, Beverly	- - - - -	Pvt.
Walton, Philip C.	- - - - -	2nd Lt.
Gaffney, Philip J.	- - - - -	Capt.
Moundres, Thomas P.	- - - - -	Capt.
Baumgartner, George M.	- - - - -	1st Lt.
Barron, Louis	- - - - -	Pvt.
Knipple, Warren K.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Fix, Raymond L.	- - - - (120th)	T/5
Offner, Andrew M. Jr.	- - - - -	Cpl.
Panas, James P.	- - - - -	Capt.
Iannacone, Constantine J.	- - - - -	Sgt.
Kelly, Joseph M.	- - - - -	Pfc.
Rone, James	- - - - -	Pfc.
Sheehan, Keith C.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Toole, John R.	- - - - -	2nd Lt.
Grob, Herbert D.	- - - - -	Cpl.
Byrnside, Delmar C.	- - - - -	Sgt.
Gates, Bernard M.	- - - - -	Capt.
Colome, Harvey K.	- - - - -	Cpl.
Bell, Vernon H.	- - - - -	Pfc.
Griffith, Everett W.	- - - - -	1st Lt.
Swenson, Paul E.	- - - - -	Pfc.
Pittari, Anthony	- - - - -	Pvt.
Scarfo, Joseph F.	- - - - -	Pfc.
Graves, Robert L.	- - - - -	Cpl.
Arnold, Frank B.	- - - - -	Pvt.
McMath, William M. Jr.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Harris, Giles B.	- - - - -	2nd Lt.
Sanna, Domenic A.	- - - - -	Pvt.
Campbell, John W.	- - - - -	1st Lt.
Morrison, Roy V.	- - - - -	Cpl.
Radakovitz, John S.	- - - - -	1st/Sgt.

II—BATTLE HONORS.—3. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (sec. I, Bull. 22, WD, 1943), superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (sec. III, Bull. 11, WD, 1942), citation of the following unit in General Orders, No. 40, Headquarters 1st Infantry Division, 17 July 1944, as approved by the Commanding General, United States Army forces in the European Theater of Operations, is confirmed under the provisions of section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction. The citation reads as follows:

The 81st Chemical Battalion, Motorized, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action. In the invasion of France the mission of the 81st Chemical Battalion was to furnish close mortar support for the two leading assault regiments. In the accomplishment of this mission the 81st Chemical Battalion landed at H plus 60 minutes on D-Day, at which time the beach and harbors were under incessant machine gun, artillery, rocket, and mortar fire from the enemy. Underwater and beach obstacles were encountered as the landing craft approached the shore and in the advance from the landing craft to the beach. When two LCVPs in which a part of the battalion was landing sank from enemy shell hits, the men of the 81st Chemical Battalion transferred their mortars, ammunition, and equipment from their own landing craft to an LCM, and under constant shelling managed to land the equipment. In another instance, when their landing craft sank, the men, by their fierce persistence in the face of great odds, swam ashore, towing with them two mortars and two mortar carts which previously had been made buoyant by life preservers. Though numerous casualties were suffered the men of the 81st Chemical Battalion were not deterred from the accomplishment of their mission, and upon reaching shore with the loss of only one mortar, continued in support of the infantry for 12 days without relief. Such heroism and gallantry, in the face of tremendous odds and unusual and hazardous conditions, are in keeping with the traditions of the service and deserving of the highest praise

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY SERVICE FORCES

Office Chief Of Chemical Warfare Service
Washington 25, D. C.

24 August 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

To : Commanding Officer, 81st Chemical Battalion, APO 652,
c/o Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

1. It is a particular pleasure for me to commend the 81st Chemical Battalion for its outstanding accomplishments in the liberation of enemy-occupied territory.

2. The Presidential unit citation and other honors bestowed upon your organization, collectively and individually, attest to a high degree of military proficiency in which your personnel can be justly proud, and in which your Service takes equal pride.

3. In both spirit and attainment, the 81st Chemical Battalion exemplifies the high traditions of the Chemical Warfare Service.

WILLIAM N. PORTER

Major General

Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Commanding Officer, 81st Chemical Battalion

THRU: Commanding General, First U. S. Army, APO 230

1. Upon relief of the 81st Chemical Battalion from attachment to the V Corps, I desire to express to you, and through you to the officers and men of your command, my thanks and appreciation for the excellent manner in which they functioned while under this corps.

2. The record of the 81st Chemical Battalion during the campaign for Western Europe has been indeed an enviable one. The battalion entered combat with this corps on D Day and has served uninterruptedly with it for 104 days. It was in the line continuously for the first 60 days of combat. Notwithstanding the unfortunate loss of its commanding officer and a large portion of its equipment during the landing on the French Coast, it has at all times been ready for any mission which it has been called upon to perform. It participated in the decisive assault on Hill 192 on 11 July 1944 and its effective support of the 2nd Infantry Division contributed in a large measure to the success of that attack. It has operated in support of artillery as well as infantry. Elements of the battalion during the above period have been attached to ten different divisions. It has sustained more than 100 casualties, and 53 of its members have received individual decorations. It has won the coveted Presidential Unit Citation for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy.

3. No words of mine could add to the prestige of an organization with such a record. It is indeed a history of which any organization of the United States Army can be justly proud. I accept its loss to the corps with regret. My best wishes for your continued success go with each and every one of you.

EDWARD H. BROOKS,

Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION

OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL

APO 90, U. S. ARMY

AG 200.6

19 January 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Commanding Officer, 81st Chemical Battalion, APO 403, U.S. Army.

THRU: Commanding General, Third U. S. Army, APO 403, U.S. Army.

1. Companies "A," "B" and "C" of the 81st Chemical Battalion rendered extremely valuable services to this division from 20 August, 1944 to 7 January, 1945.

2. During the Maizieres-les-Metz operations Company "A" fired a total of 12,054 rounds HE and WP from 15 October to 1 November, aiding materially in the capture of that town. During the Moselle River crossing Company "A" fired a total of 4,537 rounds of WP and HE from 9 November to 18 November. During one twenty-four hour period this company maintained a smokescreen about two thousand yards wide during daylight hours in addition to other missions called by the supported unit. During period from 8 October to 4 November, Company "B" fired a total of 8,447 rounds of WP and HE in the Gravelotte area.

3. In the Saar River crossing 6 December to 22 December, 1944, "B" and "C" Companies rendered most valuable services. Especially were these companies helpful in this action with their highly successful smoking operations. During this action "B" Company fired a total of 23,886 and "C" Company fired a total of 17,862 rounds of HE and WP.

4. The exemplary manner in which officers and enlisted men of this battalion have supported the 90th Infantry Division under all types of weather, terrain and enemy action has been outstanding. The constant close cooperation of Lt. Col. Jack W. Lipphardt, Battalion Commander, and his staff, was of the highest type.

5. The support furnished by these companies of the 81st Chemical Battalion contributed greatly to the successes of the 90th Infantry Division. Their future assignment in support of this division would be most welcome.

J. A. VAN FLEET

Major General, U. S. Army
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND B

10TH ARMORED DIVISION

APO 260, U. S. ARMY

2 December 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

To: CO, Co "C," 81 Cml Bn.

1. During the period 7-30 Nov your company, or part of it supported each team of this Combat Command and materially assisted us in our advance between the MOSELLE and SAAR RIVERS.

2. I wish to commend you for your wholehearted cooperation and efficient employment of your troops, and to further commend the officers and men under you for their untiring efforts, disregard of danger and proficiency with their weapon.

3. It is a pleasure to give you this commendation.

EDWIN W. PIBURN

Brig Gen, USA Comdg.

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH UNITED STATES ARMY

APO 408

Office of the Commandant, 15th Army Radar School

18 May 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

To: Commanding Officer, 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion, APO 403.

1. Company "B," 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion, was on temporary duty at this station for the period 15 April-18 May 1945, both dates inclusive. During all that period, members of the company executed all the firing missions for the Radar School. The company acted as supply agency, operated two messes, provided most of the transportation used at the school, furnished the interior guard, policed the area, and in general administered the operation of the chateau.

2. The officers and men of Company "B," 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion are commended for their excellent performance and attention to duty in all their assigned tasks.

3. It is requested that this commendation be forwarded to Company "B," 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion, for their records. It is further requested that higher headquarters be informed concerning the commendable performance of this company, while on duty at this station.

N. A. McLAMB,

Lt Col., CAC, Commandant.

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T.A.R.
page 10.

Subject: Commendation
To: CO, C. 81 Cal Bn
1. During the period 7-30 Nov your company, as part of 1st sup-
ported each team of this Combat Command and materially assisted
us in our advance between the MOSELLE and SAAR RIVERS.
2. I wish to commend you for your wholehearted cooperation and
efficient employment of your troops and to further commend the
officers and men under you for their lasting efforts, disregard of
danger and proficiency with their weapons.
3. It is a pleasure to give you this commendation.
EDWIN W. PIERSON
Brig Gen USA Commanding

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 408
Office of the Commandant, 15th Army School
12 May 1945
Subject: Commendation
To: Commanding Officer, 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion, APO 408
1. Company "B", 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion, was on com-
pany duty at this station for the period 15 April to 15 May 1945.
During all that period members of the com-
pany executed all the firing missions for the 15th Army School. The
company acted as supply agency, operated two targets, provided
most of the transportation used at the school, furnished the forward
guard, policed the area and in general advanced the operation
of the station.
2. The officers and men of Company "B", 81st Chemical Mortar
Battalion are commended for their excellent performance and con-
tinued to duty in all their assigned tasks.
3. It is requested that this commendation be forwarded to Com-
pany "B", 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion for their records. It is
further requested that higher headquarters be informed concerning
the commendable performance of this company, with an view to
this station.

V. A. MELAMB
1st Col. CAC Commandant

