

1946

# Combat history of the 119th Infantry Regiment

United States Army

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JUNE 1944 - MAY 1945

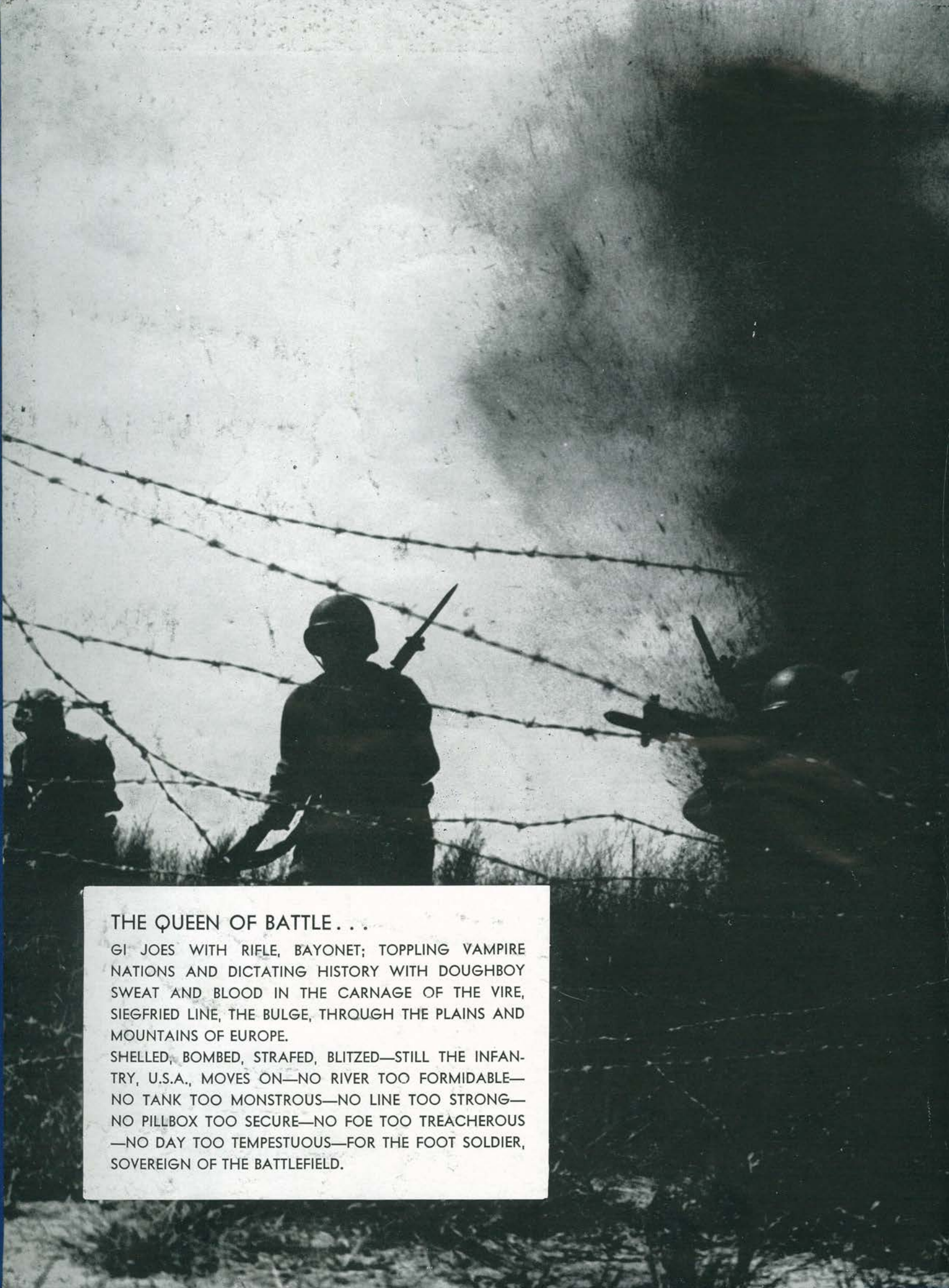


*119<sup>th</sup>*

*Infantry*

★ NORMANDY  
★ NORTHERN FRANCE  
★ RHINELAND  
★ ARDENNES  
★ CENTRAL GERMANY



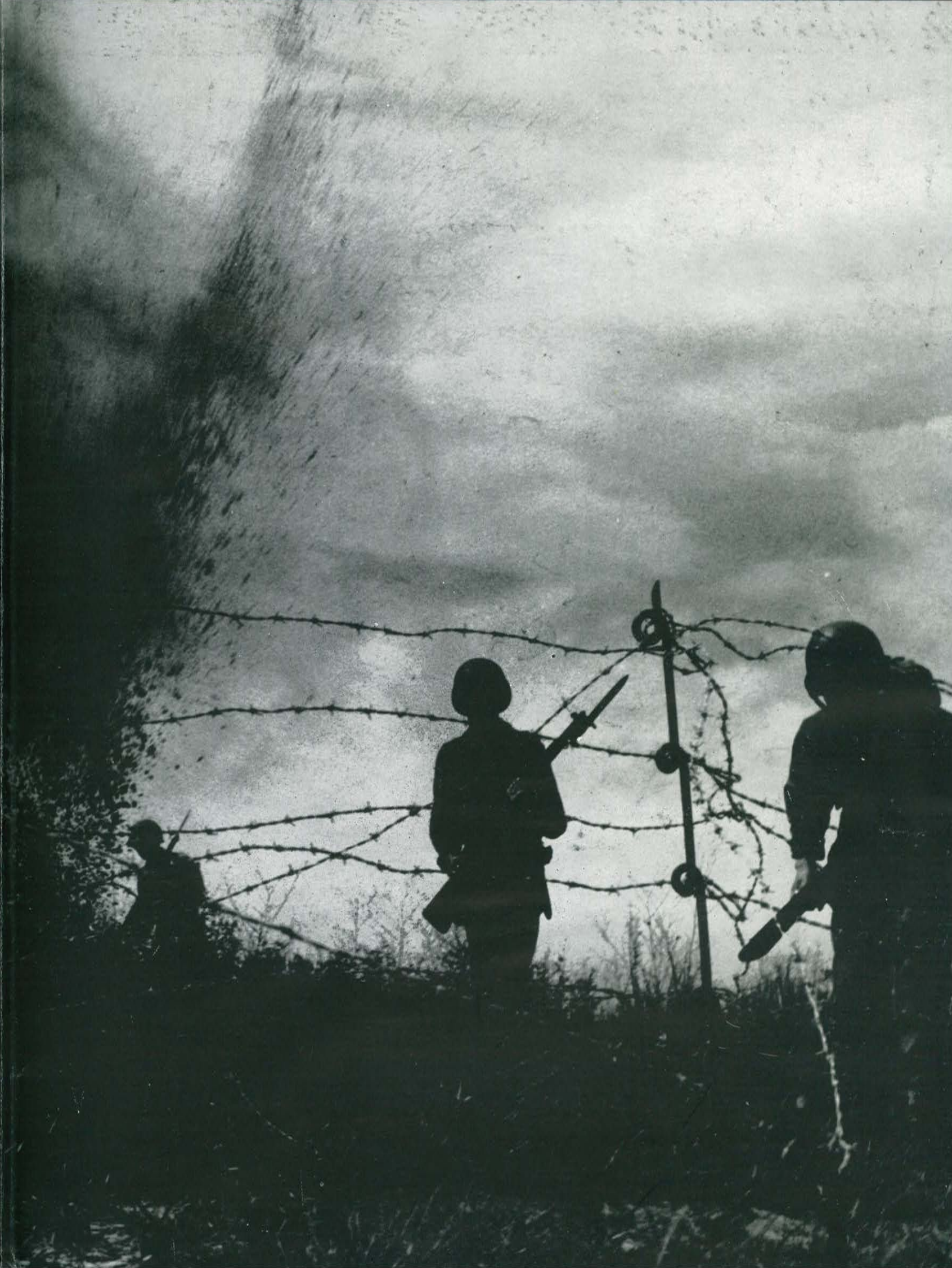


## THE QUEEN OF BATTLE . . .

GI JOES WITH RIFLE, BAYONET; TOPPLING VAMPIRE NATIONS AND DICTATING HISTORY WITH DOUGHBOY SWEAT AND BLOOD IN THE CARNAGE OF THE VIRE, SIEGFRIED LINE, THE BULGE, THROUGH THE PLAINS AND MOUNTAINS OF EUROPE.

SHELLED, BOMBED, STRAFED, BLITZED—STILL THE INFANTRY, U.S.A., MOVES ON—NO RIVER TOO FORMIDABLE—NO TANK TOO MONSTROUS—NO LINE TOO STRONG—NO PILLBOX TOO SECURE—NO FOE TOO TREACHEROUS—NO DAY TOO TEMPESTUOUS—FOR THE FOOT SOLDIER, SOVEREIGN OF THE BATTLEFIELD.







# COMBAT HISTORY

## OF THE

# 119TH INFANTRY REGIMENT







**THEY CALLED HIM "JOE"**





## D E D I C A T I O N

No history of the 119th Infantry Regiment would be complete without a sincere and profound expression of deep gratitude to the Officers and men of the 197th Field Artillery Battalion. Your officers and men fought and died with us and for us. Many of your observer parties sacrificed their lives so that we might live. To no man, or group of men, can we owe more; there is none who could have given more. You have shared our suffering, our food, and our burdens. Under your fire we could sleep at night and move in the daylight. It would be unkind for us to display our laurels without the admission that to your efforts we are indebted for many of our victories, our confidence, and, for many of us, our lives.

We salute you 197th, "You're the best damn Artillery Battalion in the Army."

HEADQUARTERS 119TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

FORT JACKSON, S. C.



November 10, 1945

SUBJECT: Regimental History.

TO: All personnel, 119th Infantry Regiment.

1. Those connected with the preparation of this brief history of the 119th Infantry Regiment covering its activities while in the European Theatre of Operations have been severely handicapped by a lack of complete files and by the separation from the regiment of the bulk of the personnel who were present during combat. As a consequence this history deals principally with the activities of the regiment as a whole and of necessity omits many personal interest stories, rosters, etc., which, if available would have added much to the book. It is hoped that these difficulties will be appreciated and that minor inaccuracies or omissions will be understood and condoned.

2. With assurance that I express your desire I am suggesting that the regimental history be dedicated to the memory of our comrades who fell in action.

3. I should like again to wish you and yours continued success and much happiness in the years of peace to come which were made possible through your sacrifices and efforts and of those gallant men to whom I suggest this book be dedicated.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R. A. Baker'.

R. A. BAKER  
Colonel, 119th Infantry  
Commanding





**R. A. BAKER**

COLONEL, 119TH INFANTRY

*Commanding*

W. H. SIMPSON  
*Lieutenant General, U.S.A.*



HEADQUARTERS SECOND ARMY

*Office of the Commanding General*  
MEMPHIS 15, TENNESSEE



The breaching of the Siegfried Line, the Roer River crossings, and the drive to the Elbe River, are some of the landmarks on the hard and dangerous road to Victory traveled by the men of the 119th Infantry Regiment. Such landmarks are monuments to courage and ability, and help to make the record of the 119th Infantry a proud one.

*W.H. Simpson*

W. H. SIMPSON  
*Lieutenant General, United States Army*





**LELAND S. HOBBS**

*Major General, U.S.A.*

*Comanding the 30th Infantry Division*

My salute to a fighting organization—the 119th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division!

By its deeds, by its superb fighting qualities, by its pride in accomplishment, it wrote into the pages of the history of World War II a series of campaigning that will live forever.

Under competent leadership, the 119th Infantry Regiment trained well, fought well, conducted itself with pride. No division commander could have been more fortunate than the Commanding General of the 30th Infantry Division, in having such integrated team work as was furnished by the Infantry and Artillery units of our division.

The tasks were hard, and many of our comrades fell in the accomplishment of them. But the 119th Infantry Regiment always reached its objective. That is the true test of a combat unit.

Let all of us who fought together resolve to retain in our future lives all that was best—all that made us better soldiers—all that made us proud of ourselves and of our organization.

Your exploits in the European Theatre are now in history, but as individual Americans there is still work to be done.

My congratulations to each and every member of the Regiment for the magnificent record you established, and my sincere, humble thanks for all your efforts.

LELAND S. HOBBS,  
*Major General, U. S. Army,*  
*Commanding the 30th Infantry Division*

# HISTORY OF THE 119TH INFANTRY

This is a history of the 119th Infantry Regiment from June 13, 1944, when it landed on the coast of France, to its actions around the Elbe River, and the formal collapse of Germany on May 8, 1945. Each man who fought in the Regiment had his personal memories. If all the memories of our men, living and dead, could be gathered together here, a complete, exact story of our suffering, sacrifice, courage, and victories could be told. The passing of time, however, leaves only the War Department records and the memories of our survivors. An attempt has been made to fortify the official record with the lore of the Regiment. If any deviation from actual fact has been made in the attempt, it can only be attributed to the telling and retelling, and the fatigued minds of the handful of us left.

## JUNE

Vire River—Airel—La Meaulle—St. Clair—sur l'Elle

The 13th of June was a clear day and from the ship you could see the smoke and dust of explosions inland. Along the beach called Omaha were the sunken ships and wreckage of D-Day, a few days before. Then the first breach had been made in the West Wall of Fortress Europe. Now the question was whether we could hold on until we had gathered enough forces and supplies in the beachhead to fight our way out of the Normandy peninsula into the body of Europe, developing the action from a raid into an invasion. The Germans at this time were determined to push us back into the Channel, as they had already done at Dieppe.

The 119th expected and was exceptionally well prepared for a hard fight. It had had, considering the mission assigned to it, a short period of training. On September 7, 1942, it had been activated as part of the 30th Division, at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. It was a new regiment, with cadre drawn mostly from the 117th and 120th Infantry. On December 7, 1942, it began the first phase of the Mobilization Training Program at Camp Blanding, Florida. The second phase of the training was completed at Camp Blanding and for the third phase the Regiment moved to Camp Forrest, Tennessee, on June 1, 1943. The Regiment established such an outstanding record in its War Department Training Test that it was rapidly groomed for action. It

had broken all previous records for physical endurance, tactics, condition of equipment, technical knowledge, and general efficiency. Colonel A. V. Ednie, our commander, later brought us to France and fought with us during the Normandy campaign.

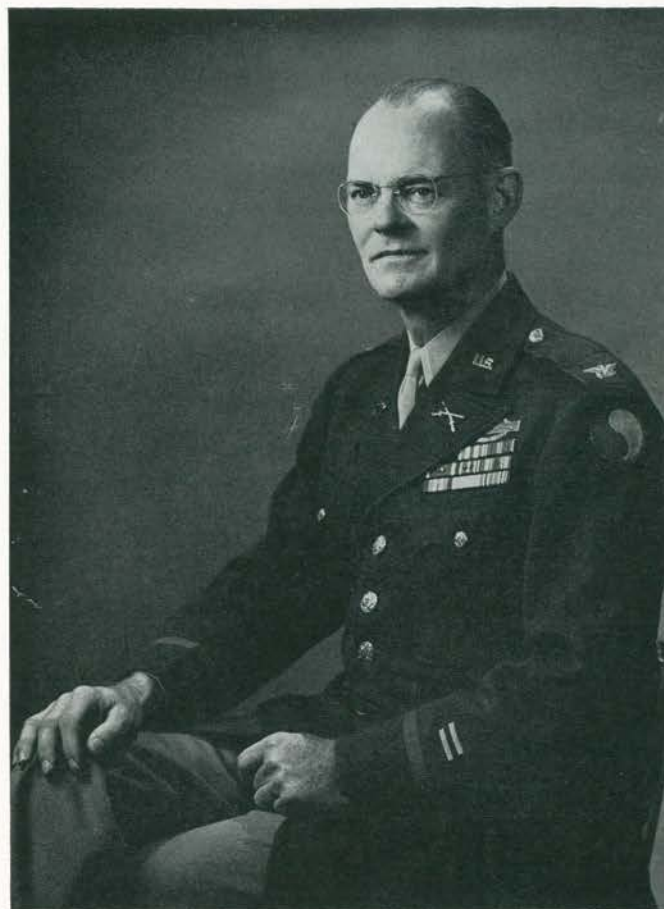
On June 10, 1943, a letter from the Adjutant General's Office transferred to us the battle honors of the old 119th Infantry from World War I. The old 119th, 60th Brigade, 30th Division, had landed in France on May 29, 1918 and first went into action in August. The 30th Division helped break the Hindenburg Line—as we were to break the Siegfried Line—and the 119th won the following battle honors:

Aug. 16—Sept. 4, 1918—Ypres, Belgium Canal Sector.

Sept. 29-Oct. 2, 1918—Bellicourt, France, St. Quentin Canal Sector.

Oct. 7-Oct. 12, 1918—Fremont, Busiguy.

COLONEL A. V. EDNIE  
*119th Infantry Regiment*





Oct. 16-Oct. 20, 1918—Ribesville, Esciellor, Majinghirn.

Our connection with all this was tenuous, but it gave us a challenge and a great example. By similar connections our history reached back to the North Carolina State Guard, organized in 1879, to the Army of Occupation in Cuba, and to the coastal defense against the Cerveras Squadron in 1898. Thus our history was fairly long as well as glorious.

The final phase of the training program lasted from September 4, 1943, through October, and consisted of Third Army Maneuvers around Murfreesboro, Tennessee. After that the Regiment moved to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, to pursue refresher training before going overseas. There it received replacements to bring it to full strength.

On February 12, 1944, a cold and snowy day, the Regiment left Boston Harbor on the U. S. Army Transport Brazil. It docked at Liverpool on the 23rd and went by train to southeastern England, billeting in the towns of Rustington, Middleton, and Little Hampton, Sussex. There the Regiment had still further training in bayonet and knife fighting, in dirty fighting, in destruction of equipment, and in chemical warfare, in aircraft identification, in squad tactics, mines, the selection of observation posts, and so on. The Regiment was to be prepared for anything, and some of this training turned out to be invaluable.

On April 3, the Regiment moved to an area around Chalfont St. Giles and Stoke Poges, in Buckinghamshire, and continued to train. On April 15 it held a review for the English general, Montgomery, near Beaconsfield. His address won not only the admiration but the genuine liking of the American soldiers who heard him. The Regiment continued to train until it left Southampton for France.

The soldiers, from all over America, were ready to engage in a major historical event, and they had different ideas about it. Some thought it was a job to be done. Some thought we were fighting England's war or Russia's war, or a war for imperialism. Some thought our war was exclusively in the Pacific. Some thought it was an opportunity to prove ourselves heroes. Most of them thought we were fighting for liberty.

After landing, the Regiment gathered near Isigny, organized, and waited for orders. Isigny was in ruins. On the march from the beach the Regiment had seen its first German dead lying along the hedgerows.



*Omaha Beach*

On June 15 the Regiment was assigned the mission of occupying a line along the Vire River, relieving elements of the 175th Infantry. We were to be prepared to attack on Division order. The line was occupied by K and L Companies with M Company in support. The First and Second Battalions stayed in an assembly area awaiting the attack order.

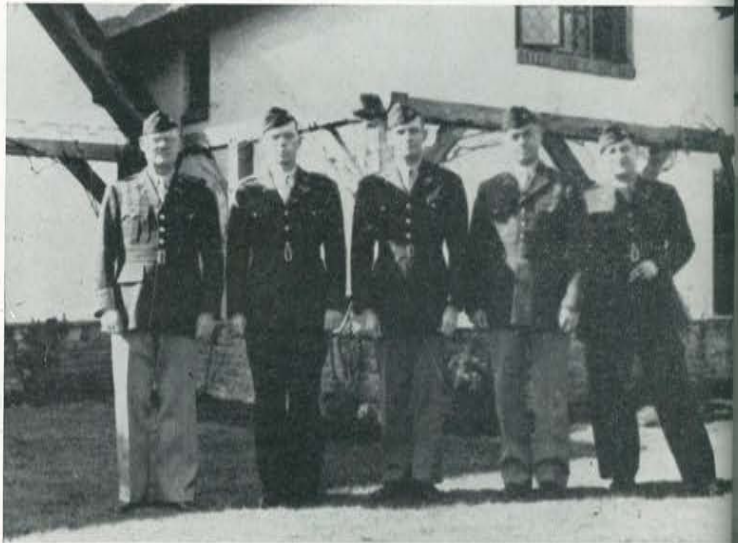
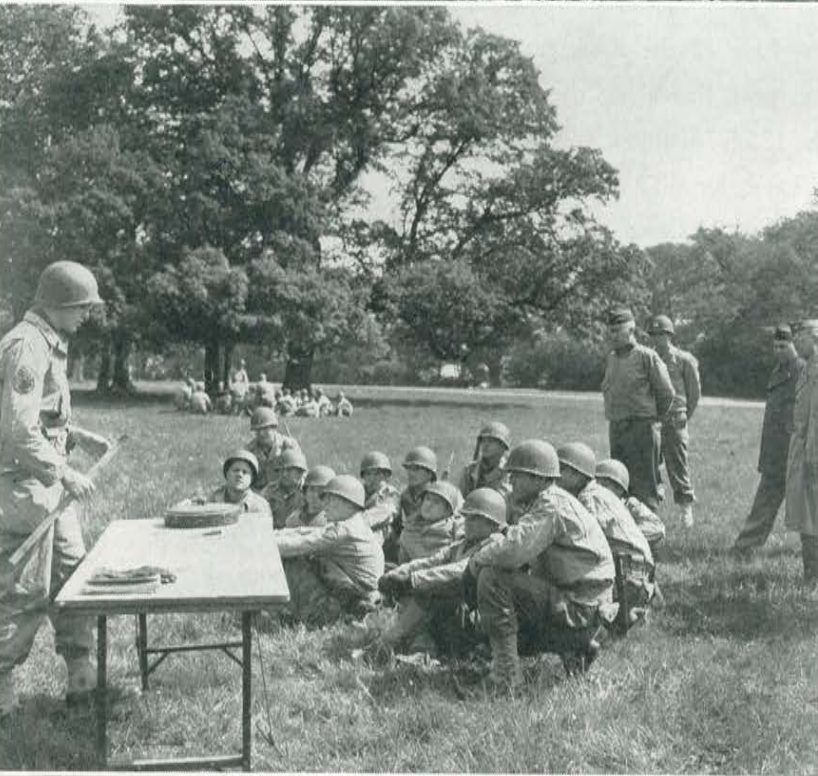
In the afternoon L Company took the village of Airl without opposition and sent one platoon under 1st Lt. Daniel A. Meade to cover the stone bridge across the river at Pont de St. Fromond and to protect it from further damage. (It already had a large hole blown in it.) At 1000 the next morning Lt. Meade, in company of an officer from the 105th Engineers, walked out toward the bridge to examine it for repairs and was hit by a bullet from an enemy sniper across the river. Only a short time before an enlisted man from the platoon had crossed the bridge and returned unharmed. Lt. Meade was the first Regimental casualty by enemy action.

On the same day the Regiment took its first prisoners. A German, wounded in the leg, had to be left behind when the others withdrew. After hiding in a house in Airl for three days, he turned himself in to the Third Battalion. A Polish soldier in the German army became separated from his unit and after wandering around for several days, turned himself in to the First Battalion in the neighborhood of Amy.

The Regiment moved about two kilometers to the south and prepared to attack on the morning of the 17th. In the evening of the 16th, however, the attack was postponed. On June 17th, detailed plans were made and orders given for a



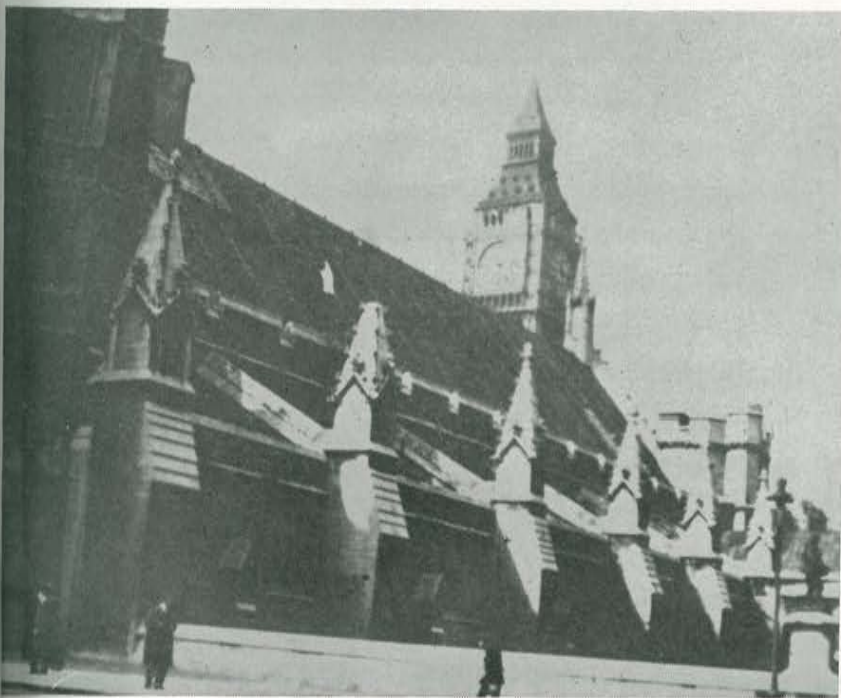
# PRE-INVASION IN ENGLAND





# SCENES

★ ★ ★





river crossing and attack to the west starting at 0130 June 18. About noon this order was revoked and the two battalions were ordered to take up a defensive position. The other Battalion, the Second, was ordered into Division reserve and occupied an assembly area near Le Essarts.

Two patrols from the Regimental I & R Platoon crossed the river in the morning, penetrated up to 600 yards behind the enemy lines and returned safely. Several night patrols had failed even to get across. The patrol, consisting of Cpl. Harold Merz, Pfc. John F. McLacken, and Pfc. Edwin Watt, crossed in a boat in broad daylight. On reaching the end of a hedgerow they looked over the intersecting hedge and saw an enemy machine gun crew, a sergeant, and three men. Corporal Merz was very amused by this; the others were not. As they were about to withdraw, one German looked up and saw them. Pfc. McLacken lobbed a grenade over the hedge into the emplacement, destroying the gun and killing or wounding the crew. The explosion alerted other Germans in the area who started excitedly firing at random. The patrol fired a few rounds in their direction and then withdrew.

The only other noteworthy events of this day were the arrival of the Third Battalion Staff and Company I, which had been separated from the Regiment in the marshalling area in England; an informal visit to the CP by General Corlett, the Corps Commander; and the first distribution of mail in France.

Division Field Order Three had ordered the Regiment onto the defensive. The Third Battalion (minus K Company) occupied the Regimental right, a sector along the Vire River from Airlé inland to a stream bend. The First Battalion occupied the line of the river south from this point to La Meauffe. The 117th Infantry in Corps reserve sent in one battalion to occupy the east bank of the river on the right of our Third Battalion.

K Company became Regimental reserve and at first occupied a portion of terrain in the rear of the Third Battalion; but, on June 18 at 1400, it moved south and occupied the gap between our First Battalion and the 175th Infantry to our left.

On June 18, B Company moved south in the First Battalion sector to occupy its position between the railroad and the river. It made a short advance against light machine



*B Company await their turn to land on Omaha Beach*

gun fire and sniper fire from near the church in La Meauffe and from the hedges near the town. A number of casualties were sustained, and upon the order of the Regimental Commander, B Company displaced to the north. Company A took up the attack.

This offensive action, the first by the Regiment, was opposed by snipers, the fire of automatic weapons—some of it from across the river—and an 88-mm. gun. Support was given by the 197th Field Artillery and by one platoon of Cannon Company, but even so, 33 casualties were sustained before the town of La Meauffe proper was cleared. Among them were 1st Lt. Clarence C. Dent, commander of C Company, and Lieutenant Missimir of Company A, who was captured (later he escaped from the Germans and joined the French Underground in Paris. He fought in the liberation of the city).

Early the next morning the Regimental Commander offered Colonel Cantey, commanding the First Battalion, all available resources to complete his action, but the 175th Infantry withdrew on the Battalion left and General Harrison the Assistant Division Commander, ordered Colonel Cantey to break off the attack and take up a defensive position. The Second Battalion, in Division reserve, was ordered south to an assembly area near La Gouterie to cover the gap between the 119th and the 175th.

We were not yet prepared to carry out a major offensive and yet the holding action was to be exploited for what it



would yield. In the afternoon an overlay arrived from Division giving a new attack plan. The Third Battalion would attack on the right and the Second Battalion on the left. The First Battalion would keep its defensive position until passed by the Second, when it would revert to Regimental reserve. The hour was fixed at 0400, but the day was to be determined later by the Division. The battalions were moved into line, but on the 22nd the attack plan was definitely cancelled, and a tentative defense line from Airel to Moon-sur-Elle to St. Clair-sur-l'Elle was reconnoitered by the Battalion Commanders.

The battalions stayed in about the same positions for the next two weeks. Contact with the enemy was limited to some artillery exchanges, and frequent patrols were sent out. On the 23rd, a platoon of the First Battalion occupied a strong position in La Meauffe, and numerous sniper points were set up. The enemy also had sniper positions and observation posts in the town, withdrawing them at night.

Our principal observation post was a 150-foot smokestack in a distillery in the northern part of town. The Germans sent a patrol of over 30 men across the river at night to demolish the stack. As they came within 50 yards of it and the first few started over the railroad embankment toward it, a guard saw them in the moonlight and threw a grenade. The leader was seriously wounded, and the others, not knowing where the grenade had come from and not being able to provoke any answer to their fire, lost enthusiasm for the mission and gradually withdrew. The leader, who was found alive in the morning, gave considerable information concerning the German dispositions across the river.

So we stayed in place, gathering strength and information for the attack. On the 25th, the rear detachment, which we had been vainly trying to locate since our arrival in France, finally showed up. They had sat on the ship for eight days waiting for the wind to die down enough to permit landing.

## JULY

Vire River Crossing—Pont De St. Fromond—Cavigny—Belle Lande—Pont Hebert—Le Mesnil Durand—Hebecrevon—Romphaire—Troisgots.

A new plan for an attack across the Vire had come down from Division on the last day of June, so the first few days of July were spent reconnoitering positions and completing details. On the night of the third, K Company sent Pfc. Bert-

rand J. Mandeville and Pfc. Hans Richert on a patrol across the river in a heavy rain. A creeping barrage of artillery protected their crossing. Stripped to the essentials, each man had with him a D ration and a K ration, a carbine and one clip of ammunition. When they had gone about 400 yards into enemy territory a machine gun opened up on them. They managed to crawl around the flank of the position in the dark and had continued 200 yards farther when another machine gun opened up. They moved around the second machine gun and finally secreted themselves in a position a mile behind the enemy lines.

They spent the Fourth of July sitting in a steady downpour observing enemy movements and plotting their positions. About midnight they returned with detailed information which later proved to be of the greatest importance to our artillery in covering our crossing of the Vire.

In the early morning of the Fourth of July the Second Battalion occupied a new position near the crossroads at Moon-sur-Elle and prepared for an early crossing, only to have the attack again postponed. On the 6th a S-3 meeting was held, at which units were ordered to emplace all guns after dark for fire support of the 117th Infantry. All reconnaissance was to be completed before dark and trucks were to be driven back and forth during the night to give the impression of activity in our sector. The crossing was actually to be made in the 117th Infantry sector to our right, by that unit with our Second Battalion follow-







*Lt. Phillips and Capt. Mann*

ing them under Division control. H-Hour was to be announced at 2200; until then, great secrecy was to prevail.

In the meantime, as we faced the river, our left flank was dubious, and that area to the south was to cause considerable difficulty, not only for the 35th Division, which was to clear out the east side of the river, but for us as we came down the other side. In the afternoon of the sixth, a combat patrol of 34 men from C Company ran into stiff resistance from small arms and four machine guns 1,200 yards southwest of La Meauffe. The patrol sustained heavy casualties, though it inflicted a good many and knocked out at least one of the machine guns with mortar fire.

Finally, on the seventh, at 0430, the crossing was started just north of Airl by the Second Battalion, 117th Infantry. They made the crossing almost without resistance. The artillery concentration was probably the greatest used thus far in Europe. The ground shook from the rumble of the guns and the explosions a few hundred yards away. However, in the hedgerows on the other side, the men met considerable resistance, and it was not until 0755 that Phase Line One was reached, just south of Pont de St. Fromond, and the supporting fires of the 117th Infantry, opposite the position of the Third Battalion, were lifted from the northern half of the area.

At 0800 our Second Battalion began to move on Division order. It crossed on the stone bridge at Pont de St. Fromond, which had been strengthened by steel trusses laid over the center where a hole had been blown. Although heavy casualties were sustained in men and vehicles on this bridge, it itself did not suffer further material damage. During the

day many bridges were put in at other points by the engineers, only to be frequently blown by enemy artillery fire. Because of the congestion at the bridges and across the river it was late the next day before all the vehicles could cross.

At 1250 the Second Battalion reached its assembly area on the southern slope of the hill southwest of Pont de St. Fromond and secured the left flank of the 117th. In this move four enlisted men were casualties and a 197th Field Artillery liaison officer was killed. That evening the Second Battalion was attached to the 117th and the next morning accompanied their attachment southwest to take the crossroads south of St. Jean de Daye. The town itself had been captured on the seventh by the 120th Infantry.

In the morning of the eighth, foot elements of the Third Battalion, Special Units, and Regimental Headquarters moved out to cross the river. Just before they moved, Colonel Ednie gave instructions to the entire Regiment that prisoners would be taken whenever possible. This policy was repaid during the next few days when most of the Russians and Poles in the German forces opposing us allowed themselves to be captured. The backbone of the opposing troops was SS panzer grenadiers.

During the night, elements of the Third Armored Division moved across the bridge at Pont de St. Fromond to

*Ruins caused by our artillery and bombers at Airl, France.*





fill the fields and most of the roads with armor. Their movements and attack had not been coordinated with ours. When Regimental Headquarters finally reached the new CP, a tank battle had just ended there. Five disabled enemy tanks were standing or lying around the area. One had had the turret completely blown off by a direct HE hit. One, which had run off the bridge in trying to withdraw, was intact. A platoon of 45 men from E Company, occupying a nearby church as an outpost, had suffered nine casualties, including Lieutenant Beatrice, the platoon leader, killed. The Regimental Headquarters Commandant and a small patrol from B Company mopped up three snipers in the Regimental Command Post with little difficulty.

That afternoon the Second Battalion returned to Regimental control and continued the attack to the south. The Third Battalion was moved into position on their left. In this attack, fire from two enemy machine guns pinned down the Third Platoon of L Company when it tried to outflank the positions. A platoon leader and several others were casualties. Sgt. John R. Church brought his 60-mm. mortar squad up to within 75 yards of the enemy and, firing at the dangerous and delicate angle of 82 degrees, killed the entire crew at one of the enemy positions and wounded most of the crew at the other. Men from the First and Third Platoons then moved up and wiped out what was left.

The advance of the Third Battalion was slowed down not only by determined resistance, but by supply difficulties. Vehicles from the rear could not reach the front because the few roads in the area received particular attention from the enemy heavy artillery. They were also reported to be mined. Men could not be spared from the lines to go back for supplies, so carrying parties were organized in the rear to bring ammunition, food, and water on foot to the front line positions. These men worked all night under artillery and small arms fire, without guides and through unfamiliar territory. On the return trips they helped evacuate the wounded. The Battalion aid station had suffered many casualties and there were insufficient men left to evacuate the casualties from the lines unaided. This difficult situation continued for three days.

On the morning of the 9th the attack was resumed with the same dispositions: The Third Battalion on the left, the Second Battalion on the right, and the 117th Infantry on the



*Casualties began to pour in*

right of our Second Battalion. In the early afternoon the Third Battalion took Cavigny. At 1545 a counterattack by 50 enemy tanks struck the Division center and right, and the Regimental attacks were held up until this situation clarified itself.

F Company fired on six German tanks held in a defiladed position. E Company passed through F Company and attacked the tanks, overcame them, and pursued the escaping troops. The main body of the counterattack was broken by Corps artillery. When the artillery fire lifted in the evening we continued our advance, and the Second Battalion took La Coquerie.

The first two days of the attack south from the crossing site, the Regiment lost seven killed and 66 wounded. Among them were several Company Commanders. Most of the casualties were from artillery fire. We took 63 prisoners. Ten of them were taken by S/Sgt. Heinz K. Schwartz near Cavigny.

On July 10th at daylight the First Battalion started across the river to occupy an assembly area just north of the church at Cavigny. The Regimental CP moved to a position almost adjoining theirs. During the move Captain Mathwig, com-





ing Cannon Company, and his driver were both severely injured when their vehicle detonated a mine. The road had been used by vehicles previously for 12 hours without accident. When it was swept 20 or more teller and box mines were found along the shoulders.

The Second Battalion took up the attack at 0700 and, though the Third Battalion was delayed a few hours by lack of ammunition, the two battalions at 1030 were moving approximately abreast of each other on a front extending northwest from a point just across the river from St. Gilles. They were meeting only light resistance and in the early afternoon were delayed mostly by the tanks of the Third Armored Division which were blocking routes of communication and firing across the front of the troops. Still the Second Battalion swung forward, pivoting on its left until it was almost due west of St. Gilles, with its right flank resting on the Pont Hebert-St. Jean de Daye highway. The Third Battalion advanced to a line about 500 yards north of the highway from St. Lo to Pont Hebert, with its left close to the river. To cover the open Regimental left flank the First Battalion was moved 600 yards east from its position at Cavigny and one company was sent south along the river.

General Hobbs and General Watson, the Commanding General of the Third Armored Division, with Colonel Roysdon and Colonel Ednie, conferred on a method of keeping the tanks from holding up the infantry advances. The conference determined that there would have to be close coordination of tactics between units. Tanks and infantry joined forces with satisfactory results.

In the early evening E Company was reported in a field just west of the highway to St. Jean de Daye and approximately the same distance south as the Third Battalion. Things looked promising, so the Second Battalion was ordered to take La Fontelaie and the high ground east of le Vignot, with the other two battalions covering the operation on the left flank. But at 1950 the Third Battalion was counterattacked and the Second Battalion was held up temporarily. Company G, moving south abreast of K Company against light resistance, held up on the edge of Belle Lande in order to send in preliminary reconnaissance and a few mortar shells. The plan was to go through the village to the high ground south of it, searching the buildings on the way.

As the Company entered the main street they received heavy bursts of machine gun fire. One man was killed outright, and the whole Company faltered. They became still more disorganized when the Company Commander, a platoon leader, and several enlisted men were seriously wounded. Orders had already come from Battalion to withdraw so that the town could be shelled. Lieutenant Krause of Cannon Company and Lieutenant Earll reorganized the Company, broke contact and withdrew to defensive positions. Here began the battle which soon enveloped the entire Regiment. The week that followed proved that we must destroy the enemy or die here. Tremendous masses of artillery were used on both sides. The enemy probably had the edge. All day and all night our lines were torn and twisted by heavy enemy concentrations.

The enemy didn't hesitate long; preceded by a mortar barrage, they attacked fiercely with three tanks, machine guns, and an unknown, but large, number of infantry. The tanks could be seen firing point blank over the tops of the hedgerows not more than 100 yards away. Lieutenant Krause stood up and directed cannon fire against them until he became a casualty. T/Sgt. Guy M. Robinson with great vigor and determination held his men in position at their



hedgerow, firing at point-blank range. In the rear of the Company, enemy artillery and mortar fire were causing casualties. Pvt. William Seddon took command of his squad when its leader was hit and, shouting that he would fire to kill the first man to move back, held his position.

The counterattack was stopped, their reserves dispersed and halted by Division artillery before their full strength could develop.

With a remarkable spirit of optimism an order was given for the Second Battalion to continue the attack at 1100 on the next day, July 11. The First Battalion was to pass through the Third Battalion and attack on the left. It was to be a part of a highly coordinated Corps attack, and it was desired that careful reconnaissance be carried out so the momentum once gained would not be lost.

The attack was launched, and during the day three were killed and 92 wounded, including Lieutenant Dalton of G Company and Captain Shackleton, S-3 of the Third Battalion. Forty-two prisoners were taken. The fighting was bitter all afternoon and continued so into the night with little gain achieved.

At 0630 the enemy counterattack broke loose again, accompanied by artillery concentrations on the Regimental CP and the Third Battalion, now in reserve. Company L was attached to the weakened First Battalion, and K Company was sent to cover its open left flank.

Five hostile artillery concentrations came in on the Regimental CP during the morning. The first wounded Captain Goldberg, one of the Regimental dentists. The second wounded Captain Worthland, the Civil Affairs officer attached to the Regiment. The third killed Major Kanes, the Regimental surgeon. The fourth severely shell-shocked Captain Maskowita, the Regimental Communications officer, and his driver. In all there were 17 casualties in the CP. As our artillery located the enemy batteries and began counter-battery fire, the first and last round of the fifth enemy concentration came in.

That night enemy tanks and infantry crossed the Vire and infiltrated past the line units on our flank into our rear areas. A platoon of tanks approaching by a defiladed route came within 100 yards of the Second Battalion CP south of la Coquerie, when a guard saw the accompanying infantry and gave the alarm. Cpl. Walter A. Scarborough awoke in his



*"Lou" Klewer, American Red Cross Representative*

foxhole to find most of the men in the area pinned down by intense small arms fire by the enemy infantry as well as by machine gun fire and direct 75-mm. fire from the tanks. He saw S/Sgt. Thomas E. Steele and Sgt. Fred F. Womack manning an AT gun in a point-blank fire fight with the leading enemy tank.

Leaving his foxhole, he carried ammunition through the fire and relieved Womack, who was wounded, at loading. At the beginning of the attack Sergeant Steele had thought it was only an infantry action and had manned a machine gun mounted on a vehicle just behind an AT gun. The first tank appeared and destroyed the AT gun and one truck. He then fell back to a second AT gun and fired several rounds of AP ammunition into the tank, destroying it. Until Sergeant Womack arrived, he loaded and fired single-handed. A bazooka team was moved in position to bolster the defense, and one of the rockets knocked the tread off the second tank.

Lieutenant Wilson led a small patrol against the enemy force. He and another man engaged the enemy infantry single-handed. He continued to push the enemy force back until he was wounded and ran out of ammunition. At the end of the action all 5 tanks were knocked out and 21 enemy infantry were killed.



Because of this and other enemy action in our rear areas during the morning, and because the Third Battalion was unable to get ammunition to the front, H-Hour was postponed from 1100 to 1200. Two companies of tanks arrived and were put in direct support of the Regiment, one to each of the attacking battalions. Before they could engage the enemy, they were ordered to meet a number of enemy tanks reported near Pont Hebert. At 1530 the First and Second Battalions jumped off without tank support. In an hour they had completed an advance of 200 yards. As small as this distance may seem, in those days it was an advance of considerable import.

That evening artillery concentrations began to fall in the First Battalion motor pool. The men were dug in along the hedgerows. One shell made a direct hit on the hedge just above a foxhole and buried the two men in it under the sodden covering and the earth from the hedge. Spencer J. Smiley, the motor sergeant, upon hearing their weak cries, left his foxhole to help them. Under the continuing fire of the barrage he attempted to dig down to them, with his hands and his helmet, only stopping when concussion threw him flat. When he finally uncovered them he found that they were in serious need of medical attention. Loading one man upon his back, he started toward the aid station. After only a few steps he was cut down by shrapnel and died of his wounds. It was bravery like this that gave us the will to fight.

During the day 17 men had been killed and 144 wounded. Fourteen prisoners had been taken, and from them it was learned that 12 German companies had been thrown in the line to start a drive to Isigny. The Germans had projected their attack more extravagantly than we could have, but accomplished even less.

On July 12 the attack jumped on time—at 0900—with the Second Battalion on the right and the First Battalion on the left. The attack was preceded by a ten-minute artillery barrage, including eight-inch howitzers. The Second Battalion gained the town of Belle Lande and at 0945 their right was south of the highway leading west. Colonel Ednie requested that tanks protect the bridge at Pont Hebert to our rear in case of another counterattack. The tanks sent reconnaissance toward the bridge, while a reinforced platoon of the Third Battalion was sent to a wooded draw about 1,000 yards northwest of the bridge to cover the tanks.

However, before noon the First Battalion was in another wooded draw only 300 yards from the bridge.

The First Battalion was then ordered to cut southeast to the river, but almost at once an infantry counterattack was launched against this open left flank. Tanks were ordered to halt it, but as the 35th Division did not reach Pont Hebert on the other side of the river until the 17th, the flank remained open, and the First Battalion continued to receive enfilading fire at a range of 250 yards.

On the right flank six tanks appeared from the direction of Hauts Vents threatening the Second Battalion at Belle Lande. Two of the tanks were set afire by artillery with two others reported to be dug in. Nevertheless, the Second Battalion was ordered to push south 600 yards to the high ground just south of Belle Lande, and the First Battalion was ordered to push to a point 200 yards south of the bridge. The Third Battalion was to attack due east from its position behind the Second Battalion, take the town of Pont Hebert, and close the gap between the other two battalions. The Second Battalion ran into an aggressive enemy force which almost wiped out one platoon of E Company; they refused to surrender and fought it out where they stood. Tanks were called for, but they were slow in arriving and all units were finally forced to dig in. K Company was sent to the left flank to back up C Company, which was badly depleted and in command of a sergeant, George R. Day.

Five minutes before the attack C Company had suffered 15 casualties from enemy artillery and morale was low. Although heavy small arms fire was brought against the enemy's positions 100 yards away, they held and, as one squad tried to get across, killed four men instantly and wounded two others. Pvt. Paul L. Howrie and Pvt. Woodrow W. Shirah of the squad remained in the open under small arms and mortar fire to make sure that the wounded and were evacuated. Private Shirah and Private Howrie were killed in other actions later in July.

During the same artillery barrage a shell made a direct hit on a foxhole with three men in it, killing two and wounding the other in the head. The survivor, Pfc. Sebastian A. Dechario, was so dazed by his wound and the concussion that he did not realize the two others were dead and set out to get help for them while the barrage was still going on.

On his way back to the aid station he thought he heard a cry for help. Stunned and half blinded by his blood, he



searched the draw until he found a wounded man clinging to a tree, helpless and blind. Private Dechiaro led him toward the aid station, helping him up and down under barrages that fell in the draw and protecting him from the shrapnel with his own body. When he reached the aid station he refused treatment and led the medics back to the front.

Just before midnight the left flank was bombed and strafed, and there were 13 more casualties. The enemy air force was still a strong factor, and we often wondered where our superior numbers hid themselves.

In the bloody fighting that followed, the First Battalion maintained a constant patrol to locate and evacuate the dead who were accumulating in the Company areas and depressing the men.

On the 12th the Regiment lost 30 killed, 219 wounded, seven missing, and one captured. We took five prisoners. At 0300 the next day the Division ordered us to straighten our lines and prepare for a heavy attack expected within hours, as the Division was now well ahead of the units on its right and left. The Division casualties up to this time stood at 13 per cent.

Consequently the First Battalion made a limited attack to gain suitable ground for defense. Our lines then started just north of the town, ran west 300 yards, south for almost 1000 yards, and then west to a junction with the 117th.

The Second Battalion made a slow advance against the heavy fire from machine guns and small arms and finally reached the high ground they had been after for 24 hours. At this time G Company consisted of one officer and 69 men.

That evening General Hobbs ordered us to take up an anti-tank defense. Colonel Ednie instructed both battalions to strengthen A.T. defenses and make stable contact with adjacent units. The Second Battalion was unable to maintain contact with the 117th Infantry. During the day 19 were killed and 139 wounded. Most of the casualties were inflicted by the German artillery, which was equal or superior to ours, and fell without interruption day and night.

The slightest movement of even one man brought fire. In the Second Battalion area particularly, active 88's on mobile mounts sent enfiladed fire down hedgerows occupied by our troops.

By 1000 on the 14th, it became evident that the Germans were not going to attack, so B Company, supported by a platoon of tanks, hit the bridge at Pont Hebert. The at-



tack was made easier by the advance of the 35th Division, which had drawn abreast on the other side of the river. Germans were seen withdrawing from the town, and they were followed back by our artillery. They realized that they were unable to hold against such determined forces and withdrew to positions farther inland. By 1135 Company B had taken the town of Pont Hebert and the approaches to the bridge.

Colonel Ednie was relieved as Regimental Commander by Col. Edwin M. Sutherland, who had been in Alaska from 1924 to 1927, in Tientsin from 1931 to 1934, in Pekin from 1935 to 1939, in the China-Burma-India theater from 1941 to 1942, and in Kiska from 1942 to 1944. On the 13th, Col. James W. Cantey had been relieved as Commander of the First Battalion by Maj. Robert H. Herlong. Lt. Col. Edwin E. Wallis continued to command the Second Battalion, and Lt. Col. Courtney P. Brown continued to command the Third Battalion. Colonel Ednie was assigned to the 29th Division, where he achieved considerable fame and glory by advancing with his leading elements in the taking of St. Lo.

At 0500 of the 15th, preceded by concentrations of medium artillery, and a rolling barrage of light artillery, the



117th Infantry attacked south on the Division front. Our Third Battalion was attached to them and their Second Battalion was attached to us. This peculiar deployment only further demonstrates our position in the early days of the war. All flanks were open and we were subject to attack from any direction. Our mission was to support the attack and cover the Division flanks. At 0730 our Second Battalion reported that the assault wave had gone slightly beyond their positions, that a battalion of the 117th was a couple of hedgerows ahead on their right, and a little later that our Third Battalion was just ahead of them and pinned down. Somewhere on our right a tank battle was in progress.

Company 1 had gone into the attack with two platoons leading abreast, and the First and Fourth Platoons following at 100 yards. After an advance of 300 yards, the Company lost contact with the unit on its left and the two rear platoons lost contact with the rest of the Company. The fire from small arms and mortars was heavy, but they were still able to move. The two rear platoons, which were out of contact, drifted about 100 yards into the open area of the left flank and were pinned down by an enemy machine gun 50 yards ahead. They then received a generous portion of an artillery barrage, and more mortar and small arms fire. One man was killed and two seriously wounded. A medic, Pfc. Maurice R. Bertrand, was also wounded in the head and knocked senseless. When he recovered, he crawled under the fire to the other wounded and gave them first aid.

In the meantime, while the machine gun had the platoons pinned down, enemy infantry was working around their left flank to cut them off. Pfc. Henry J. Herchel, a machine gunner, spotted the enemy machine gun and began to crawl forward through the fire, carrying his light machine gun with him. After about 40 yards he set it up on a slight rise, and with accurate bursts of fire wounded both enemy gunners and destroyed their gun. The platoons were able to withdraw to hedgerows 60 yards back and set up defenses against the enemy pushing in from the left. Later they made contact with the Company and evacuated their three wounded.

The advance of the Division was slow, against stubborn infantry and tanks. Enemy artillery covered both our front lines and our rear areas. Though the Second Battalion of the 117th attached to 119th was not committed during the day, it suffered 50 casualties from concentrations of artillery.

Our Second Battalion was pulled back into reserve and in



*In the Normandy Hedgerows*

its place the First Battalion was moved forward from Pont Hebert to follow up the Third Battalion, and also to clean out a quarry about 1,200 yards southwest of Belle Lande. The quarry, an enemy strongpoint, had been by-passed in the Division's attack. The First Battalion cleaned it out before nightfall, taking a number of prisoners.

During the day 22 men were killed, 100 wounded, and six were missing. Prisoners taken totalled 36.

On the 16th the Regiment sat in Division reserve with little to do but hold the bridge at Pont Hebert, and that was accomplished by a reinforced platoon of C Company and a platoon of AT Company. In the afternoon there was bright sunshine. Warm showers had been built in a rear division area and some of us had the first bath we had had in two weeks. It then seemed a long time to go unwashed. It was only during these short rest periods that a soldier again felt human and began to have his normal tastes and desires.

The Third Battalion, however, was attacking south with the 117th. K Company, with a strength of three officers



and 50 men was held up by an enemy force consisting of two machine guns, a scout car, and 30 personnel well placed in and around a small group of buildings. Company K had a platoon of tanks attached to it, but they had not come up yet and without them the enemy position could not be assaulted, bypassed, or flanked.

Sgt. William J. Callahan, a personal runner for the Company Commander, made his way back to the Battalion to ask for support. When he was told none could be sent, he decided to steal a few tanks from some one else.

He hunted around under the artillery fire and at last came upon a group of tanks idling. He explained the predicament of K Company to the officer in command of the tanks and volunteered to guide them back to the Company. With the help of these tanks, K Company knocked out the resistance and moved on.

Advancing through the hedgerows, K Company was again held up by machine gun, mortar, and 88 fire. A number of men were wounded and the platoon became disorganized. As his platoon sergeant was seriously wounded, Sgt. Joseph Herring assumed command of the platoon, though he himself was wounded in the face. He rallied the men and led them over the next hedgerow. An enemy machine gun killed him, but his comrades, inspired by his courage, charged ahead and revenged his loss in the only way they could—in kind.

The Third Battalion was released from attachment to the 117th and returned to us in the late afternoon.

Activity on the 17th was in part confined to cleaning out the pockets of enemy resistance isolated behind the advance. In the early morning the movement of some unit was spotted 400 yards in front of F Company, and a patrol was sent out to identify it. After crossing about 500 yards of hedgerows, the patrol ran into enemy machine gun fire, which killed two men of the patrol and wounded another. S/Sgt. James T. Pressnell fired and killed one of the enemy. This drew their fire to him and he was wounded in the head and pinned down. From 1100 to 1600 he lay in the same spot, from which he could see the enemy digging new positions just 70 feet away, setting up mortars, and swinging an 88 into position. The 88 then began firing directly over his head. At 1600 the Germans apparently began to wonder about him, for he saw one of them climbing a tree with a rifle and looking in his direction. Sergeant Pressnell fired quickly and

killed the climbing German, who dropped clumsily out of the tree. The other Germans were now alarmed, and Sergeant Pressnell decided it was less dangerous to leave than to stay. He crawled back along the hedgerows and two hours later reached the Company CP. He reported what he had observed, and the 88 was knocked out by artillery.

At dusk word was received at Regiment that the 120th, leading the Division assault, had taken its objective below Le Mesnil Durand. Just before midnight a patrol from the First Battalion made contact with the 35th Division across the bridge at Pont Hebert.

The next afternoon the Regiment moved forward to occupy the left of the Division sector. Our line started north of La Juganniere, extending east between La Houcharderie and La Godarderie, and continuing north along the Vire to a point east of La Crepiniere. The First Battalion occupied the left of the line and the Second Battalion the right. The Regimental CP was established near the church in Les Mesnil Durand. In the church, part of the wall of the bell tower was still standing, while most of the other buildings were almost entirely destroyed. There were no civilians—the Germans had evacuated them, as they had all other civilians since our crossing of the Vire. It was a desolate place. The same night the radio announced that St. Lo had fallen, K Company officers and men rejoiced as "Captain Harry" (Hopcraft) returned from the hospital.

On July 19th, the Regiment was ordered to advance 500 yards and establish a main line of resistance along the north bank of a tributary which empties into the Vire opposite Roulox Godard. The left of the line was to extend some 700 yards back along the Vire. The First and Second Battalions jumped off at 1100, and it took less than an hour to occupy the new line. That afternoon the First Battalion sent a series of patrols to hold the creek crossings and to determine the enemy strength on the other side. The first patrol drew fire from the right flank and, because of the depth of the stream, could not get across. A later patrol got across only with great difficulty.

That evening prisoners were captured who said that on the 20th all hell would break loose. Perhaps because of this report, orders were given to carry gas masks at all times. The attempted assassination of Hitler on the 20th by some officers of the Wehrmacht and the abortive revolt in Germany must have been the "hell," for nothing else broke loose.





*Colonel Edwin M. Sutherland*

The next morning the Second Battalion had orders to secure the bridge to their left front and build another with the help of engineers. By the middle of the afternoon both bridges were completed and two platoons of E Company were across the stream.

Colonel Sutherland and the Battalion Commanders reported to Division to receive the plan of attack. After a very heavy air and artillery barrage, two battalions were to push forward rapidly with the support of two platoons of tanks each and take up positions near Hebecrevon. For the next three days the Regiment waited for the weather to clear.

A number of patrols were sent to secure the stream crossings, to maintain contact with the enemy and with friendly troops, and to take prisoners. On the 23rd a patrol of nine men was sent across the stream by Company A to capture prisoners. They found an approach to one of the enemy forward positions, a draw covered by machine gun fire.

Sgt. Robert F. Kee, to distract the attention and the fire of the enemy from the patrol as they came up the draw, worked his way around and fired on the enemy from the flank. On the way back down the draw with the prisoners, the other men of the patrol were discovered and fired upon. Two were wounded, but all managed to escape and to

bring the prisoners with them. Sergeant Kee, whose initiative had made the operation a success, attempted to withdraw, but was killed by machine gun fire.

On the 24th the attack was to have been preceded by 80 minutes of air and artillery bombardment by 3,000 planes and 50 battalions of artillery. In spite of the overcast, the attack planes and bombers appeared and dropped a large number of bombs, some within our lines. About 30 minutes before H-Hour, the attack was cancelled by First Army. Our casualties were five killed, 28 wounded, and one missing, almost all due to the bombing. Five prisoners were captured when they fled into our lines to escape the bombing. They would have done better to stay where they were.

July 25 was the blackest day in the history of the Regiment and probably the brightest for the free world. About the same order was issued as for the day before. During the night all troops except mortar and artillery observers were to withdraw behind the bomb line, 1,200 yards back from the stream. At H-minus-120 all remaining troops were to begin to withdraw and at H-minus-85 to have finished withdrawing. At H-minus-80, fighters were to strafe and bomb the German lines, followed by 1,200 heavy bombers. The bombing and shelling were to move progressively south after H-Hour.

At H-Hour the Third Battalion, supported by one platoon of medium tanks and one platoon of light tanks from the 743rd Tank Battalion, was to move rapidly south through Hebecrevon and occupy an area east of St. Gilles (not the St. Gilles just southwest of LaMeauffe). The Second Battalion and Special Units were to follow the Third Battalion. The First Battalion, supported by the two platoons of medium tanks from the 743rd Tank Battalion, was to follow the 120th Infantry on the right, attack Hebecrevon from the west, pass through it, occupy a position to the east of it, and then be prepared to move, on Division order, east into the loop of the Vire west of St. Lo. The purpose of the operation was to crack the German defenses west of St. Lo and clear a path for a further attack by the Second Armored Division.

H-Hour was set at 1100 and the troops moved back according to schedule into an area one-half mile south of the Regimental CP at Le Mesnil Durand. The bombing struck on time and the action by the first planes, the P-47s, seemed to be successful in spite of the heavy flak thrown up by the



Germans. Then the bombers, B-17s and B-24s, appeared and still heavier flak came up at them. At least two of them were shot down within view.

The bombers came, moving south, and with great precision and effectiveness bombed the Regiment around Le Mesnil Durand and passed on. Approximately a squadron released their load of medium and heavy bombs.

Of the 14 medics at Regiment, half were casualties, six of them being buried alive. The other men of the detachment left their foxholes while the bombs were still falling and dug out the buried. One of them, Technician Fifth Grade Lindeman, was able to help dig out the others and treat the wounded before he had to be evacuated. There were many dead and seriously wounded in the Regimental CP and the fields around it. Not only did the medics have to reach and work on emergency cases while the bombs were still falling, but the Germans were pouring in barrages of artillery besides. Twelve vehicles carrying gasoline and ammunition had been set afire and were steadily exploding.

In the Third Battalion area Captain Henry E. Schlegel, the Battalion Surgeon, went within 20 feet of an exploding ammunition trailer to arrest the hemorrhages of a man. Many men were shaking or stupefied, while others were driven hysterical by the enormous concussions. We had become accustomed to seeing the dead, particularly enemy dead, gradually blacken and rot within a few days in the hot, damp weather, but we were not prepared to see this devastating annihilation and dismemberment.

Technical Sergeant Clark and Technician Fourth Grade Marshall loaded a number of severely wounded on a one-fourth-ton truck and started back to the collecting point near Pont Hebert. On the way, about 1120, another squadron of planes, B-26s, released their bombs over our area and near the road. Men jumped from speeding vehicles, and some jeeps went charging along the roads without their drivers. Yet T/4 Marshall continued to drive his truck while T/Sgt. Clark stayed on it, administering blood plasma. It has been estimated that one bomb had been dropped for every 25 yards of enemy front.

In spite of all this, at H-Hour, 1100, the attack had somehow got under way. The tanks supporting the Third Battalion had moved past the church at Le Mesnil Durand and were followed by K Company. Although the second bombing caught them on the road, the Third Battalion had

reached the creek at La Nouillerie by 1200. There were mines at the crossings, plus considerable artillery fire, but the attack progressed up the hill and down the other side until the supporting tanks were stopped in a defile by mine fields covered by direct fire from dug-in enemy tanks.

The infantry made several attempts to outflank the tanks. Against their mutually supporting fires, no progress was made, and we suffered a good many casualties. Since the tanks were dug-in, they could not be reached with bazookas. An attempt was made to withdraw far enough to let our artillery work. In withdrawing, the infantry abandoned its defilade and suffered additional casualties from enemy mortar and artillery fire.

Finally the First Battalion was sent around the left flank along the Vire. Though their route was exposed to artillery observers on the hills southwest of St. Lo, they succeeded in reaching the high ground southeast of La Nouillerie. The enemy, with their defenses flanked, began to withdraw, not only here, but also in front of the 120th to our right, which had been held up by a like resistance.

At 2200 the assault was resumed, with infantry and tanks, in an attempt to surround and capture Hebecrevon. The enemy resisted with considerable artillery and some small arms outside the town. Company A, advancing with a company of tanks on a road leading to Hebecrevon, was pinned down by small arms fire and machine guns. The point scouts reported to Capt. Ross Y. Simmons that the road blocks, with a peculiar system of wires no doubt attached to mines or booby traps, were holding up the tanks. Captain Simmons went forward under the machine gun fire to the road blocks and by the dim starlight neutralized the wires. After clearing the road, he waved the tanks forward. He remained at the head of his Company and led the final attack which captured the town.

When the night's action was completed, the First Battalion was dug in east of Hebecrevon, the Third Battalion north of it, and the Second Battalion to the south. The high ground to the south had been stoutly defended by artillery and mortar fire. Captain Parlavocchia, leading F Company in the attack, had been seriously wounded by shrapnel 200 yards before the objective was reached. His leadership had given the attack an impetus which carried his troops on to the objective. He died of his wounds on July 31st.

On the 25th of July the Regiment lost 40 killed, 220





*The "Battle of the Hedgerows" was dirty, close-range fighting. This infantryman waits to draw a bead on an enemy sniper.*

wounded, and ten missing. Thirty-two prisoners were taken. That morning Technician Fourth Grade Barbato, the Regimental journal clerk, was hit directly by a heavy bomb. All the maps and overlays for July 24 and 25 in his possession were destroyed, and on the 26th the journal was not kept, so that these sources are lacking to the Regimental history.

The 26th brought orders for the First Battalion to attack southeast 500 yards, to an area near Le Gros Cailloux. The First Battalion was to be preceded by tanks and followed by the Third and Second Battalions in column. Assembling for the attack, at 0735 the medium tanks appeared in Hebecrevon from the west to make contact with the light tanks east of the town. As the head of the column reached the eastern edge of the town, two tanks were knocked out by direct fire from 88s. The tank column withdrew and halted.

Finally contact was established, but as the First Battalion had to take a route across country for the first few hundred

yards, the tanks were reluctant to start. At 0900 the First Battalion moved over the route they had chosen. The tanks did run into some resistance, but changed their route eastward and continued to advance.

The town of Hebecrevon and the fields and apple orchards around it were at this time very crowded. In the area were troops of the Second and Third Battalions, the Regimental CP, and the Forward CP of the First Battalion. Headquarters Company of the Second Battalion came in at 1000 and began digging in positions in an orchard at the edge of town.

It was common German tactics during this campaign to withdraw from a town and, after our troops had entered it in some force, to pour artillery in. Though the bombing had destroyed much of their equipment and personnel, and the persistent attacks by our tanks and infantry had disorganized any concerted resistance, they were able to main-



tain artillery barrages on Hebecrevon through the late morning and most of the afternoon. One barrage landed in the orchard where the Second Battalion was digging in and caused a number of casualties from tree bursts. As the barrage continued, those who could withdraw, did. The wounded were left in the area. The Battalion medics tried to get back into the orchard, only to suffer casualties themselves, among them the Assistant Battalion Surgeon and the Section Leader. Rescue squads were organized by T/Sgt. Rex Lunsford and T/4 Frank J. Olivero, a clerk in the aid station who was himself wounded. One squad after another ventured again into the bursting orchard. They were all led by Technical Sergeant Lunsford. Thus all the wounded were finally carried to safety.

The barrages inflicted many casualties in the other areas around Hebecrevon, particularly in the Regimental CP and the First Battalion CP. When the wounded could not be evacuated, Captain Ferrier moved under the fire into the open fields to administer first aid and blood plasma.

Before dark, the Regimental CP moved up and set up temporarily about one-half mile north of La Tremblee. During this move the CP caught up with the lead battalion and was often up with Company A, which was leading. Colonel Sutherland was a rugged and irascible colonel and he meant to push the attack as far as it would go. He was willing to lead the forward troops himself. For this he was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action, but he accepted it, he said, for the Regiment which had earned it.

About 2100 the Regimental CP was set up in an area between St. Gilles and Le Bas Mesnil, and the battalions were slightly to the south. The rear elements, however, were still back at Hebecrevon or even at Le Mesnil Durand, where most of the vehicles were. A patrol of the I & R Platoon was dispatched to guide the rear of the Regimental CP forward, and at same time to turn in to the PW cage at Les Mesnil Durand two French Fascists in civilian clothes who had been caught sending up flares.

The patrol had driven 1,000 yards to the rear when they saw a column of about 40 men approaching in the darkness. On coming closer they found the men were Germans and supposed them to be prisoners. Lieutenant Wilson, who was leading the patrol, asked who was in charge. They immediately began firing, killing Lieutenant Wilson and Cor-

poral Merz, and severely wounding a driver, Pius Wing, who later died of his wounds. The two remaining men of the patrol, Pfc. John F. McLacken and Pfc. Edwin Watt, killed the two French Fascists as they broke away, and five or six of the Germans in the column, before they made their own escape in the darkness. The Germans set up a machine gun at a turn in the road and ambushed vehicles until they realized that they were isolated behind a considerable force.

Throughout the night, individual Germans and groups tried to work their way through our lines back into theirs. Men woke up with strange German foxhole comrades the next morning. We had slept with them, and they with us.

Early in the morning, 27 armed Germans, including two burp (machine pistol) gunners, approached the sentry at the entrance to the Regimental CP. Before he had time to do anything but drop his jaw, they had entered and dropped their equipment on the ground. They then looked around for someone to attend to their surrender. The Regimental Adjutant led them into a field nearby, and in a few hours nearly 200 prisoners, including a German colonel, had been gathered there.

On the 27th, the Regiment moved south again. The First Battalion, with tanks, followed by the Second Battalion, moved along the main route to Gourfaleur with the object of clearing areas along the west bank of the Vire and protecting the crossings. The Third Battalion moved by a parallel route closer to the river, toward Jeigne, with the same object. The Regimental CP planned to move with the Second Battalion, but because of enemy resistance, mostly scattered strongpoints, the column moved rather slowly. The Regimental CP pulled off the road, and after a number of short moves, set up in a house by the crossroads 400 yards north of Le Haut Coquerel. Here the rear echelon of the CP caught up with the others during the afternoon, and the Staff was together for the first time since the morning of the 25th.

Early afternoon found the First Battalion moving up a hill about 400 yards northwest of Gourfaleur with B Company on the left of the road and C Company on the right, each with a platoon of tanks in support. The Second Platoon of C Company was moving through a draw, and the lead elements had reached a point some 150 yards from the crest of the ridge overlooking the draw, when a machine gun and small arms fire pinned the platoon down. The Third Platoon





*Lieutenant Colonel C. P. Brown*

was sent around to the left to outflank the enemy positions in and near some houses at the crest of the hill and was also pinned down by machine guns, small arms and mortar fire, which caused heavy casualties. The platoons called back to the tanks for direct fire into the houses, but after considering the incoming mortar fire, the tanks could not make up their minds to move forward. While they were thinking it over, the mortar barrage grew more and more intense and orders came for the 11 men left in the Second Platoon to withdraw to a covered area 200 yards back and reorganize. All of the men who were able withdrew, except for the lead scout, Keith L. Sy, who was on the crest of the ridge. Three men not far behind him had been wounded in the barrages, two of them so seriously that they could not withdraw. Sy stayed to give them first aid and drag them back to cover. There he cared for them as best he could, and prevented their bleeding to death.

The Battalion Commander, Major Herlong, who was in the front lines, went to the rear of C Company to bring up the tanks. Under the continued mortar and machine gun fire he moved in the open from tank to tank, encouraging them, insisting on their advance, and directing their fire.

The Company began to move forward and as the Second Platoon came up again, it found Sy still holding the ground.

In spite of resistance, the battalions had reached their objectives by 1530. They established blocks on the bridge over the Vire and set up for all-round defense. Headquarters Company of the Second Battalion again found itself in an apple orchard full of artillery, and three men were killed. Major Laney, the Battalion Executive Officer, was wounded. During the day 24 men of the Regiment were killed, 116 were wounded, and 29 were missing. A count of prisoners showed that 236 had been taken.

On the 28th the Third Battalion moved a short distance to the south to continue its former mission of preventing the enemy from crossing the Vire into the division flank. About noon, the Regiment, with its two remaining battalions, was ordered south to an assembly area near St. Romphaire, but as the area was being fought in by the 117th, we did not occupy it until 1645. The CP set up just south of Le Ronceur. Hot food was served to some units for the first time.

The next day the Regiment was ordered to attack south between the 117th and 120th and seize the area east of Etourniere and Troisgots to the Vire. The First and Second Battalions attacked abreast, the First Battalion on the right, and later in the morning, the Third Battalion was released from its mission and joined the attack on the right of the First Battalion. Tough resistance was met all day and little progress was made. The Germans were withdrawing eastward from the peninsula through Tessy to the south, and their firm defense of Troisgots was part of an action to cover their withdrawal. We ran into their Second SS Panzer Division. Our advance from Pont Hebert had required some such commitment on their part.

I Company was held up by two tanks with machine guns and rifles in support firing from somewhere behind the next hedgerow. T/Sgt. Fred D. Steelman, an acting platoon leader, was unwilling to send his men first into this fire and acted as lead scout himself. Five separate times he led his platoon up to the hedgerow, and each time was forced back by direct fire from the tanks which shredded the hedgerow before him. Through large gaps in the opposite hedgerow came heavy machine gun fire from unseen positions some distance behind.

Five times Sergeant Steelman had prevented his men from scattering over the open field, and had managed careful with-



drawals to safety. He brought them up to the hedgerow a sixth time as they heard the nearest tank changing its position. Sergeant Steelman planned to clear his way by getting at the tank with a bazooka, and then eliminating the machine guns. To locate the guns, he deliberately walked across the gaps, provoking the machine gun crews into declaring themselves. In crossing the second gap, he was killed instantly.

Company A lost its commanding officer, a platoon leader, and others from the artillery. That afternoon, the Company consisted of 42 men. Company strength in most companies was approximately a platoon. Company A had only one mortar left and it was the only effective weapon they had against the well dug-in enemy. This mortar was set up in the middle of the clearing before a hedgerow to get sufficient mass clearance. Pfc. George B. Boston and Pfc. Nathan Daniels manned the mortar under continuous small arms and artillery fire without cover. They refused to interrupt their fire to dig. They fired 136 rounds, and by their persistence and accuracy disorganized the enemy so that they fled, leaving their dead and wounded lying over the entire area. This was remarkable, because the Germans almost always took pains to bury or evacuate their dead. We seldom had the consolation of comparing their casualties to ours.

When the advance of C Company was stopped by extremely heavy fire, Sergeant Robert W. Chapin chose to lead his squad around the flank through a deep draw. It was a dangerous maneuver, yet when he took the position of lead scout, his squad moved out. On the way, he was mortally wounded by a machine gun covering the draw, but before he died, he was able to direct his squad by a slightly different route into the enemy flank. The enemy, with his position flanked, withdrew.

By evening, we were at least in sight of Troisgots. During the day eight men were killed, 86 wounded, and seven were missing. In the early morning, the Third Battalion had suffered casualties from an enemy bombing and strafing. That afternoon, we were given air support, the fire of which fell short and was withdrawn by request. During the night, enemy planes bombed the Regimental and rear areas, causing some loss in personnel and vehicles. After that, enemy planes appeared with such regularity each night that they were referred to as "Bed-Check Charlie," and no one went to sleep until Charlie had his go at us.

The Regiment had about the same mission on the 30th.



"Ooh!—Colonel"

The attack began late in the morning, supported by tanks. The Germans also used a good many tanks, very effectively, two of which took pleasure running through the First Battalion lines, seemingly unaffected by the fire placed upon them. They soon found that a bazooka packs a terrific wallop.

Throughout the day, we maintained strong pressure, but with little progress. In the afternoon General Hobbs directed for the first time that a church steeple—at Troisgots—be knocked out since it might be an artillery observation post. In a short time it was hit and burning, and that much we had accomplished.

The understrength platoon of tanks with the Third Battalion was lost to the action; one had been hit, two had engine trouble, and the remaining one was forced to withdraw. Before nightfall, the 35th Division attacked south on the opposite side of the Vire, and there was some hope that the deadlock would be broken. During the day there were nine killed, 79 wounded, and five missing.

According to the attack order for the 31st, Troisgots was to be attacked simultaneously from both flanks as well as frontally from the north. The western flank was to be attacked by K Company with a company of tanks from the 743rd Tank Battalion, and the eastern flank was to be at-





*"Would you care to have dinner with me, John?—Processed American cheese, you know—"*

tacked by the Second Battalion, also with a company of tanks from the 743rd. The First and Third Battalions were to move up from their previous positions, the First being on the left. A company of light tanks, D Company, was sent to cover our left rear along the river. The push jumped at 0700 with slow progress. The enemy had most of the roads blocked and mined, and resisted actively with artillery, mortars, small arms, and a considerable force of tanks.

In the Third Battalion sector, Sgt. Joseph K. Delke and Pfc. Robert E. Look were engaged in clearing the roads. To reach one road block under observation of the enemy, they had to crawl 200 yards on their stomachs. After reaching the block, they crawled around from one mine to another, digging them out with trench knives and neutralizing a large number of attached booby traps. They labored in this manner for two hours before the block was neutralized.

Company L located the position of one very obstinate tank and found a possible route of getting at it. A call was sent for bazooka men, only to find that all the bazooka men of the two lead platoons had become casualties. S/Sgt. Frank H. Owens and Pfc. Elbert Whisnant, amateurs with a bazooka, volunteered to take a crack at the tank. They obtained a bazooka and crawled with it along a hedgerow some distance ahead of the foremost troops. Then, making a dash across an open space, they reached a firing position within close range

of the tank. The first rocket launched struck the turret, killing the gunner and knocking the tank out. Company L was able to move up several rows.

With the help of artillery applied to enemy strong points and tanks, the attack staggered slowly ahead. The tanks with the Second Battalion were sent off to help the First Battalion, and as a result, the Second Battalion, without them, was slowed down by small arms fire. Around noon, K Company's tanks were ready to move into Troisgots, but were held up by fire from enemy tanks inside the town. The light tanks were brought up from the left rear and committed in the Second Battalion sector, only to be promptly stopped by enemy artillery.

In the course of the afternoon, the enemy tanks inside Troisgots were knocked out one by one, and by 1630 both the First and Third Battalions were in the town while the rest of the Second Battalion cleaned up outside the town. By nightfall, practically all resistance had ceased. All elements dug in covering the river crossing and reverted to Division reserve.

Seventeen men were killed, 80 wounded, and eight missing. Twenty-one prisoners were captured.

## AUGUST

Le Mesnil Adelee—Le Mesnil Tove—Romagny—Mortain—Les Forges — Brezolles — Droisy—Evreux—Flacourt—Seine Crossing — Porcheville — Ablemont—Vigny—Livillere.

We had broken out of the Normandy Peninsula by the end of July and the Third Army was heading south across the Brittany Peninsula. The German line still held against the English at Caen and was anchored at Vire, to the southeast of St. Lo, but below there it seemed to have given way completely. The Germans had not succeeded very well in stopping the drive south by attacking its flank at Troisgots, nor had they been successful in withdrawing any great number of their troops out of the Normandy Peninsula.

For the first few days in August, the 119th Infantry rested from its hard fighting. Some were able to get hot showers, and a USO troupe showed up to entertain us. Red Cross clubmobiles also appeared and though there was no time to make coffee, there were doughnuts and girls. Less officially, of course, there was calvados.

On the third of August, the Second Battalion was at-



tached to Combat Command A of the Second Armored Division on a mission to the south. The balance of the Regiment rested two more days in the same area between St. Romphaire and Troisgots. The Luftwaffe still paid us his nightly visit and rocked us to sleep.

During this period, the Second Battalion suffered heavy losses. Later, when they returned victorious, they had a strange look in their eyes and renewed hatred for the enemy.

The Regiment, on the sixth, with two battalions, made a long move to the south passing through Teszy-sur-Vire, Percy, Villadieu, Brecey, and then southeast toward Juvigny-le-Tertre, to an assembly area in the fields around La Blairie. The entire Division with attachments and several other units were on the road, so there were frequent halts. It was summer weather, and from Percy on there was almost no evidence of war. The civilians had not been evacuated and stood along the road with flowers, calvados, and cider for the troops as they passed. And, although our hearts were softened by the French gratitude, our eyes were blackened by the apples they tossed as we passed. It did look now as if the liberation was going to be a successful proposition, and everyone became very excited.

The Division area had been occupied recently by the Third Armored Division. The First Infantry Division had just moved out, expecting a long move to the south. We also made plans, in accordance with a Division order, for a long move in the early morning to Domfront.

Adolf Hitler, however, had another idea. Along the line from Cherence le Roussel through St. Barthelemy to Mortain he had massed four SS Panzer Divisions, among them the First—which had been withdrawn from Caen to Troisgots and was now east of Mortain—and the 116th, which at this time was not particularly formidable, though in the fall it became the principal trouble-shooting outfit all along the front. This massing of force was the preparation for a thrust west through Mortain to Avranches on the Channel, which was to cut the American armies in two. The plan had a fair chance of succeeding because the distance was not great; many of our units in the way of the thrust were weary and badly depleted, and the town of Avranches controlled the main routes of supply between the forces in Normandy and those who had driven south.

The attack began late the night of the sixth. The First



*Lieutenant Donald Wilson*

Division had held the sector rather loosely, and we had just moved in. We were not organized and there was even a great shortage of maps. The 120th Infantry, which had moved into the sector before us, had one battalion on the high ground east of Mortain, its Regimental CP in the western outskirts, and a number of road blocks set up covering the approaches to the town. The Germans, in a regulation pincer movement, attacked Mortain from the northeast and southeast, drove out the Regimental CP of the 120th and isolated the Battalion on the hill. They began a less concentrated attack by infiltration of armor and infantry all along the Division front. On the strategic level, the war was getting to be a very interesting affair.

The first we knew of the action was a report that came in at 0400 of enemy movement to the northeast of us, near Cherence le Roussel. The move to Domfront was indefinitely postponed. A good many reports came in from the 117th to the southeast of us as the masses of German armor pierced their area in the darkness, frequently moving within touching distance of our troops. At 0700, a 197th Field Artillery



observer reported a hostile tank attack forming at Romagny, and that the Germans were within Le Mesnil Tove.

A few minutes later, the First Battalion was ordered into Division reserve, to an assembly area close to the Division CP and not very far from Romagny. All light tanks of the 743rd Tank Battalion with the Regiment went with the First Battalion. Upon request, B Company was allowed to remain as Regimental reserve and was given the mission of setting up a road block in Le Mesnil Adelee with the help of two guns of the Battalion AT Platoon. They found that Le Mesnil Adelee was full of enemy tanks, two of which they saw. Motors of about ten others could be heard in the town. They established positions 700 yards from the first tank, and with the trap baited, waited.

The Third Battalion, supported by medium tanks from the 743rd Tank Battalion, was ordered to move north from Juvigny-e-Terte and capture Le Mesnil Tove. Five hundred yards south of Le Mesnil Tove, near the crossroads at La Prevetiere, their tanks were engaged and one was knocked out. The infantry was pinned down by small arms and automatic fire. S/Sgt. Merlin C. Johnson, a mortar observer with L Company, went forward along a trail east of the main road, through some open woods to find a position from which he could direct mortar fire on an enemy tank and three vehicles. He knocked out the tank and at least one of the vehicles, which burned. From the same location, he was able to break up an attempt by enemy troops to take up positions along the road running east out of Le Mesnil Tove.

The Second Platoon of K Company had fought its way 60 yards into a field beyond the crossroads when tracked vehicles were heard coming down the road into their right flank. Pfc. Leonard V. Henry grabbed a light machine gun and ran back towards the crossroads to defend it. He found that one enemy half-track had already parked and unloaded a group of infantrymen who were on their way to positions on the west side of the main road opposite the Second Platoon.

As a second half-track approached, Pfc. Henry fired and it came to a halt. The enemy infantry jumped to the ground and began to fire back. Pfc. Henry wounded the two foremost men, and the other seven threw down their weapons and surrendered. When he had taken his prisoners to the rear, he returned with incendiary grenades and destroyed both half-tracks.

L Company advanced some 100 yards beyond the cross-

roads before it was pinned down. Behind a hedgerow 50 yards ahead were enemy riflemen and a machine-gun nest. One man with a burp-gun was firing from an enemy half-track which had been knocked out near the hedge.

S/Sgt. Ralph E. Markley ran to the side of a barn where he could remain hidden and still observe the enemy machine gun. He had a rifle with a grenade launcher, and with the first grenade he knocked out the gun. As the Germans in the wrecked half-track withdrew, the enemy rifleman spotted Sergeant Markley and turned their fire on him. He made a break from the barn in full view of the enemy and jumped for the cover of a sunken road 25 yards away. On landing, he found himself in the midst of five Germans who were setting up a mortar.

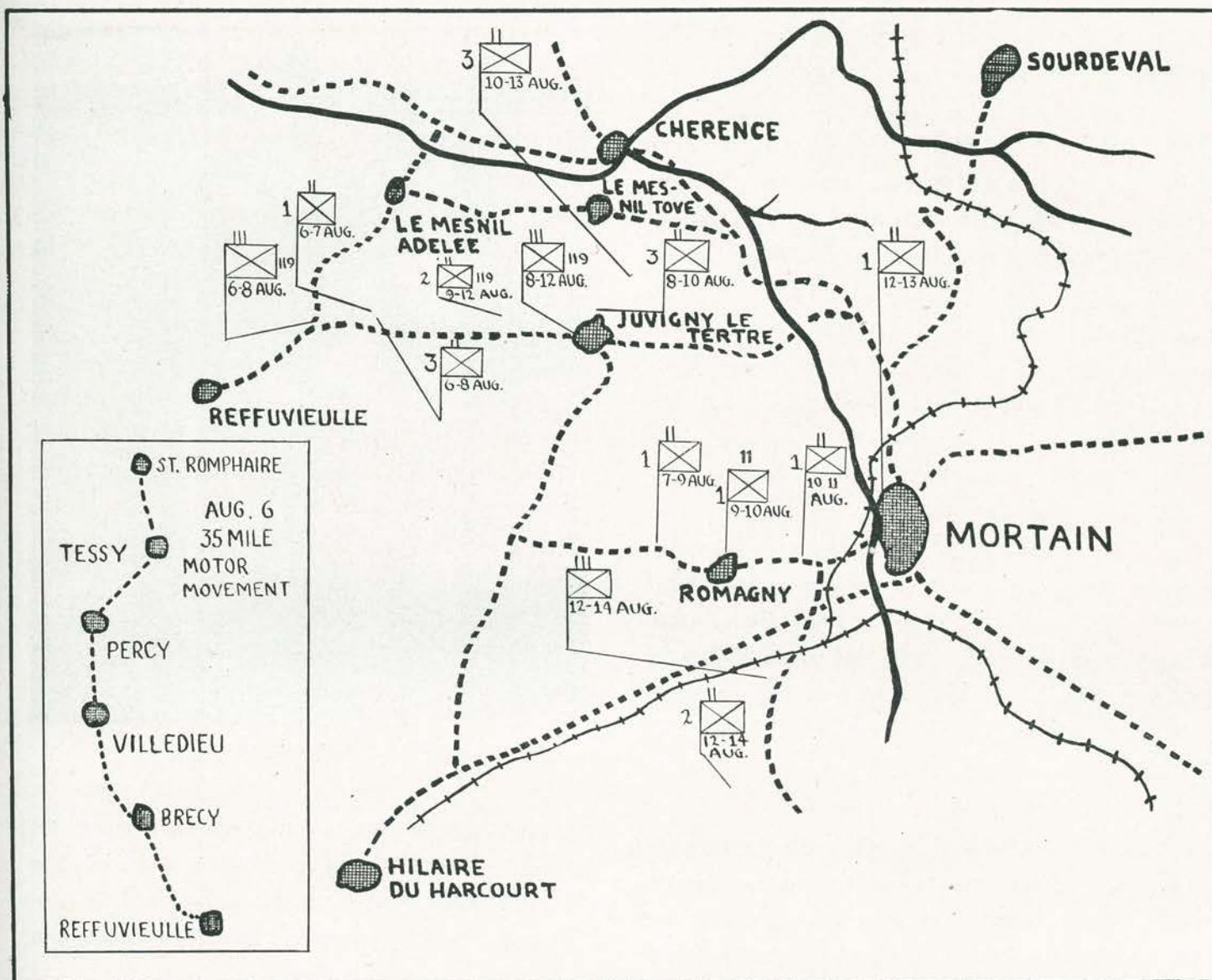
In the confusion, the enemy fled. As they ran he fired a grenade, killing one and wounding two others. The enemy soon became disorganized, and L Company was able to make a short advance before it was held up again. The Germans had begun using a great volume of artillery to defend the town. The Third Battalion made no more progress the rest of the day.

Company I was ordered first on a separate mission to establish a road block at the road junction 800 yards west of La Prevetiere, and then they had been instructed to move down the road to Le Mesnil Adelee and join B Company. They had five tanks with them and were proceeding westward cautiously, for 35 enemy half-tracks were reported to be loose in the area. Early in the afternoon some planes were sighted, but, since they were identified as American P-47s and British Typhoons, neither I Company nor the tanks took cover. The planes however, dived on the unit, firing rockets, machine guns, and dropping bombs.

Three of the tanks were disabled and the unit was scattered and disorganized. These planes, especially the British Typhoons, though they fired on other units of the Third Battalion all along the line, were mainly responsible for halting the Germans' counter-offensive in this immediate sector. It was reported that the Germans had been firing red smoke shells over I Company and B Company so that the planes would take them for their targets.

I Company and its tanks had not yet reorganized from the strafing and bombing when a large force of enemy tanks and infantry moved out of Le Mesnil Adelee to capture part of the unit. A platoon leader was captured, and Pfc.





Daniel J. Noyes, who tried to find him, was driven back by an armored car.

The Germans had withdrawn from Le Mesnil Adelee when Combat Command B of the Third Armored Division finally came up behind B Company. Combat Command B moved into Le Mesnil Adelee and then east toward Le Mesnil Tove. B Company moved into Le Mesnil Adelee and a task force was formed under Captain Stewart, consisting of B Company, I Company, a platoon of AT Company, and a platoon of engineers. Captain Stewart was ordered to block the town after he had withdrawn the greater number of his troops from it. Though we had been reinforced, we could as yet do little more than hold.

The Regimental CP of the 117th in front of St. Barthelmy had been overrun by Tiger tanks, and though three of them had been knocked out in the CP by bazookas, there were

others roaming about. Groups of the enemy had infiltrated around the rear of the Third Battalion before Le Mesnil Tove, and a platoon of B Company with one platoon and two squads of the 105th Engineers were sent to take care of them.

That night, Cannon Company reported that they had knocked out one Panther, one Tiger, two ammunition dumps, and two machine guns. The Regiment's Third Battalion and Special Units suffered the loss of 28 wounded and six missing. The First Battalion, operating on Division order under Major Herlong, was committed and stopped cold close to Romagny, where it fought all night. The Second Battalion was expected back from its mission with the Second Armored Division during the night, and the Third Battalion was notified that the Second would help them take Le Mesnil Tove the next day.



The Second Armored Division, with our Second Battalion still attached, had had the mission of capturing Vire, one of the principal anchors of the German line. This town controlled several routes of supply north and south. The Germans were defending it with tanks, artillery, mortars, and infantry, and were bringing in fresh troops and supplies.

As the Second Armored with infantry riding, approached the high ground west of the town, it drew considerable artillery and both tanks and infantry suffered losses. Nevertheless, they deployed at the summit of the long slope down into the town, G Company with a company of medium tanks on the right for flanking movement on the town, and on the left E and F Companies with a company of light and a company of medium tanks for a direct assault down the slope.

On the evening of the sixth the attack began. The main body of the attack got no closer to the town than 2,000 yards. One platoon of E Company reached the first houses on the outskirts of Vire but was driven back by a superior force of enemy infantry. Having suffered heavy losses in armor and infantry, the Second Armored pulled all its forces back over the hill onto the reverse slope to avoid the direct tank fire, and dug in for the night.

The Germans sustained their artillery fires most of the night and we replied. Our tanks set a large German ammunition dump afire, and the Germans, among other successes, blew up one of our half-tracks which contained cases of C rations. The C rations were blown over 100 feet into the air and descended, cooked through, over several hedgerows, providing the infantry with chow, but little consolation.

On the morning of the seventh the attack was renewed with about the same dispositions, and again failed with heavy losses. As the Second Armored withdrew, elements of the fresh 29th Division, which eventually took the town, were approaching it from the northwest. The Second Battalion, in returning to the Regiment without maps, became scattered and arrived in small groups during the night and the early morning of the eighth. Instead of being sent to help the Third Battalion to take Le Mesnil Tove as previously planned, it went into Division reserve to rest and reorganize. During the day, the Third Battalion helped stop an enemy breakthrough between the 117th Infantry and the 39th Infantry.

That night the First Platoon of AT Company, attached to the Third Battalion, had placed a gun at the crossroads before Le Mesnil Tove. They had emplaced after dark to avoid



*Lt. Col. Carlton E. Stewart*

enemy observation. They had no sooner dug in around the gun than a barrage of artillery and mortars came in. The enemy fire on the area between the crossroads and the town was almost constant, and the fields and road were filling with debris.

Early in the morning a barrage killed a squad leader, and wounded a Third Armored Division officer and four men who had a position about a hundred yards up the road from the AT gun. Pfc. Eldred Viard and Pfc. William L. Lindquist raced from the gun to the wounded under the fire and began carrying them back to the Battalion Aid Station; they had to make four trips. The enemy was probably watching their movements, because shortly after they had returned to their squad, enemy shells came in on the gun and one of them hit the ammunition truck, setting it afire. Another struck beside it, wounding a member of the squad and caving his foxhole in on top of him. Pfc. Viard and Lindquist again left their holes to dig him out and save him from suffocation. They were both hit by shrapnel. Still, in spite of their wounds and the exploding ammunition truck, they dug the man out and carried him away from the truck to the other side of the road. There was only one foxhole there



and they put the wounded man in it while they gave him first aid, remaining exposed to the continued fire themselves.

The Third Battalion was to move to the northeast and take up a position on the hills east of Le Mesnil Tove in preparation for a descent on the town from that flank. They were reinforced for this operation by the return of I Company and the attachment of Task Force One, Combat Command B, of the Third Armored. Task Force Two of that Command was to cover their right flank and keep in contact with them.

But the Germans, whose grand attack had been disorganized on the seventh, mainly by the Typhoons and their rockets, renewed the push on the eighth; we held, but only at great cost. That morning the Luftwaffe was up in great numbers, but for once we were not bombed. Either the planes had business elsewhere or they were clearing the air for the ground attack.

The Third Battalion, with Task Force One to its left, jumped off at 1330. For a couple of hours its attack failed to gain Le Mesnil Tove because of the enemy artillery. The town was being defended to cover the passage of tanks, among them those which had already withdrawn from Le Mesnil Adelee, or to hold a base, if the main attack from the east could come up and support them in a second thrust toward Avranches.

When the Third Battalion was finally able to gain the town, the tanks of the task force had it almost completely surrounded, and eight medium tanks and a platoon of infantry were already inside it. Later, the task force was driven out of the town by the Germans, and it was finally cleared by Captain Stewart's task force.

The German tanks withdrew from the neighborhood very gradually. At this time Charence le Roussel to the north was in our hands, and Company A had made contact with the Eighth Infantry there. At 1700 the Third Battalion had reduced La Bernadaye to the east of Le Mesnil Tove and was heading farther east, though not rapidly. One German tank in front of L Company proved the delaying factor. For a while, Task Force One was cut off from the Third Battalion by the fire around Le Mesnil Tove. Task Force Two came up on the right flank of the Third Battalion, southwest of Le Grand Dove. At 2150, when the Third Battalion dug in, it was in contact with both forces.

On the ninth at 0700, Task Force Two, with L Company on its left, moved north to cut the road running east of Le Mesnil Tove, at a point just east of La Bernadaye. A tank in front of L Company opposed the advance, but withdrew before the road was cut behind it. The mission was changed, and the force advanced to Grand Dove. We had cut the road more to block the advance of tanks coming from the east than to cut off those around Le Mesnil Tove, and we were now heading into the enemy line of advance.

Task Force One was on our left, and Task Force Two on our right. Both forces suffered very heavy casualties from enemy artillery, and one shell landed in a group of officers of Task Force Two, killing Colonel Cornog, the unit commander, and making casualties of almost all the officers. This disrupted the plans for the attack.

The Third Battalion was finally ordered to move on at 1920 without the tanks. L Company advanced astride the road, with K Company on its left and somewhat to the rear, and with I Company following. Company K was held up by stiff resistance, so L Company halted and waited for them to come abreast. The lead platoon of L Company was running short of ammunition and, while they halted, a small group was sent back to the rear to get more. During the halt the platoon cleared three houses in the area and set up a defense. Sgt. Edwin J. Schaeffer was standing guard in the doorway of one of the houses when he noticed an enemy soldier leaving a patch of woods and entering a trail nearby. Sergeant Schaeffer called to him in German to surrender, but he turned around, fired a shot and took off behind the hedgerow. Sgt. Schaeffer ran after him, alternately firing and waving at him to come back. After 150 yards of this, Sergeant Schaeffer came upon a group of 25 Germans and assumed they were prisoners of K Company. He asked for K Company. One of them answered with a burp gun and all hell broke loose.

Sergeant Schaeffer turned his BAR on them and they all hit the ground. His fire proved persuasive, for an officer among them held up his hands and the group surrendered.

At 2020 the companies were instructed to make physical contact with each other, to close up the gaps, and to protect the tanks, which were more or less following. The infantry of Task Force Two was committed to secure the left flank, and the tanks were held in defilade. Before the Third Battalion dug in, they had advanced with difficulty about 500





*A patrol moves through the ruins of Mortain*



yards. During the day three men had been killed, 51 wounded, and one was missing.

The Third Battalion made a rapid advance on the tenth to reach an orchard just west of Grand Dove by 1000. Although enemy artillery was still severe and a few tanks were reported prowling around Le Mesnil Tove, infantry resistance was slight.

That afternoon we dug in on the forward slope east of Grand Dove and organized a main line of resistance. On the 11th there was almost no activity. The Third Battalion merely maintained their defensive positions. The hard fighting on these two days was done by the First and Second Battalions, which were with the Third Armored Division attacking the town of Mortain and the hills west and north of it in an effort to reach the isolated battalion of the 120th. The enemy defended the hills and the town vigorously with artillery, tanks, entrenched infantry, and frequent counter-attacks.

On the morning of the tenth, the Second Battalion succeeded in pushing the enemy off the high ground a half mile to the west of Mortain, but when they attempted to take the hills north of the town they were held up. Capt. Warren L. Fox of E Company dismounted from his tank and led his Company forward through the artillery and heavy small arms fire. He made a steady advance before he was mortally wounded. In the early afternoon the enemy attacked E Company with three tanks and at least one company of infantry. E Company was forced to withdraw, and the enemy followed, pressing to within 200 yards of the Company front.

Sgt. Joseph C. Leve moved his light machine gun squad 100 yards to the right. He and his squad held the enemy for three hours, while E Company withdrew 400 yards and reorganized. Other units of the Battalion sustained similar attacks and suffered heavy casualties.

First Sgt. Thomas H. Kirkman was sent back to the Battalion CP to bring up replacements. They were later to be known more pleasantly as reinforcements, but at this time they were replacements. Sergeant Kirkman went back to the CP on foot, where he loaded one hundred replacements onto three two-and-a-half-ton trucks. They rode to a point 1,700 yards behind the forward elements and then unloaded. Sergeant Kirkman assigned them to company groups and started the march forward. As they passed through a draw and came

up over a hill, the enemy spotted them and began laying on artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire.

As this was their first fire, the replacements started running in panic to the rear. Two of them were killed and several were wounded. Sergeant Kirkman ran to the rear of the column and stopped the fleeing men. Heatedly, he told them to follow him, that the Battalion would be wiped out if it did not get help. The men followed him. Late in the afternoon the enemy launched another attack which Sergeant Kirkman, leading a group of the replacements, helped stop.

During the attacks, patrols were sent to the right and left flanks to ascertain if there was any possibility of flanking to envelope the enemy. The patrols found that the Second Battalion had more chance of being enveloped by the enemy than of flanking the enemy themselves. Lt. Charles N. Blodgett was given the mission of reinforcing the right and left flanks of the Battalion with two reinforced machine gun platoons. While the fire fight was at its bitterest, Lieutenant Blodgett placed his men first to the left where the threat was greatest, and then to the right, throwing back the enemy envelopment of the Battalion flanks.

The First Battalion was in similar difficulties to the south of the Second. On the outskirts of the town, Company A ran into a minefield, which stopped the platoon of medium tanks with the Company. The sergeant of the Third Platoon, Francis M. Cordle, maneuvered his men into positions covering the tanks and at the same time gradually continuing the advance. While the tanks cleared a way through the minefield and advanced cautiously through it, the infantry platoon pushed forward with the help of one tank-dozer, which was opening gaps in the hedgerows for them.

Suddenly the enemy opened up with accurate cannon fire on the dozer and it was presently in flames. The Third Platoon broke and headed for cover. Sergeant Cordle exposed himself to the fire of the enemy hidden only 300 yards away, in an attempt to hold the line. In spite of his efforts, he was only able to rally four men. Since he had no order to withdraw, he and his four men remained to stop the enemy who now came charging down the hill. The enemy came within 200 yards and began concentrating their fire on the remaining tanks and men. Only after the tanks were able to withdraw to covered positions did Sergeant Cordle pull his men back. With the enemy at close range he covered the withdrawal of his four men before he himself left. A few men with stout hearts can do great things.





*Lt. Col. Robert H. Herlong*

Our mortars did a large part of the work in holding off the counterattacks and preventing further withdrawals. The enemy, however, was also making good use of its artillery and mortars. A particularly heavy barrage fell on C Company, which had committed all four of its platoons. The Third Platoon, on the Company right was driven back under heavy pressure, leaving a wide gap between C Company and B Company on their right.

Lt. Earl C. Bowers exposed himself to the barrage and small arms fire to reorganize the platoon and to fight it back into its position. Although the Battalion sustained heavy casualties, it was successful in stemming the German drive.

Here our mission was to hold against a vastly superior force, but Major Herlong realized that the best defense was offense. The enemy found each attack counterattacked, each penetration pinched off. Clever deployment and patrolling on our open right flank confused the enemy. The enemy outnumbered our forces at least three-to-one. A push on the right flank or an all-out push any place in the sector would have broken through. A rough-riding major from South Carolina out-bluffed and out-smarted the best Hitler had to offer.

When the attack was renewed, one of our tanks was hit and started burning. The crew, with the exception of one member, escaped and fled from the tank. The man inside had been hit by fragments and was calling for help. The ammunition was expected to start exploding at any minute.

Sgt. Agaptio B. Morales of D Company climbed up on the burning tank and dragged the man out to safety. When the tanker was safe he said to Sergeant Morales, "May God be with you." It was a good time to be in a religious state of mind. This man had found, as many another had, that in time of need there was a religion and a God for every man.

On the 11th, the Second Battalion, with the Third Armored Division, assaulted the town of L'Abbaye Blanche on a hill to the north of Mortain. A forward observer for the 81-mm mortar section of H Company, Sgt. Frederick W. Unger, was in a Sherman tank on a forward knoll of the hill when the tank was hit and set afire by an enemy AT gun. Sergeant Unger crawled out of the tank, took up a position behind a hedgerow 15 yards away and continued to direct mortar fire. The mortar section itself had suffered casualties and was becoming disorganized under the enemy fire. Lt. Clair Askew crawled from section to section of his platoon reorganizing the gun crews and setting an example of courage, until he was killed. Under his example the mortars made it possible for the infantry to move forward. Toward dusk the tanks and infantry moved back several fields to organize defenses for the night. Almost immediately they had to fight off an enemy counterattack. The Second Battalion, like the First, was barely holding its ground. For the two days the Regiment suffered 53 killed, 290 wounded, and 13 missing.

On the 12th the Germans abruptly changed their plans and began to withdraw. It was not an easy withdrawal; an observer from the isolated battalion on the east of Mortain was able to direct artillery on their troops and convoys as they moved back from the town. In withdrawing from Mortain they abandoned the counter-offensive on Avranches, together with the hope of pushing the Allies back into the Channel and restoring the Atlantic wall.

They changed their whole Continental strategy and determined to fall back on Paris and the Seine line, fighting only delaying actions between Mortain and the Seine. They probably did not seriously expect to hold the Seine very long,



and it was to be held only as a wearing action and to gain time for strengthening the Siegfried Line and the defenses of Germany itself.

General Dittmar, who in the last few days of the European war surrendered to the 117th Infantry at Magdeburg, said that the failure of the Avranches counteroffensive was the turning point of the war, at least it precipitated matters. the Germans had been badly battered by the Allied air forces and also, on the night of the 11th, by their own Luftwaffe. They might perhaps have pushed through us at Mortain, but the cost of getting through such resistance as the 30th Division put up must have seemed very high for an objective like Avranches, whose value was daily declining.

In the morning K Company was sent to help the First Battalion, and with this fresh strength and the gradual withdrawal of the Germans, and the First Battalion was east of Mortain by noon. Elements of the 35th Infantry had al-

ready pushed past them and relieved the battalion of the 120th. In the afternoon, the Third Battalion pushed as far as La Graviere without much difficulty. That evening the XIX Corps attacked across our front to end our action around Mortain. As a result of the rapid and complicated movement of the action, and the flexible construction of the American army, the Regiment now consisted of parts of special units, the First Battalion of the 120th Infantry, attached, and the Second Battalion of the 117th Infantry, attached. The original Regiment (not counting attached units) suffered 11 killed 52 wounded, and 11 missing during the day.

On the 13th, the Regiment was somewhat untangled. The Third Battalion came back and the Second Battalion of the 117th left. The Division was getting straightened out to move on, after the long interruption, to Domfort.

For route security, K Company occupied the high ground

*The First Battalion Doughboys move through the streets of Mortain, which were littered with destroyed American equipment.*







*American men pick their way through the debris and rubble as they advance through the French town of Domfront in pursuit of the fleeing German forces.*

southeast of Mortain to cover the road to Barenton, while the rest of the Third Battalion was sent just north of Barenton itself. On the 14th the Division moved to an area east of Barenton, and the Regiment, in reserve, stopped just east of St. Cyr du Bailleul. On the 15th, the Regiment moved up around Domfort, relieving elements of the 120th. The Second Battalion took the high ground just northwest of Domfort and east of La Haute Chapelle without meeting the enemy. The Third Battalion took up defensive positions on the high ground between the main roads running east from Domfort and St. Front de Colliere. The First Battalion moved northeast along the road running south of the Varenne toward Dompierre.

They met little resistance, except from some scattered tanks, which did not last long. Morale was high after the previous victory, and resistance met sudden death. There were no casualties during the day and two prisoners were taken,

On the 16th we continued to move northeast until contact was made with the First Division coming up from the south. Then we moved slightly north and set up defensive positions in what amounted to a semi-rest area. The Regimental CP sat in a rather large house 1,000 yards southeast of Les Forges.

This house was referred to as a chateau. It was nothing of the kind, hardly even a manor, but the CP, being accustomed to holes dug into hedgerows by a dozer, or farmhouses at the most, assumed delusions of grandeur on having a residence. In any case, the whole Regiment, in holes and houses, rested and laughed for the first time in days. For three days, reorganization took place and the units were partially brought up to T/O strength.

On the 19th, the Regiment made a long motor move. We cruised east from Domfront through Juvigny-sous-Andaine, Alencon, Belleme, Mauves, Longny, Senonches, and stopped just northeast of Brezolles. The French civilians along the





*American Infantrymen of the 30th Division look at the American Flag flying from the damaged front of the town hall of the French town of Argentan, which is a symbol of liberation to the inhabitants, a sign of victory to these fighting men, and another step forward on the road to Berlin.*

road were feeling the first excitement of the liberation and greeted us wildly as we passed. They yelled "vive l'Amérique" as they tossed flowers and apples to us. During stops, they brought cider, wine, and cognac to the trucks. We gave them cigarettes.

The French children, with their customary cynicism, soon turned this into a racket and invented the famous question, "Cigarette pour Papa?" The gesture of two fingers raised to represent V for Victory was soon lowered to the lips as sign language for "how about a smoke?"

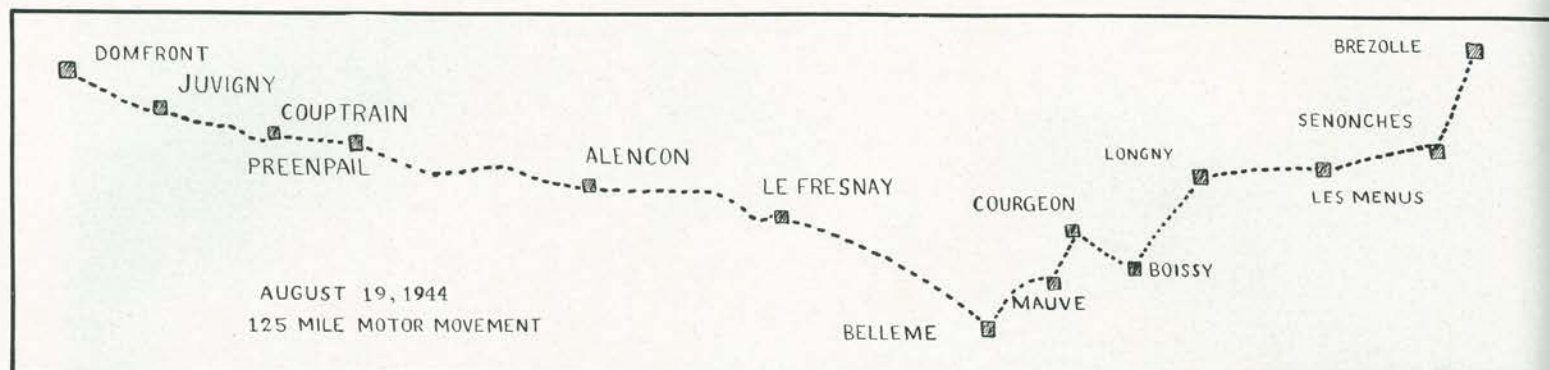
The feeling between the French population and the American army was declared by the press and public persons to be excellent, but through misunderstandings and impatience on both sides it soon deteriorated to a dangerous degree. In late August and early September, however, it really was almost as good as advertised. On the 19th of August, the French had some satisfaction for their exasperated pride, in the news

from Paris. The French Forces of the Interior, the FFI, or the "fifis," had started an insurrection in the capital and were thus threatening the base of German operations in France.

On the 20th, the Regiment began what amounted to a pursuit of the Germans, from Brezolles to Le Mesnil Morin, northeast of Evreux. It was the first of a series of rapid moves which came to be known as "rat races."

The assault jumped off at 0800 with the First Battalion on the right in contact with the 120th, and the Second Battalion on the left in contact with the 113th Cavalry. The Third Battalion, in reserve, followed the Second Battalion. We were moving northeast to an objective near Droisy on the other side of the Avre River. There was very little resistance until we reached the river, where we found the bridges blown and drew some small arms fire. The First Battalion fought across the river at a ford east of Acon, and before





noon, the Second Battalion was crossing at Breux. The First Battalion, on the right, drove ahead rapidly in spite of the rough terrain, but the Second Battalion, on the left, ran into difficulties. The two leading platoons crossed a small bridge over a gully 500 yards short of the high ground before Droisy.

The enemy occupied the high ground and had excellent observation on the bridge. After the two platoons had crossed, the enemy dropped artillery on the bridge and laid in a quantity of mortar and small arms fire on the platoons. The bridge was destroyed and the Company split. The two lead platoons thought the Company was following and went on into a stretch of woods. Artillery and small arms fell so heavily at both ends of the bridge that the rest of the Company, after four attempts to approach it, was forced to withdraw.

Sergeant Alexander K. Harvey volunteered to get across the gully and contact the lead platoons. On leaving cover he was pinned down by machine gun fire, but succeeded in crawling the 40 yards to the edge of the gully beside the bridge. Even in the gully, he had to hit the ground because of artillery fire. When he had crawled out on the other side he had to continue crawling because of machine gun fire, and shortly afterwards a sniper opened up on him.

Two of the sniper's bullets struck only a few inches from Sergeant Harvey's arm, and at the third shot he saw the sniper behind a tree 150 yards away. He rolled over into the road and killed the sniper with his first shot. Fighting his way forward, he finally caught up with the leading platoons, and then went back to guide the rest of the Company across the gully.

The Second Battalion moved on in a column of companies. Late that afternoon a German column consisting of four half-tracks, with 20MM guns and three tanks, came

along from the left and hit the crossroads, and our column was cut by enemy infantry which deployed across our line of march.

Private George P. Kocotis, a radio operator marching at the head of the column, had taken cover in the woods to the northwest of the crossroads. The woods were receiving considerable fire from the 20MM guns mounted on the half-tracks. Private Kocotis tried to slip back to the rear half of his column by following a path parallel to the dirt road on which the Germans were advancing. As he came out on the road, a burp gun pinned him down in a ditch.

The fire ceased and the burp gunner seemed to have moved on, so Private Kocotis c-awled back into the woods and went back to his radio by the same path. He destroyed the radio, and finding a BAR which had been abandoned, returned to the road. He observed a German standing in the doorway of a church nearby and shot him in the stomach. A German corporal fired a rifle at Private Kocotis, but with the BAR he was persuaded to surrender. Six more Germans appeared with their hands on top of their heads. Kocotis took advantage of the confusion and herded his prisoners through the lines to the rear element.

Lt. Harold D. Fayette had also been cut off with F Company at the head of the column. He had moved back toward the crossroads to help G Company reorganize, and became completely cut off from friendly forces. He managed to fight his way through the enemy to the river, which he swam, and at last reached the CP.

He explained the situation of F Company, which had captured a large ammunition dump but was now in danger of losing it, and the situation of G Company, which had suffered 54 casualties. This action had developed into one of considerable intensity. The Third Battalion was ordered up to restore the column. The Germans, who had run into



our column while withdrawing from positions along the Avre, were at last driven back and the movement was continued.

Droisy and the objectives near it were taken before nightfall. The First Battalion had moved its tanks across the Avre by the ford. The river bottom and banks became a bog and the other tanks had to wait until bridges were built. Before noon, two bridges were in use and others were under construction.

We made good progress against spasmodic resistance and by nightfall had reached Les Authieux and Le Parc. "A" Company was given the mission of taking Le Parc. The First and Third platoons had advanced half way through the town, meeting very light resistance, when suddenly they came under very heavy fire from an enemy rifle company supported by three tanks. The two platoons suffered 21 casualties from the concentration of machine gun, mortar, and tank fire.

The First Platoon withdrew from the area entirely, and the Third Platoon disintegrated and was forced to withdraw, leaving only 12 men with the platoon leader, Lt. Robert J. Henglein, to face the enemy. The tanks were 200 yards away, two of them forward and one behind on the main road. Lieutenant Henglein crawled along the buildings 50 yards ahead of his men and from an exposed position fired a bazooka. The second rocket knocked out the nearest tank and thereupon the other two tanks and the infantry began to withdraw. Lieutenant Henglein was wounded by a shellburst from one of the tanks, but when the tanks had withdrawn a safe distance, he returned to his platoon, reorganized it, and led it back into the fight for the town until he was too weak to continue.

The Second Platoon of B Company, attacking across a level wheat field, was pinned down by rifle, burp gun, and machine gun fire coming from the buildings of a lone farm 200 yards ahead. The platoon leader and the platoon sergeant were pinned down in an exposed position and were unable to move. Casualties began to mount until Sgt. Kenneth R. Beason, the platoon guide at the rear of the platoon, suddenly stood up and walked forward, calling to the men to follow him. He hit the ground, fired two shots and then, though artillery was falling in the area and the enemy concentrated their fire on him, he got up for another dash forward, firing steadily. An enemy bullet hit him in the head, killing him.

The platoon, enraged by this, charged forward, capturing the enemy position, killing five, and capturing 22 Germans and three machine guns.

The Regimental CP had moved up to Droisy and through Chavigny-Bailleul to an enormous brick ruin overgrown with grass and small trees, which in the distant past had been the Chateau de Bailleul.

On the 22nd, the pursuit was resumed, with the Third Battalion leading, the First Battalion following, and the Second Battalion bringing up the rear. There was some resistance in Prey, but, in general, units of the enemy that had been cut off in their withdrawal to the Seine or actually surrounded by our forces would surrender easily. We took 202 prisoners during the day, plus a complete battery of horse-drawn guns with all personnel. Parts of B and C Company became mounted infantry for the next two days. At nightfall, the Third Battalion was near Le Mesnil Morin, the First Battalion near Huest, and the Second Battalion just southeast of Evreux.

The Division was making plans for crossing the Iton River north of Evreux to occupy the high ground on the west bank. Colonel Sutherland spent the night reconnoitering and planning the crossing. At the same time, a patrol from the Regimental I & R Platoon went into the city of Evreux. Various FFI agents had reported that the Germans had withdrawn from the city and that it could be occupied without difficulty. The patrol had gone well into the city when it met a group of men who seemed to be French. In the darkness the patrol was not sure, and they were not sure of the patrol.

There was a mistake about the French password and a grenade was thrown into one of the jeeps, wounding two men. Not knowing whether it was a German ambush or not, the patrol withdrew.

The next day the city was occupied without resistance, though in the northern outskirts there were still small groups of Germans who gave the FFI a lively day's hunt.

The 117th occupied the town itself while we crossed the Iton north of the town and occupied the high ground to the north and northwest without difficulty.

The city of Evreux was in a frenzy of liberation. Riots were stopped, but were always ready to break out again. The populace went after the collaborators, especially the prostitutes who had dealt too openly with the German soldiers.

For the first time we found that the French hair dressers







had styled a new haircut for women of dubious character. All in all, they didn't look as badly as some of our own haircuts. These Quislings were rather summarily tried by popular voice and their hair was shaved off publicly. Similar scenes were to occur in other French towns, and in Belgium and Holland. This confusion of a biological urge with political policy was not a European specialty. We also privately confused the two issues in dealing with the question of fraternization in Germany.

On the 23rd the Regiment lost two killed and three wounded. The dead were a platoon leader of AT Company, Lieutenant Rivets, and his driver, who had been ambushed by a group of Germans on the road just before dawn. One hundred and twenty-nine prisoners were taken. A large number more refused to accept our hospitality and K rations, so were promptly sent on a visit to Hades.

There had been rumors that we would be able to rest for several days, and we prepared to do so in spite of the heavy rains that were now beginning. During the afternoon of the 24th, Dinah Shore sang to us from under a tarpaulin in front of the chateau. She sang *Milkman, Keep Those Bottles Quiet, I Walk Alone*, and other popular songs.

Our rest was short-lived, for, on the morning of the 25th, we were ordered to move north toward Luviers and to support the Second Armored Division, which was meeting strong resistance in Elbeuf. On the way to Louviers we received numerous reports of German groups from the French. By the time we reached their reported location, there was nothing but more information that came too late. But, considering what the FFI had to work with, they proved invaluable.

There were no Germans available for extermination when we reached the Chateau des Angles, and the owners were very indignant that the Germans had buried one of their dead in the middle of a flower bed. It was of no consolation to them that the corpse was an officer of an enemy army.

We reached an assembly area around Surville, west of Louviers, in the early afternoon, only to be ordered to withdraw south of the highway between Neubourg and Louviers to make way for the Fourth British Armored Division. All motorized elements moved to the south the same night and the Regimental CP set up in a very handsome white chateau in a large formal park a mile north of Le Mesnil Jourdain. On this day the French and American armies had entered Paris and the radio broadcast nothing but announcements



*The French "FFI"*

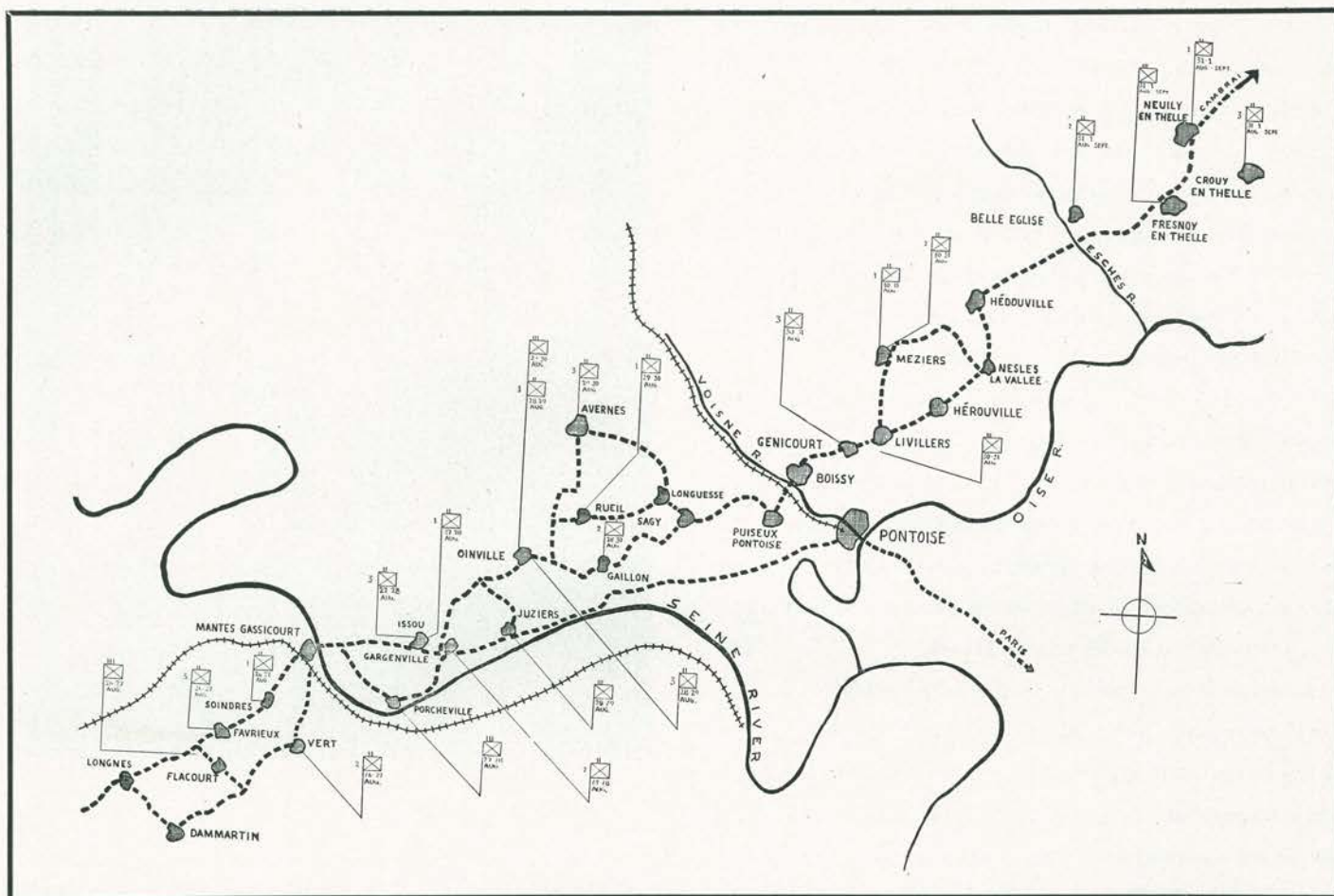
and descriptions. The lady of the chateau, who had white hair and rather weary good manners, sat in the front seat of one of our jeeps listening to the excited announcer in Paris. She prayed that our tanks would not wreck the city.

The foot troops moved south of the highway on the morning of the 26th, and the rest of the day was spent by the Regiment moving by motor through Evreux, St. Andre de l'Eure, la Ivry la Bataille, Tilly, and Dammartin, to an assembly area near Flacourt. We had no casualties and we took one prisoner during the day.

A small bridgehead across the Seine had been established by the 79th Division at Mantes-Gassicourt. We crossed on the morning of the 27th and occupied the eastern edge of the bridgehead, from Porcheville north towards Guitrancourt. The Second Battalion held the right, by the river, with the First Battalion on the left, next to the 117th. We were now in the defenses of the Seine Line, and though Paris had fallen, the Germans were expected to defend the river as best they could, if only to cover their withdrawal to the Siegfried Line.

They held a loose system of positions in the key hills and towns along the north bank of the Seine, and there were some scattered forces on the southern bank and the small





islands. The positions on the northern bank were held with great tenacity. In the late afternoon the Regiment attacked northeast but was held up—the First Battalion near Issou and the Second Battalion near Juziers. Company B, advancing across a bare open hill, was pinned down by severe rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire from the enemy dug in along a ridge 250 yards ahead. Artillery was called for, and Company B withdrew from the hill by dark, preparing to renew the attack the next morning.

Near Juziers, the Regimental I & R Platoon had preceded the attack to locate the enemy along the river. The platoon advanced 700 yards along the crest and sides of a wooded ridge until they hit a small group of the enemy, who first feinted at surrender and then fired. Immediately the platoon received rifle and burp gun fire from the left flank as well, and machine gun fire from the enemy located in barges across the river. The enemy on the ridge applied grenades and mortars, so that the platoon was entirely surrounded by fire.

Lt. Agnew C. LeFevre organized the withdrawal of the forward group of his platoon a few hundred yards back to a

defensive position, and then braved the fire for the length of the ridge to bring up a machine gun and send back for support from the Second Battalion. Company G was late in arriving, but the ground was held against superior fire and odds until they arrived. Company G made little progress and dug in for the night. The next morning, with the aid of artillery, the First and Second Battalions took the ridges and made fairly rapid progress. The Second Battalion pushed a reinforced company as far as Meulan to set up road blocks, though there were numerous snipers to be cleaned out in the villages along the river road.

The 120th Infantry came up on our right, relieving parts of the Second Battalion, and our attack swung north toward Serincourt, Jambville, and the territory east toward the Aubette River. Before we turned north we had been hoping to get to Paris; at least we were able to see the Eiffel Tower at a distance. Before nightfall the First Battalion had taken Oinville and the Second had taken Gaillon. The Regiment CP was in another chateau, in Albemont. The grounds had been an ordnance depot, and the Germans had abandoned it only the night before.



Early on the 29th the attack was resumed, with the Third Battalion on the left and the First Battalion on the right. The Second Battalion, in reserve, protected the supply routes, the right flank, and mopped up when necessary. The First Battalion took Serain-court, which it had been unable to take the day before, and advanced to Rueil. The Third Battalion took Jambville and drove on toward Fremainville, where it met serious resistance. In a factory on the outskirts of town a small German garrison equipped with 75MM guns, AT guns, a dug-in half-track, mortars, machine guns, and rifles was delivering enough fire to hold up the advance of both the First and Third Battalions. Colonel Brown, commanding the Third Battalion, brought to bear on the factory all the fire available to him, including AT guns, which proved effective against the larger enemy guns and the half-track. This neutralized the enemy fire enough to allow the First Battalion to by-pass and to continue on to its objective.

At the same time, Colonel Brown sent Company K, under the command of Captain Hopcraft, around the left flank by a concealed route toward Aavernes, with the mission of taking the town and the bridge over the Aubette north of the town. This move would cut the escape route of the Germans in Fremainville and the sector below Aavernes. Captain Hopcraft rapidly took the enemy outposts on his route without giving the alarm of his approach. The town fell, with 89 prisoners. He surprised and captured a number of enemy self-propelled artillery pieces, blocked the river crossing, and directed artillery fire on an enemy force preparing to counterattack from the other side of the river. In this operation Company K lost only one man.

At Fremainville, however, the garrison in the factory fought ferociously, and though anti-tank fire was poured into the buildings, they had to be cleaned out room by room with grenades and rifles. The Second Battalion was sent northeast from Gaillon against Condecourt. They met no resistance until they came down a forward slope one-quarter mile west of the town. Company F and Company E were leading, with Company E on the right and somewhat ahead of Company F. Company E was caught in the crossfire of machine guns located ahead and in the woods to their left front. They were trapped in the open fields. The enemy began laying in artillery and mortar barrages.

The mortars were late in coming up to support the rifle companies. The leading elements had for a while gone for-

ward rapidly and were out of supporting range of the mortar platoon. Lt. Earl A. Fay and his driver, Pfc. Robert J. Lorenz, started back to the platoon to bring them forward. A stretch of the road back for about 300 yards was covered by machine gun and small arms fire from enemy positions that had either been by-passed or established after the forward elements had gone by.

Before reaching the platoon, Lieutenant Fay and his driver found three wounded American soldiers lying in the road and beside them, two dead Germans.

Sergeant Unger was, as a forward mortar observer, attached to Company F, but at this time was directing his fire on the enemy in front of Company E, which was receiving the brunt of the attack. When he stood up to observe, an enemy bullet struck him in the hip and knocked him down. Nevertheless he crawled forward for better observation and continued to direct fire. A shell from an enemy 88 landed five yards in front of him; the concussion brought blood from his nose, but he refused to withdraw.

Lt. Harold A. Clifford, a forward observer of the 197th Field Artillery, lost communication with his guns when his radio went out. He came forward into the area where Company E was pinned down to use a radio being operated by a member of that Company. Each time he arose to observe his shellbursts he was fired at. Although he was wounded when the enemy drove to within 150 yards of him, he stayed until the end of the action and even left plans for fire missions in case of a renewal of the counterattack after he was evacuated.

Under cover of artillery and mortar barrages, an enemy force of infantry developed an attack from a wooded draw at the base of the hill. Company E had suffered many wounded and killed, and was not capable of continuing a prolonged engagement. The Company Commander, who had been observing the terrain closely, realized that a position 100 yards farther down the slope would allow a stronger defense against the coming infantry attack. He led his support platoon around the right flank of the assault echelon and, as he came abreast of them, ordered them to move forward with him to support his advance. He advanced 50 yards before he was wounded and the increasing fire pinned his men to the ground again.

A few minutes later Germans dashed out of a barn not far to the front, apparently to take prisoners. Seeing them



the Company Commander struggled to his feet and shouted to his men, "Fire! Fire on them!" He was killed immediately by a burst of machine gun fire. Though no man could move without drawing machine gun fire or raise himself up without being hit, the enemy group was cut down one by one. Unfortunately, two men of Company E, unable to fire because of their jammed weapons, were forced to surrender to the enemy. Two heavy machine guns had been abandoned.

Lt. John L. Goods tried to reorganize the men that were left in the crews, and managed to obtain support from several machine guns from Company E. Pfc. Harvey K. Bates was the only man left of his squad. He destroyed two enemy machine gun squads and the personnel of a horse-drawn artillery piece.

Pfc. Harold L. Gilbert remained at his gun during the counterattack and caused the enemy many casualties before they concentrated their small arms fire and killed him. S/Sgt. Charles Curtis, with a section of heavy machine guns, not only emplaced the guns in effective positions and directed their fire along a draw, but, from a haystack where he had excellent observation, he was able to help the artillery observer in directing his fire. Later Sergeant Curtis drove a jeep into the area at great risk and loaded it with those who were most seriously wounded.

It was especially the fire of the mortars and the artillery that at last threw back the enemy infantry, composed largely of paratroopers. Companies E and F were able to organize their lines for the night.

On the 30th the Regiment prepared to continue to its objective at Courcelles-sur-Viosne, where it was to be pinched out by the two other regiments of the Division and revert to reserve. We jumped off at 0800 and in a little more than an hour the First Battalion was in Longuesse and Vigny, and the Second Battalion had made contact with the 120th at Condecourt. The Third Battalion took Sagry and then drove 14 miles cross country to just short of Gaincourt.

The Regiment moved from the Aubette to the Viosne, with the First Battalion taking Villeneuve St. Martin. We reached Courcelles in the early afternoon and were ordered to follow the other two regiments. Our Second Battalion followed our Third Battalion, which followed the First Bat-

talion of the 120th, and our First Battalion followed the First Battalion of the 117th. Units of all three regiments became thoroughly tangled with each other on the roads during the afternoon, and it was 2200 before the Regiment was settled near Livilliers just north of Pontoise. The Regimental CP set up in some wet woods 300 yards west of the town.

On the 31st we continued in reserve and struggled forward against our own traffic. There were no casualties and no prisoners taken. Late that afternoon the Regimental CP moved near Fresnoy-en-Thelle into a school full of refugee children and called it a chateau.

## SEPTEMBER

Fresnoy-en-Thelle—Peronne—Cambrai—Somme—Belgium  
Tournai—Bousvalodeur—Meuse River—Albert Canal—  
Vise—Dalhem, Longehamp—Holland—Banholt—Terlin-  
den—Margraten—Valkenburg—Gulpen—Heerlen—Groen-  
stratt—German Border.

With Paris gone and the Seine Line unhinged and broken, the Germans now tried to withdraw their armies to the Siegfried Line, defending as they fell back such natural barriers as the Meuse River. Our problem was to cut their withdrawal before they reached the Siegfried Line by moving so rapidly that they could not organize any serious defenses at the Meuse or at the approaches to the Siegfried Line. We hoped to win the major portion of the war, if not all of it, outside Germany.

At 0400 on the First of September the Regiment received orders from Division to join another rat-race, the most spectacular so far. We were to drive 178 miles northeast to Tournai, Belgium, without stopping, except as the enemy might interfere. Tournai is a large city dating back to the days of the Romans. Its strategic position has made it a choice plum for invading armies for nearly 1,000 years. It controlled the road-net of southwestern Belgium and the main old Roman road to Brussels and to the east. The Germans were using this city as an army headquarters for the troops on the channel coast and in western Belgium.

The enemy was withdrawing across the route in considerable force, and we expected to fight our way through. Our speed and momentum was to be our security until other forces could move up and consolidate our gains. It was a long gamble, but our present advanced position gave us an



opportunity to deliver a serious blow to the German forces on the channel coast.

Leading the drive was a task force under the command of General Harrison and composed of our First Battalion, cavalry, tanks, engineers, and artillery. Our Regimental Combat Team was to follow the task force, with the 120th Regimental Combat Team following.

After the task force got under way, the Regiment left Fresnoy-en-Thelle and crossed the IP at the crossroads south of Tillet in the early afternoon. There was little resistance at first, and before midnight we had passed through Roy and Peronne. Our orders were to by-pass resistance and to continue our drive to the north. Again the struggle with our own traffic was the worst of it. However, the Germans were having a much worse time with their transportation, for the sides of the roads were littered with their trucks and wagons which had broken down or run out of fuel. The road was often blocked by civilian cars, motorcycles, bicycles, and baby carriages they had stolen from the French to carry their loot back from the Seine.

In the early morning of the second we began to run into some resistance; German artillery which was cut off to our left shelled the road. General Harrison, the Task Force Commander, moved ahead of the main body to the point. He came under observation, and when a mobile gun threw a shell into the radiator of his vehicle, he was wounded. He abandoned his vehicle and, although in great pain, refused assistance as he crawled several hundred yards to cover. As he was evacuated back past the column, tears could be seen in his eyes. The bearded, hollow-eyed Joes snapped to attention and threw him the first salute they had given in months.

At this time we were entering towns which our Regiment had fought for and taken during the last war. They remembered us, and the FFI seemed to take heart at this news and gave us at least temporary security from snipers as we hurried along.

One of our French-speaking officers with the usual American audacity found that the civilian phone system was still in operation. He calmly called the burgomeister of the towns ahead, introduced himself, and requested the local German disposition. One call was placed as far as Tournai, our objective.

Colonel Sutherland assumed command of the Task Force,



*A "rat race" to glory*

and in his place Lieutenant Colonel Quinn took command of the Regiment. Shortly before noon the German traffic and ours collided at an intersection in Cambrai. A German tank column was passing through when our Task Force came up. After a brief engagement two of the German tanks were burning at the intersection and the rest withdrew. They were reported in various places in and near Cambrai for some time afterward, but there was no second battle with them. Shortly after noon the Third Battalion, which had been sent forward to help the Task Force clear the town, reached the railroad tracks in the northeastern outskirts, and the way through town was clear for the column. We were delayed approximately two hours in Cambrai, by the enemy and by, let us say, "local hospitality."

The Task Force struck the town of Douchy and was stopped by small arms and a battle between the Germans and the FFI. The majority of the enemy was taken care of by the FFI, but there still remained a small group holding out strongly in a large house and its courtyard.

The command group of the First Battalion dismounted and closed in for a little sport. The streets were filled with our tanks and vehicles and a great crowd of civilians celebrating their liberation and at the same time excited over the little battle. It was a miniature of what the liberation of Paris must have been. We would tear ourselves away from the women who seemed to adore us, though we were black with dirt and hardly fragrant; finish our wine, and continue the scrap.

A sniper in the house wounded a member of the FFI, which caused a great commotion among the civilians. One of our tanks parked along the sidewalk trained its gun on





*Our column moves through Cambrai*

the house, knocked off a corner of the roof, and finally persuaded the Germans to surrender. We were surprised when they came out of the house. They were Mongolians.

Later in the afternoon, near Valenciennes, we were held up again by somewhat heavier small arms fire, which was directed on the column after the leading tank-mounted infantry had gone through. The following tanks were not sure what they were getting into and could not be persuaded to advance. Finally Major Herlong ordered the hesitant commander of the first tank to follow him, and he drove his jeep through the enemy rifle fire with the entire column following.

That afternoon, we crossed the border into Belgium. The Belgians waved enormous flags, shouted, and threw tomatoes and apples to us. It was certainly well meant, but we found the Belgian apples extremely hard.

At 1935 the Regimental CP was set up in a farmhouse a mile south of Tournai, and at 2230 the First Battalion was meeting small arms fire across the river inside the town. Fighting continued throughout the night. The entire move had been made in about 52 hours. Here we were again with enemy on four sides and with only one road of communication. The Regimental casualties were only five men wounded.

We were the first Allied troops to enter Belgium. Several days later we heard that our friends, the 79th Division, also claimed that honor, so, to save argument, we shall divide the honor with them. This drive was heralded by military men as the longest and fastest opposed advance in the history of warfare.

We met no friendly troops in the area, with the excep-

tion of a few members of the Belgian White Army, who helped us clear out scattered pockets of resistance. About 1030 on the morning of the third, the First Battalion made contact with an advance guard of the British 11th Armored Division. Outlying patrols and road blocks were withdrawn to let the British pass. When their long motorized column came through Tournai, we were astonished, for they were very well washed and pressed, and had a well-fed look.

After a high Mass was celebrated for us in the city's ancient cathedral, and Colonel Sutherland and Major Herlong were introduced to the celebrating populace, we officially turned the city over to the British Seventh Battalion "Green Howards" of the 69th Brigade, 50th Northumbrian Division.

We spent the next day cleaning out pockets of resistance and engaged in some hot street fights. Over a hundred Germans were flushed out of the woods a mile southwest of the Regimental CP. We also washed and soon were as pink as the British, though not pressed.

We fraternized with the Belgians, and at this time most of the Americans got along with them better than with the French.

The Belgians were never ironic and they seemed to have direct, comprehensible feelings. Later, however, their small mercantile class began charging prices that would soon restore the national economy, so relations between us grew strained. By then we began to grow fond of the Dutch, who to the end returned our mutual respect and admiration.

On the seventh of September we turned east toward the Meuse. The Regiment crossed its IP in Bruxelles at 0700 and went south through Valenciennes, then east through Mons, La Loviere, and Nivelles, and arrived in the area around Bousval before noon. The Regimental CP had a choice of chateaux and settled on one with out a moat, south of Bousval.

The trucks were released, and on the Eighth the Regiment went on foot to an area near Autre Eglise, southeast of Jodoigne. There were constant reports of small or large groups of the enemy hiding in the woods and houses near our line of march, and patrols were sent out to investigate. Invariably the Germans had withdrawn before the patrols arrived. The Belgian White Army was well organized. They had concealed command posts and PW cages full of Germans and Rexists, but had little means of communication except by bicycle. Their information unfortunately



came to us too late. We did make contact with the enemy in the Bois de Buis, but the TDs and engineers soon settled the matter, and the march continued without event.

From Autre Eglise we moved to Thys, southwest of Tongres, on the ninth, and completed the move to the Albert Canal and the Meuse River during the afternoon of the 10th. Our path was clear as far as the canal, with the exception of machine gun fire which came from the island between the canal and the Meuse. We knew that the enemy intended to defend the Meuse in that sector, and we had very little information beyond that. In the rapidity of events that followed, we lost contact with the enemy forces, took up defensive positions, and emplaced cannon against a counterattack. Patrols were sent up and down the west bank of the canal to prevent a surprise attack by the enemy on our side or a crossing from the other.

We then made plans to cross without delay ourselves. A reconnaissance patrol reached the east bank of the Meuse shortly after midnight with the help of darkness and fog. On the morning of the 11th, the Second and Third Battalions ferried the canal and met no opposition on the island. The crossing of the river was made in assault boats and a few small

*Tank mounted infantry cross the Belgium border*



*An old man remembers our division*

civilian rowboats which were found along the bank. At times there was a good deal of machine gun fire from the far side of the river on the boats and on the west bank. It was not accurate at first because of the light fog still on the river; later, while Company L was crossing, the fire severely wounded a member of a light machine gun squad as he moved down the bank.

Although a foot bridge was built across the canal later in the afternoon, all three battalions had already crossed. As they had only hand-carried weapons, and could not expect to do more than hold the bridgehead, Company G was left on the island to protect the rear around Richelle, south of Vise. A few vehicles were able to cross the river through the southern end of Liege, where the First Division had built two pontoon bridges. All the original bridges in Liege had been bombed or blown. The road along the east bank of the river was free of resistance from Liege to the bridgehead, with the exception of machine gun fire from the enemy who held positions on the bluffs. Some loss in men and vehicles was caused by our artillery falling short, and five ammunition jeeps were lost from a convoy in Liege during the night and did not reach the companies until the next day. Nevertheless the bridgehead was not only held but slightly enlarged before morning.

Company K, learning of a German column approaching from the northeast to attack the bridgehead, held their fire until the Germans were on top of them, and then opened up, annihilating the entire column. The First Battalion remained in contact with the enemy all night. Before daylight the enemy withdrew, so the First Battalion strengthened the platoon already in Vise. The town had been generously treated with artillery, and the Germans did not defend it. The Third





Battalion struck eastward away from the river to Dalheim and then northeast through Bombaye to Warsage, without meeting resistance.

The First Battalion, with the Second Battalion following, raced as far as Fouron-le-Comte before it met determined resistance. In spite of 20-mm. and rifle fire, the First Battalion pushed one company into Fouron-Le-Comte shortly after noon and sent two companies to help the Third Battalion, which was held up by AT guns and entrenched infantry holding the ridge northeast of Warsage. Both battalions were ordered to hold up and wait for the artillery to cross the river. A vehicle bridge had been completed at 1230; our artillery crossed and was in position at 1530.

The First Battalion companies established a line from Fouron-le-Comte across the front of the enemy positions on the ridge, while the Third Battalion, pushing around the right flank of this line, made a dash into Holland to take the town of Norbeek before dark. They pushed on and were held up again a mile south of Terlinden. Company K engaged the enemy while Company L, under Lt. Leslie E. Stanford, began a flanking maneuver to enter the town from the west. They were delayed by counterattacking half-tracks, 20-mm. fire, and some machine gun fire. Sgt. Daniel W. Petersen

left his squad and ran through an orchard to head off one half-track. When it came within 35 yards he fired his M-1 and shot the driver through the head. After the half-track crashed into a tree, the enemy slowly withdrew, and Company L entered the town, taking 54 prisoners.

Though out of communication with the Battalion, they held their position against a renewed attack and knocked out another half-track, two motorcycles, and a considerable force of infantry.

The First Battalion broke loose from its position around Fouron-le-Comte with the help of tanks and drove into Holland towards Banholt. They ran into some resistance at Mheer, for the enemy still occupied part of the town and was laying artillery in on the rest. While most of the attacking force took cover, Staff Sergeant Burroughs set up a heavy machine gun by himself in the middle of the street. From this position he was able to take by surprise a group of enemy crossing an intersection about 75 yards in front of him. He killed 17 of them before they could get away. Those who could get away abandoned the town and the Battalion moved on. Although it was now well after dark, the Battalion continued to push the enemy, who was just five minutes ahead on the same road. The Battalion moved in a column of companies, with Company C leading, and the Second Platoon, under Lt. Sylvester Shetter, acting as advance guard. Approaching Banholt, the platoon was suddenly fired upon by a 20-mm. gun at a range of 50 yards. Lieutenant Shetter ran back and forth along the road deploying his men under the fire, trusting to the darkness to hide him. He sent a squad of riflemen and one light machine gun around the left flank, along a graveyard and a house, to attack the enemy flank. While the enemy was occupied with this attack, Lieutenant Shetter deployed the other squads in positions from which they could bring fire on these guns and on two others which had joined the fight. The platoon's fire set ablaze a building 50 yards away containing an ammunition dump. Even in the bright light of the fire, Lieutenant Shetter continued to move about, directing the movements of his platoon. At last he stood up within 60 yards of the enemy position and called his men on to a frontal assault. The men left their cover, charged, and captured from the confused and disorganized enemy three 20-mm. guns, two heavy machine guns, and a quantity of small arms. Although the enemy fled,



three prisoners were taken and three men of the platoon were wounded.

The Battalion dug in near Banholt, which fell to us without further resistance. The Regiment lost three killed, 27 wounded and one missing during the day. Fifty-six prisoners were taken. This Regiment was again the first Allied unit to enter an enemy-held country—so far ahead of all others this time that our claim was never contested.

On the morning of the 13th the attack was resumed. The First Battalion passed through Banholt in a column of companies while the Third Battalion moved forward from Terlinden with two companies abreast. The First Battalion was held up by enemy fire from Termaar, but after a platoon of tanks was sent up to help them, Company B took the town. Friendly artillery held the Battalion up shortly. When the fire lifted, they moved on through Margraten to Sibbe.

Here the First Battalion executed an attack which was perfection to the last degree. The enemy had constructed an elaborate series of trenches just outside the town. They lay across the main road in a line through an orchard on the right and along a fence line on the left. The approach for 1,500 yards before them was a level stubblefield. Their observation and fields of fire were excellent. As the point of the First Battalion was fired on, the Battalion Commander came forward and began to develop the action. The support platoons were committed, and two companies deployed. As artillery fire pinned the enemy down and neutralized their fire, the infantry advanced rapidly across the open field. Tanks followed in the gaps and added their cannon fire against the machine gun nests. The infantry advanced on the double, firing even light machine guns from their hips. When they had advanced too close to continue the artillery fire, our mortars took up the fire without a pause. Then as the troops massed for the final assault some 50 yards from the trenches, the mortar fire ceased, and into the trenches went the infantry with bayonets. Approximately three German companies were removed from circulation.

A strange incident occurred here. The Commanding Officer of the enemy defenses in this area had been a Luftwaffe Major. He had been killed. In his pocket was found a heavily thumbled Fort Benning booklet on infantry tactics which had been lost by Lieutenant Pearson several months before in France. Strange as it may seem we had defeated our own tactics, something the enemy had never been able to do.



The Third Battalion took Reijmerstok, but ran into 20-mm. and small arms fire near the railroad cut northeast of the town in such volume that tanks were sent to help them. When that resistance was cleared, the Third Battalion had little trouble in reaching Ingber and the nearby villages. Company G, on an independent mission, took Hontem, and the rest of the Second Battalion moved from the assembly area near Altembrouck up to Margraten and Termaar.

Here began our first supply difficulties which continued to grow more serious as the days continued—short rations, little ammunition, and even less fuel. The lack of supplies and follow-up troops almost stopped our advance. We had advanced so rapidly that supplies were still coming directly from the beachhead in France. A fresh Corps with supplies might have gone a long way.

At 2130 Cannon Company repelled a counterattack at Grotwelsden and even captured six Germans. In Ingber meanwhile, two heavy machine gun crews set up road blocks commanding the road to Gulpen. The guns were approximately 400 yards apart. A little after midnight a patrol of eight Germans approached the first gun on their way into Ingber. The gunner tried to fire but the gun would not function. He sent a rifleman on the double to alert the squad while



he attempted to repair the malfunction. The rifleman woke the squad in a building 40 yards away, and, as Sgt. Robert S. Baker came out the door, the enemy patrol, hearing the activity, opened fire on the doors and windows with burp guns and rifles. Under the fire Sergeant Baker ran to the machine gun and in the darkness swiftly repaired the malfunction and turned the machine gun fire on the patrol. He killed one German and wounded two others. As the enemy withdrew one of them turned, fired a burp gun, and mortally wounded Sergeant Baker. During the day the Regiment had suffered 41 wounded and had taken 172 prisoners.

Early on the 14th, patrols were sent to determine the condition of crossing over the Geul River. The First Battalion found a bridge intact over the southern branch of the river in Valkenburg. They were ordered to seize and hold the bridge with a company if necessary. Unfortunately the enemy blew the bridge before we could stop them. Colonel Sutherland entertained the project of holding four other crossing sites with a platoon each, but finally directed the First Battalion to send a full company, supported by heavy weapons, to the site in Valkenburg. The enemy had already

*Troops of the First Battalion move up on Sibbe, Holland.*



begun mortar and artillery barrages on the southern end of town and the roads leading into it.

As the fighting in the town grew more vicious and the enemy barrages heavier, it became apparent that they might attempt to recross the river on the ruins of the bridge. Because of the lack of observation in the closely-built town, our artillery could not reach the bridge, and the complete destruction of it became a mission for mortars, or for demolition, if it could be reached.

A patrol from Company C and Sergeant Moushon, a mortar observer from Company D, left in the early afternoon to finish destroying the bridge. By slipping through the labyrinth of caves under the hills of Valkenburg, they were able to emerge at a point 400 yards behind the enemy lines, only to find a platoon of enemy troops between that point and the bridge. The leader of the patrol deployed his men around the entrance to the caves less than 100 yards from enemy troops. Then Sergeant Moushon crawled forward to obtain observation on the bridge. He had only crawled 25 yards when the enemy spotted him and opened up. Thanks to the irregularities of the terrain, he was able to continue, and in 20 minutes had reached an observation post.

He remained at this post for more than two hours, and when the bridge was thoroughly destroyed by his fire, he withdrew back through the caves to our lines.

Meanwhile, the entire First Battalion had moved up into Valkenburg and was engaged in a violent fire fight. Against the severe artillery fire almost no progress was made. Tanks were called for, but as they confused the names Valkenburg and Oud Valkenburg, they did not arrive until 2050. On the road into town two tanks were knocked out by the enemy artillery, with several casualties. In view of this, they were ordered back for the night to avoid further losses.

Here the First Battalion received the heaviest fire it had received since the early days of the beachhead near Pont Herbert. The enemy fire blanketed the town in a sheet of flame and shrapnel. The enemy occupied the hills to the north and could look down into the city streets. Three AT guns were lost in a matter of almost minutes.

The local underground was headed by the baker and a fireman. It was extremely well organized but lacked weapons. Their spies worked their way through the lines each night and reported to us the full enemy disposition. However, the shortage of artillery ammunition prevented us from exploiting this information.

The Third Battalion had less trouble. Company K had occupied a defensive position 2,000 yards west of Wijlre and



in the early morning sent a patrol to reconnoiter this town and the next one, Fromberg. S/Sgt. Joseph Mascari and the eight men of his patrol came across an unmanned enemy 75-mm. howitzer on the bank of the Geul. They rolled it into the water, crossed the river, and found another howitzer, in good condition, with ammunition near by. This gun they destroyed with thermite grenades. A third howitzer was found which had already been destroyed by the enemy. Wijlre was passed through without difficulty, but as they approached Fromberg, machine guns 300 yards to their right front opened up.

They crawled under the fire and reached the edge of town. Here they found a member of the Dutch underground who informed them that there were 150 Germans in the town itself. So, they went no further, but returned to Wijlre by another route, observing as they went a number of enemy entrenchments, some of them manned.

The Third Battalion sent patrols into Strucht and captured a number of prisoners who supplied information concerning defenses on the far side of the Geul. Company L was sent to secure a bridgehead over the Geul near Schinop-Geu.

There was little active resistance in this sector, however, until a few days later, when the Third Battalion crossed the river at Wijlre and the Second Battalion crossed at Strucht, and even then the resistance was not enthusiastic. On the 14th the Regiment lost seven men killed and 17 wounded, most of them from the artillery in Valkenburg. Seventy-three prisoners were taken.

During the morning of the 15th, the First Battalion was unable to push forward. Their position on the south bank of the river received volumes of enemy artillery. The fighting was bitter and dirty, house-to-house and at close quarters. Short gains were made by tunneling through the buildings. All companies were far below their organizational strength; much less than 50% in most cases.

But in the afternoon Company B, with the support of Company D, waded across the river and reached the island between the two branches of the Geul. They crossed the island and found intact a bridge leading from the island to the northern half of town. Lt. Hobert Howling and his depleted platoon of 12 men had made the first crossing to the island and had covered the crossing of Company B. They were now given the mission of mopping up the snipers in the western end of the island. Enemy artillery, mortar, and

small arms fire continued to blanket the town and the island, so that the Battalion was unable to make little gain into the northern half of the town itself.

Enemy fire prevented the rebuilding of the bridge to the island. Communications, ammunition, food, and the evacuation of the wounded depended on the dogged bravery of parties wading the river again and again under constant fire. Medics of the First Battalion Aid Station, the messengers, and the headquarters group of Company B had two days of this before a causeway could be built out of the rubble. When the cooks of Company D carried hot chow up to the machine gun and mortar positions, five of their food containers were destroyed by shrapnel.

To hold the bridge reaching from the island to the northern part of town, several machine gun positions were established on the northern bank. Sgt. Leroy E. Napp, Pfc. Warren E. Hall, and Pvt. Louis D. Gena set up this gun in the show window of a garage 10 yards from the bridge. They had not been long in position when the enemy launched a counterattack which drove Company B back to the bridge and over it onto the island. The machine guns, however, firing furiously, kept the enemy from reaching the bridge either to cross it or blow it up. They drove the enemy into prepared





dugouts near the bridge. A second attack was launched from there and they were again driven back.

About dusk an enemy squad started moving down the street toward the bridge. There was firing at the western end of the island where Lieutenant Howling and his platoon were mopping up. Hearing it, the enemy may have interpreted it as evidence that their attack had reached that far. At any rate the group came toward the bridge, boldly enough. S/Sgt. Charles P. Gurien, who had a heavy machine gun squad at the bridge, told his men to hold their fire and walked out into the street. We waved to the Germans to come down to the bridge and they, supposing he was one of their own men in the dimness, waved back and came cheerfully on to destruction. When they came within 40 yards the squad opened fire; no one escaped. Through the night the enemy continued the fight against the machine guns with grenades.

The Battalion renewed the attack in the morning, crossed the bridge, and brought ammunition in to the machine guns. Progress was slow against heavy resistance. The heaviest fire came from the high ground to the northeast of the town, above Sint Pieter. In the early afternoon approximately 100 enemy infantry with three tanks in support launched a counterattack to seize the principal road junction in the northern part of town. They were thrown back with heavy casualties, and the Second Armored moved up and took up positions at the road junction. With the help of the Second Armored, the First Battalion was able to clean out most of the town and push toward the road junction near St. Pieter.

The Third Battalion made steady progress from Wiljre after our artillery knocked out some dug-in enemy tanks and cannon.

Elkenraad, Kruishoef, Kolmont, and Ubachsberg were rapidly taken. Mortar and artillery fire and some small arms fire were received, but in no great concentrations. Near Ubachsberg the roads were filled with blocks, mines and booby traps. Sgt. Hubert Gentry and Pfc. James Bentis went 200 yards ahead of our leading elements toward a set of these obstacles. Before they reached them, two machine guns, set back from the road on either side of it, opened up. Sergeant Gentry and Pfc. Bentis crawled for 100 yards directly through their crossfire, removing mines—often doubly booby-trapped—from both sides of the road. For an hour and a half they inched forward, going from one side of the road to the other digging out the mines with their trench-knives.

After they had removed 40 mines and a large number of booby traps, the Battalion proceeded to its objective.

The Second Battalion held contact between the two assault battalions and covered the river crossings between them. Companies E and G remained at the Geul until they were relieved by the 117th and then followed Company F on the left flank of the Third Battalion. They had little trouble except with the bridge at Strucht, which had been blown by the enemy. The enemy left snipers and sent in some light artillery to delay its reconstruction. A bridge was built, however, and the Battalion vehicles and meager supplies passed over to follow the foot elements.

We had broken through the enemy defenses along the Geul River, which was the last natural barrier before the Siegfried Line. On the 15th and 16th the Regiment lost one man killed and 42 wounded, and took 95 prisoners.

On the 17th the enemy still resisted the progress of the First Battalion out of Valkenburg. After the Battalion made contact with Combat A on its left and had committed its attached tanks, the enemy fell back. Here, for one of the few times, we received and welcomed air support. Three dive bombers did a beautiful job of removing four machine gun nests which were holding us up.

The enemy offered only sporadic resistance, and the First Battalion moved rapidly east, occupying Klimmen, Ransdaal, and Kunrade. In the middle of the afternoon they entered Heerlen, one of Holland's largest cities. The Third Battalion was subjected to some artillery fire, but it failed to stop them as they went on to occupy Bengenrade, Heerlerbaan, and Onderspekholz.

As the Battalion moved on toward Terwinselen, a Mark IV tank was seen approaching the flank at a point well behind our tanks. An AT squad was in the vicinity and realized that if they moved their gun to meet the tank, their prime mover would be heard.

The squad unhooked the gun from the truck and pulled it by hand to a position on the tank's route of advance. Then, as the tank with its accompanying infantry came within point-blank range, the AT gun opened up, destroyed the tank, and routed the infantry. The column moved on to Terwinselen, where they were informed by a civilian that enemy tanks were approaching the town from the opposite side. S/Sgt. David S. Whittaker went forward to reconnoiter and, as he reached the outskirts of town, could hear five tanks. He re-



turned to his Company and, with a small patrol, went forward again until tanks were sighted. Enemy fire superiority drove the patrol back until they flanked the tanks and advanced to a position within bazooka range. The bazooka damaged the lead tank, and the remaining tanks and infantry withdrew.

The Second Battalion, moving behind the Third, and the Regimental CP closed into Heerlerbaan in the afternoon. During the day four were killed, 26 wounded, and 104 prisoners were taken. Company G was attached to the First Battalion on the 18th moving northeast toward Schaesberg. The forward elements of the Company, including the Company Commander and Lt. Leonard J. Kraus, were pinned down by three enemy machine guns. A radio operator was seriously wounded, and though they were pinned down in an open field with only haystacks and a few hollows in the ground for protection, Lieutenant Kraus ran 50 yards to help his operator. He rendered first aid and tried to carry the wounded man to cover. He had only moved about 15 yards when he was seriously wounded himself. Neither he nor the soldier was able to move, and no one was able to reach them. The Company mortars came up within effective range of the forward enemy machine gun and knocked it out, but could do nothing against the other two. Tanks were called for, but they were being repaired in Heerlen and were slow in arriving. Artillery was called for, but it also was delayed. Finally four tanks arrived and started working on the enemy gun positions. They were persuaded by Pvt. Walden G. McElroy to move in while he covered their advance, so that he could reach Lieutenant Kraus and the radio operator. The tanks at last knocked out the machine gun positions and the Company moved into the town.

As they arrived, the artillery, which had been called on the town, also arrived. It did no harm. With Lieutenant Kraus evacuated the Regiment suffered a great loss. As an observer, he had no equal. Many times he had led the infantry when their leaders were killed or wounded. He was always well forward near the advance scouts and often ahead of them.

The First and Second Battalions pushed forward through Nieuwenhagen to reach Groenstraat that evening. A short time later the Third Battalion reached the western side of Waubach. During the day three were killed, 14 wounded, and 21 prisoners were taken.



*Yeah!!—"Queen of Battle"*

We were now facing the Siegfried Line and expected to assault it at once, since we had the momentum. But we had outrun our supplies and were obliged to hold up and wait for a solid backing.

The pillboxes ahead of us were unoccupied, for we had pursued the enemy the last 800 yards on the double. Here again lay a great victory within our grasp. At least the first line of Siegfried defenses could have been taken with ease. Yet we realized, as did the enemy, that we could not have held long. The Regiment sat and waited for ammunition and equipment while the enemy feverishly pushed troops into the area.

The "Red Ball Express," the famous emergency truck line, labored day and night transporting supplies from the beaches. The majority of these men were negroes and through their efforts we were permitted to hold that which we had gained at such a terrific cost. Ammunition was rationed. Frequently the mortars had only one or two rounds a day artillery frequently less than we needed to fire one mission.

The infantry received a semi-rest. Many had their first baths in several months. We were deloused and received, for the first time, hot food for three meals a day without an interruption. For the many days past, fighting and marching with full equipment 30 to 35 miles a day had become routine. Squads and platoons had disintegrated to almost a memory. Few non-commissioned officers were left and even fewer officers. More than one squad or platoon had been ably led by privates. Men who had dreamed of sleep since we joined





*The fighting trio of Herlong, Simmons, and Kraus is decorated.*

the British to close the Falaise Gap, slept the clock around. Several days and much soap later, we began to recognize old friends as they asked the supply sergeant for pants, two and three sizes smaller.

The last days of September were spent in patrolling and reconnoitering. Patrols were sent into the Siegfried Line itself, and training was conducted on terrain similar to that we would find in the actual assault.

We soon found that our Intelligence had been operating in the area for some time. We began to receive enlarged maps of the Line, which not only showed the location of each pillbox, but also its field of fire. Many were so cleverly disguised that our patrols often could not find them, although they knew their exact location. Some were disguised as houses, others as stores, and some were built to resemble hay stacks.

The clean habits and living of the people of Holland gave us daily surprises. After months of the filth and manure piles of the French and Belgians we found people and customs very similar to our own. Each morning, whether the area was quiet or under shell fire, the house fronts, sidewalks and streets were scrubbed. The people showed a marked indifference to shell fire. This display of courage seemed to reflect the pain of their years under occupation. Children were instantly rebuked by their mothers for any expression of fear. "It's only the dirty Boche," they would be told; then the children would smile and finally laugh as if they were just discovering something new.

They shared their homes, meager meals, and looted cellars

with us. Romance budded and bloomed under the smiling eyes of the watchful parents. The townspeople furnished churches and choirs for us. Regular religious services were packed to capacity daily. They prayed with us and for us as we prayed for our lost comrades and for courage and safety in the coming attack.

While the days passed, the enemy continued to build up his strength. Their artillery was actively committed as it arrived. Each day the town received increasingly heavy fire, and there seemed to be no shortage of ammunition in the German army. We were enjoying our rest, so we let them have fun while they could.

## OCTOBER

Rimbürg — Siegfried Line — Merkstein — Herzogenrath — Bardenburg N. Wurselen — Kehlscheid — Richterick.

The assault on the Siegfried Line changed the character of the war. Germany was now fighting not for Europe, but for her own existence. The propaganda machine denied this, and stated that Germany began east of the Rhine. Indeed, for the rest of the war the Germans were busy changing their convictions as to Germany's exact location. As the provinces disappeared, Germany moved to Berlin and, when Berlin was directly threatened, Germany started to move to Munich, the capital of the Nazi movement, but the propaganda did not convince anybody. *Germany was invaded.*

The Germans, however, took pains to point out to us that we were fighting now in thoroughly hostile territory and that we would not have civilian or an organized underground to help us. The foreign workers in Germany were in no position to do more than sabotage, as usual, and could not





help us directly. It still should not be forgotten that many of us might owe our lives to the many duds produced by these workers in the German factories. During one period in France, approximately 30 per cent of their artillery ammunition failed to explode.

The first stage of the invasion was to be the capture of Aix-la-Chapelle, which was consistently called by its German name, Aachen, so that everyone would understand that it was not a French, but a German city. The Germans could not help taking this city seriously. It had been the capital city for Charlemagne, who was a German and the master of Europe in his time. The Germans continued to call all the subsequent actions as far as Cologne "The Battle for Aachen." This helped them feel that the direction of the war was not east, but west, and enlivened the hallucination that sustained their last important counterattack in December. It was all very clever, but not of much use.

We now transferred from the First Army to become the backbone of the newly formed "phantom" Ninth Army under Lt. Gen. W. H. Simpson, our old Division Commander.

In the battle for Aachen, the First Division drove into the city from the south, and the 30th Division came down from the north and cut it off. On the first of October the 119th Infantry was deployed opposite the Siegfried line, near Rimbürg and Broekhuizen, Holland. The troops had been trained specifically for the assault, and patrols had already crossed into the line and blown pillboxes with pole or satchel charges. The patrols were more useful for reconnaissance and harassing agents than as actual destroyers of the line.

*The Germans destroyed all bridges as they withdrew into the Siegfried Line, Herrlen, Holland.*



*2nd Battalion Headquarters*

Since the 26th of September, artillery had been firing at the more conspicuous pillboxes with moderate success. The line was to be bombed from the air for two hours before the infantry assault, unfortunately the bombers became confused and the strike was an almost total failure. The mortar barrages and the rolling artillery barrages that preceded the infantry in the actual attack were more effective, but the cracking of the line was primarily a job for infantry and armor.

During this period Capt. Earl Bowers of C Company was killed. His bravery and concern for his men (a patrol in the outskirts of Rimbürg) caused his death. His dream and cherished desire was to see his Battalion win a Unit Citation. The men of the First Battalion must have remembered his dream, for several months later it was achieved in the "Bulge."

At 1100 on the second of October the 117th and 119th attacked abreast on the Division front, with the 119th on the right. On the Regimental front the First Battalion attacked through Broekhuizen on the right of the Second Battalion, which attacked through Rimbürg. The Third Battalion followed the First, echeloned to the right rear.

The First Battalion, with two platoons of tanks, reached the river by noon, and the engineers began building a tread-way bridge for the tanks. Companies A and C crossed under fire on the portable foot bridges they had carried with them. In the woods on the other side of the river they ran into very heavy machine gun fire from the pillboxes along the railroad tracks and were obliged to hold up. The bridge for the tanks was finished in the middle of the afternoon in spite of small arms, mortar, and artillery fire; still the tanks were unable to push the attack because of the extremely soggy ground on the opposite bank. Without them the Battalion made little progress against the machine guns located in the boxes.





Company C came within 150 yards of the enemy positions before it was pinned down by the machine gun and then by artillery fire. The Third Platoon, which was covered by fire from twin pillboxes, suffered 15 casualties, including all its non-coms.

Pfc. Francis P. Smith kept a cool head and managed to hold the platoon and prevent a gap in the Company lines. In the course of the afternoon all wounded were successfully evacuated. On the return trips ammunition, food, and water were brought up. Company D, in support of C Company, attempted to bring machine gun fire on the enemy pillboxes and the entrenchments outside them. A squad of the First Platoon, making its way through the scattered woods, was pinned down by automatic fire. By a sudden dash across a clearing, Privates Gena, Kline, and Warren Hall reached a shallow draw along the creek between the river and the railroad and set up their gun. The enemy maintained a steady stream of fire on the position, so that the gunners were unable to lift their heads to observe or to man the gun.

Little support was possible from this position, so they attempted to withdraw. As they did, Private Kline was wounded and helpless in the clearing between the gun and the woods. Private Gena shouted encouragement to him and tried to get him to crawl out of the clearing, but the wounded man was too weak from shock and loss of blood. Gena and Hall then crawled into the clearing through the unabated machine gun fire and dragged the wounded man back to the woods.

Another heavy machine gun from D Company had been emplaced beyond the stream and then abandoned when the crew was driven back. In the evening Sgt. Leroy E. Napp

and Pvt. William J. Geiger crawled forward to recover the gun, wading through the icy stream up to their waists. Although the enemy was still blanketing the narrow front with fire, Sergeant Napp and Private Geiger came back with the gun.

The weight of our artillery during the first few hours of the attack had neutralized a large portion of the enemy artillery. Again, had it not been for the ammunition difficulties, our artillery could have continued this neutralization, and many casualties might have been averted. There are, however, many other factors to consider. If we had remained immobile until we had built up sufficient ammunition for all purposes, the enemy would have also had additional time to shift reserves and strengthen his western front. This would not only have seriously affected us, but the whole Allied drive and conduct of the war.

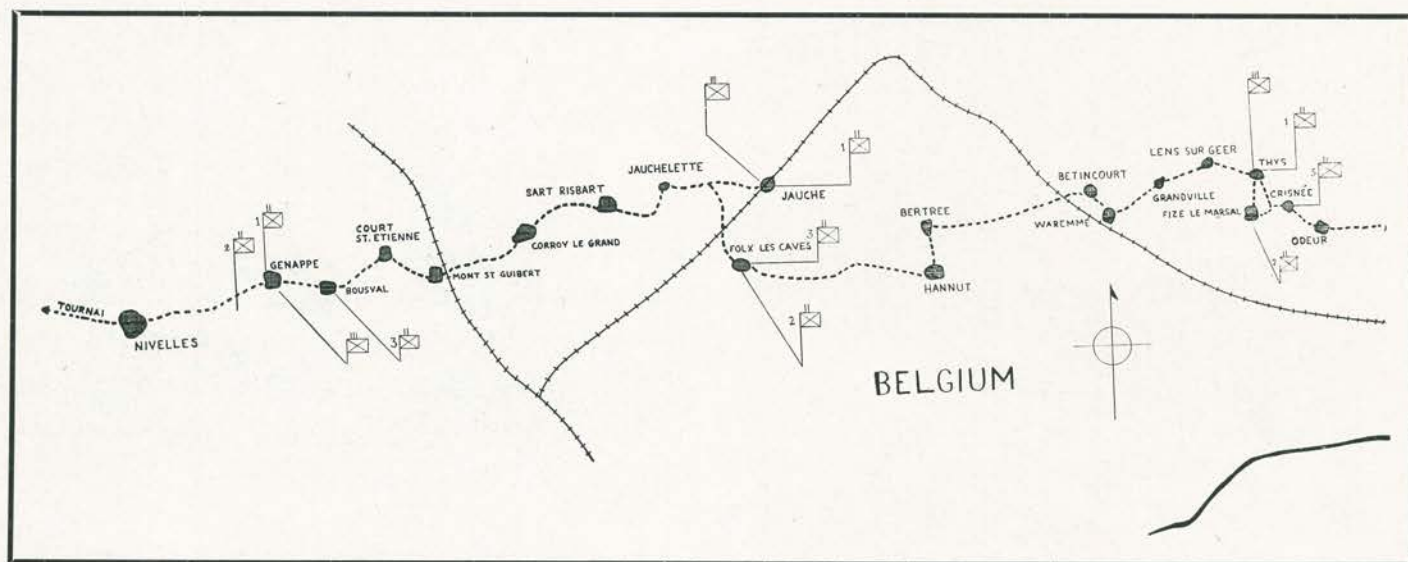
The papers at home proposed and editorialized on the former opinion, with much criticism aimed in almost every direction. It was proved later that the proper course had been pursued. Further delay at this period of the war would have given Germany new life. Daily her jet-propelled fighters and buzz bombs were reaching a hurried perfection. As it was, they became a formidable argument during the next months. There has been much speculation as to what would have occurred if they had had time to produce them in quantity. An intelligence investigation board found that German production actually was greater during the closing months of the war than at any other period.

The Second Battalion and one platoon of tanks had reached the edge of Rimburg at noon. There they met sav-

*Officers and men of the Regiment are decorated by General Hobbs.*







age resistance supported by machine gun fire from a castle across the river. The resistance was overcome, though snipers continued to roam the woods north of the town. One platoon of E Company succeeded in crossing the river by portable foot bridges and took up positions on the far bank.

Two of the Battalion tanks were able to cross the river on the bridge and worked north toward Rimbarg castle. The ground was somewhat less soggy in that direction. The road to the west of the castle was heavily mined, and covered by ten machine guns. The castle itself was defended by a platoon of infantry well dug in along the walls. The commanding officer of E Company crossed the river with a small patrol to reconnoiter positions and to plan the crossing and the attack on the castle.

Immediately upon crossing they were pinned down for 20 minutes by machine gun fire. When the Company Commander had made his plans, he found that he could not contact his platoons by radio, so he sent Pfc. Lazarus C. Montalvo back for them. Moving back, he was fired on at the bridge and the flat open ground near the river. Nevertheless he brought the platoons up one by one. The enemy artillery smothered the area in a vain attempt to stop the Company.

After the platoons were in position Private First Class Montalvo returned again with instructions for the tanks and to bring additional medics. On the way a bursting shell knocked him down and wounded him in the left arm and right hip. Handicapped and suffering from the pain, he limped on to accomplish his mission.

By evening the enemy infantry defending the castle along the road had been captured, and with the help of the tanks,

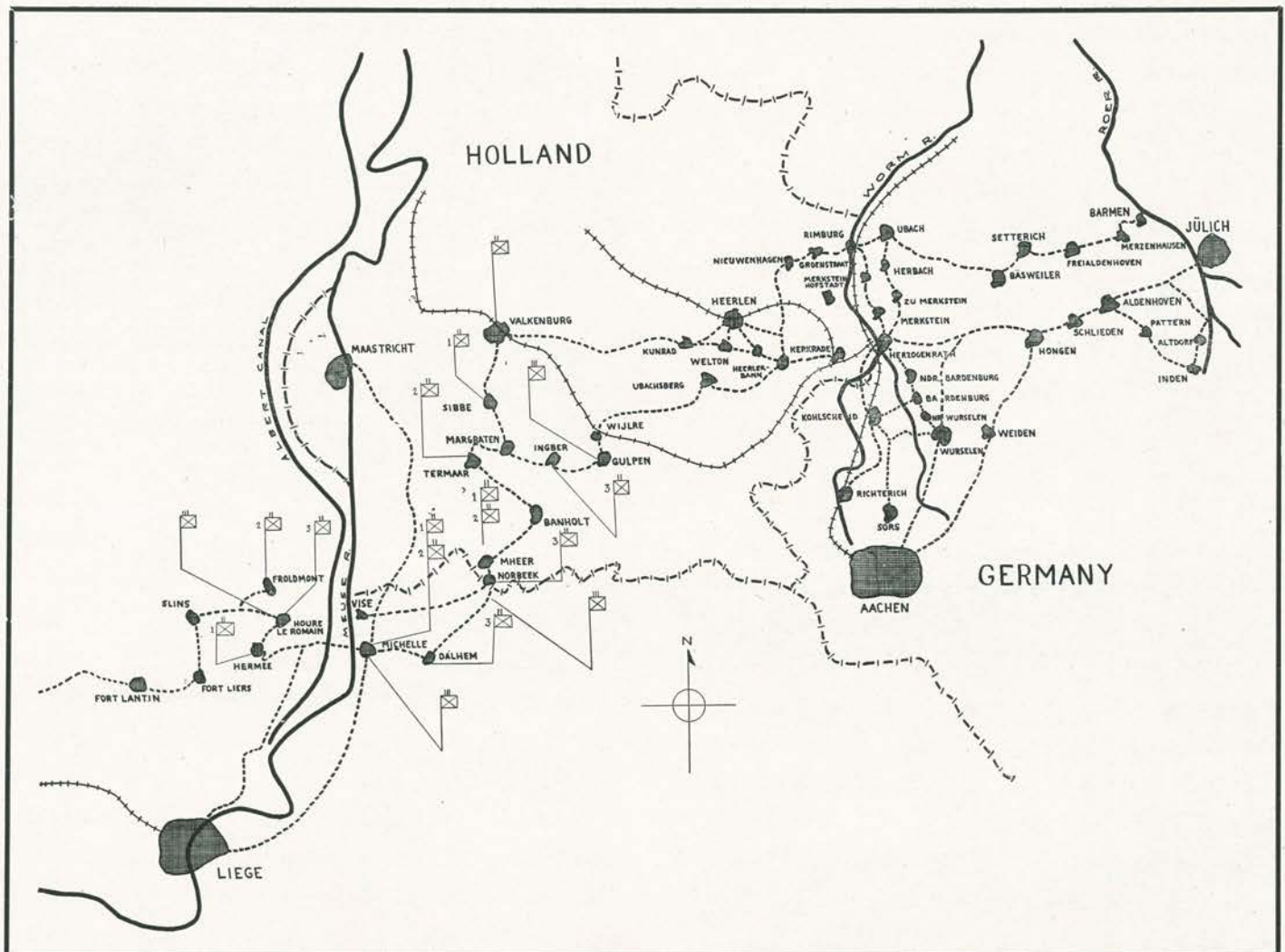
the castle was surrounded. However, the force inside was stubborn, and the Second Battalion dug in for the night along both banks of the river. During the day the magnitude of the enemy fire had prevented the construction of a vehicular bridge at Rimbarg. A bridge was begun that night and completed early the next morning. It was to be knocked out twice and damaged several times in the days that followed.

The next morning the castle was taken, with the aid of tanks. The infantry had to fight for it room by room. The First and Third Battalions were still stopped by the machine gun fire from the pillboxes along the railroad. A task force composed of I and B Companies, a company of tanks, and a company of TDs was organized under Lieutenant Quinn. Their plan was to cross the river at Marienberg in the zone of the 117th and then proceed south, flanking and destroying the enemy holding up our advance.

The tanks, with a platoon of infantry riding, and followed by the TDs, crossed at Marienberg and on the way south cleared up the resistance along the east bank, capturing 85 prisoners. Company I and parts of Company B waited at a footbridge midway between Rimbarg and Marienberg. When the Task Force came opposite that point, they crossed and joined it in a drive south across the Regimental front. Their drive relieved the pressure on the Second, First, and Third Battalions in turn, sufficiently to permit maneuver. The Task Force knocked out six key pillboxes and captured more than 400 prisoners.

The First Battalion moved up its left flank to attack south into the pillboxes. Because of the marshy ground, our tanks had limited maneuverability, and though they brought fire





on six of the pillboxes, three had to be reduced by the infantry alone. In general, the Germans defended the boxes from the outside, in trenches and tank traps, using the boxes only as shelter from artillery and mortar barrages. The majority of the pillboxes contained nothing larger than a machine gun. The enemy troops were specially trained fortress troops generously equipped with automatic weapons. It proved difficult to drive them from their trenches even with mortars and artillery.

The First Battalion drove across the railroad tracks, as did Company D on the extreme right. The balance of the Third Battalion was unable to come abreast. When the Task Force was disbanded, I Company moved up to cover the right flank of the First Battalion. Both the First and Second Battalions then attacked vigorously through the woods and up the steep slope toward the high ground west of Herbach. The enemy had excellent observation on the entire area and laid in some of the heaviest concentrations of artillery we had

ever received. In one period of 40 minutes the enemy fired a battery concentration every five seconds.

However, the bulk of this artillery did not land on our forward elements who were fighting the enemy infantry at ranges of 25 to 100 yards. This situation also limited our use of artillery and mortars, and the tanks and TDs were hampered by terrain which was both too soft and too rough. When the First and Second Battalions reached the edge of the woods at the top of the ridge, they were stopped by direct fire from enemy self-propelled guns. They dug and fought off patrols the rest of the night. The woods were still under heavy enemy fire, and many of the wounded had not yet been evacuated.

Pvt. Joseph P. Mehlich, a medic in Company B, was himself wounded, once in the leg and once through the shoulder, yet he ignored the orders of his platoon sergeant to withdraw for treatment and stumbled and crawled about the area under fire, rendering first aid to six wounded men.



He then crawled to the Company CP in a captured pillbox and arranged for litters to evacuate them.

Company E sent a patrol of five men against a pillbox in their area. The patrol, armed with rifles and grenades, crawled up to the pillbox and tossed grenades into the embrasure; the 12 enemy soldiers inside the pillbox surrendered. Seldom was it as simple as that, since such procedure required excellent aim and unstinted daring.

The firing continued throughout the night and the area came to be known as Shrapnel Hill. There were at least six enemy tanks 200 yards ahead of Company E, firing into their area. Pvt. Norman M. Rose, a rifleman, stood in the trench outside a pillbox and directed artillery on the tanks calling his information into the pillbox where it was relayed by a 300 radio to the artillery. The tanks were held off and gradually pushed back.

The enemy laid a heavy concentration of flak and flat trajectory time fire on the positions of Company I on the right flank of the First Battalion, causing numerous casualties and wounding Lt. Seymour Shefrin, of Cannon Company, I Company's only observer, in both legs, his left arm, and about the face. He was ordered to be evacuated, but he refused for he realized that the enemy would counterattack in strength at daybreak.

First aid was given to him and, being unable to move about himself, he was helped by two men to an enemy troop shelter located on a slight knoll in the woods. From there he could adjust fire by the sound of movement and German voices a few hundred yards ahead. About 0300 enemy activity increased greatly, and at daybreak the enemy counterattack came, with tanks pouring out machine gun fire, followed by two reinforced companies of infantry. The attack struck squarely into I Company's line of defense, and those who were not completely overrun and killed were forced to withdraw, leaving the area in which Lieutenant Shefrin was observing open and unprotected. The attack came over him and the last thing we heard was his voice over the radio calling for more fire on his position.

Company C, to the left of Company I, saw the stream of casualties coming through their area to the rear, and presently the remaining men of Company I came too. The enemy shelled the Company C area, and then the infantry moved up, firing steadily. When they were within 75 yards of the first foxholes the order was given to commence firing.

The enemy fire so completely covered the terrain that our riflemen fired a round or two at a time before ducking into their foxholes, and then looked out to fire again.

Pfc. Harmon W. Butler and Pfc. Ray Tucket of Company D, attached to Company C, left their foxholes to man their machine guns in spite of the intense enemy fire. They were alone manning their guns, for the other members were firing rifles to build up a section fire line against the enemy. Pvt. Samuel A. Breyer had a foxhole between the two machine guns, and by running out under their terrific fire, he kept them supplied with ammunition. Small arms fire struck the cradles of both guns, damaging them in such a manner that they could only be traversed by dragging the tripods from side to side. They fired 5,500 rounds with the enemy dead piled up as close as 15 yards.

Company C, like Company I, was finally obliged to withdraw. The enemy attack was finally stopped by Companies A and B, with the help of our tanks and the enemy artillery. When the enemy left the open ground and entered the woods, they ran into their own fire.

The tactical clumsiness was not all on their side, however, for one platoon of Company I had occupied a pillbox with weak outpost security and were taken by surprise when an enemy tank drove up to the pillbox, trained its guns on the embrasure, and ordered the entire platoon to surrender.

The Town of Ubach had been reduced on the third by the 117th Infantry, part of the 743rd Tank Battalion, and Company B of the Second Armored. On the fourth, our Second Battalion was ordered to Ubach to join the 117th in an attack south from the town. There was a traffic problem in Ubach between the southbound infantry and the Second







*Rimbürg Castle*

Armored, which was headed north and northwest to Palenberg and Frelenberg. The enemy took advantage of the concentration of our units in that spot and laid in tremendous barrages of artillery. The Second Battalion dug in for the night, and dug deep near Ubach.

In the afternoon the First Battalion turned south and attempted to mop up in the immediate area. Two pillboxes pinned down Company B and held up the entire Battalion. An attack on the first pillbox was driven off by fire from the second pillbox. The only way to knock out the first box seemed to be to slip a man across the fire lane of the second with a satchel charge to apply to the blind side of the first. S/Sgt. Harley Carson said he thought he could make it. With one man behind him for covering fire he slipped across to reconnoiter the first box, some 35 yards away. Undetected he made a dash back to our lines and informed his platoon leader that he had heard an estimated eight Germans talking inside the pillbox.

He then returned with a satchel charge and, coming around the blind side of the box, placed the charge close under the embrasure. He dove for cover and, after the explosion, rushed the pillbox again and threw grenades into the embrasure. The satchel charge had not blown the box (for that matter, they usually did not), but the grenades killed two Germans who were trying to escape, and the others surrendered. The second box, deprived of the support of the first, was surrounded and taken. It often happened this way—if one pillbox in a system of pillboxes covering each other was taken, the rest would eventually fall. As often as not,

the Germans were infatuated with the ingenuities of their system and became discouraged at the least interference.

In any case, the Battalion was able to move forward somewhat, away from the area most violently raked by the enemy artillery barrages. The Third Battalion, less Company I, which had been pulled back to reorganize, and two platoons of Company K, which were covering the bridge area at Rimbürg, continued to mop up in their sector and block the Wurm Valley from the south.

The morning of the fifth, the Second Battalion attacked south from Ubach and a line running east from Herbach. Company E led the Battalion, and the platoon of T/Sgt. Harold L. Holycross led Company E. Ahead of the platoon by some 800 yards was a group of scouts, S/Sgt. Roy Kisselboch, Sgt. Frank Stabile, Pfc. John Perez, and Pfc. Glen W. Miller, with the mission of locating hidden pillboxes and weapons.

As the attack progressed up a gradual slope they spotted the first pillbox, and at the same time they were fired on by a machine gun in the woods to their left flank. The scouts directed the fire of two self-propelled tank destroyers, and under the cover of this fire moved to within 100 yards of the box.

At this point the TDs were signalled to lift their fire, and the four men rushed to within 20 yards of the pillbox. Private First Class Perez threw a grenade into the aperture and, immediately after the explosion, 25 Germans, five of them wounded, ran out to surrender. The capture of this pillbox allowed the Company to continue the attack without deploying and set the pace for the capture of ten more boxes during the day. A large part of the day's work was done by Sergeant Holycross and his platoon, with the help of the tanks and tank destroyers. There were a number of casualties late in the day, and when the Company dug in for the night, some of them were lying in a pillbox somewhere to the right front. Successful evacuation of the wounded during daylight had become almost impossible.

The enemy occupied trenches 600 yards to the front and a pillbox 400 yards to the right front. Pvt. David J. Leo and Pfc. Wilfred A. Everard volunteered to find the wounded and evacuate them. They left at 2100, and after scouting the front for two hours in the darkness they found the pillbox and evacuated the wounded men in it.

The First Battalion continued to fight south in its zone,



eliminating three pillboxes, one of which was a two-story blockhouse vigorously defended. The Battalion dug in for the night, with C Company's right flank and right rear still containing enemy-held boxes. Early on the 6th the enemy broke loose again. The attack was preceded by heavy sustained barrages of artillery and mortar fire followed by four tanks and masses of infantry. The main force of the attack struck Company F in the flank, rolled it up, and captured 65 of our men who were trapped. The enemy advance pushed deeper into the sector while the machine guns which they had put into action on top of the pillboxes denied the commitment of our support.

By this time all Company F's mortars had been lost. T/Sgt. W. W. Pierce sent back to Company G for one. When it arrived, he found that the sight was missing. By guess and prayer, his first two rounds made direct hits, killing or wounding the crew of one gun. Meanwhile, Lt. Edward Arn rallied 40 men who refused to withdraw and held fast. The enemy attack had now fully developed. Company E lost two pillboxes and 38 men. The large number of wounded left Lt. Warne Parker with 35 men. Like Lieutenant Arn, he held fast and, with the aid of artillery and TD fire, desperately struggled to hold his ground. Near one of the pillboxes under attack 20 men from both companies were occupying a trench.

The intense enemy fire had almost neutralized their position, yet S/Sgt. Harry L. Robinson borrowed a BAR and, using an ammunition box for a firing step, stood head and shoulders above ground level. For a full hour he brought fire against the enemy, expending 22 magazines of ammunition. His hail of lead failed to stop the tanks, but it did halt the infantry. Sergeant Robinson survived this battle, but he was killed in action on the 15th.

In the fire trench at another pillbox under attack were four wounded men of E Company. Pfc. Edward Cavill carried them out from under the artillery and small arms fire to shelter inside the pillbox. When his platoon was forced to withdraw from the pillbox, he was ordered back, but told them to go to hell. Almost immediately G Company was hit hard again. He was captured.

The Germans, after making a penetration of 800 yards, were finally gradually forced back. They were driven from the pillboxes they had recaptured one by one.

Among the last pillboxes reached before evening was one

held by Pfc. John A. Lasch, Jr., and S/Sgt. Robert R. Allen. At the beginning of the attack they had been sent to secure a pillbox which had already been reduced. They had had to race a German patrol which was on the same mission. Although they were surrounded by Germans and by pillboxes held by them, they held the pillbox and refused to surrender.

As E and F Companies had been badly depleted, the work of recovering the ground lost fell on Company G and Company K, which had come up on the right flank of Company E. The tank commanded by Lt. Walter D. Macht of the 743rd Tank Battalion knocked out three of the Mark IV tanks in the course of the action. By evening the town of Herbach was flanked on the east by the Second Battalion and on the west by the Third Battalion of the 120th. This Battalion had attacked in the morning but soon ran into heavy small arms fire and for a while was occupied in throwing off a counterattack by infantry, after which they had made good progress.

Our First Battalion had attacked in the morning and reduced three strongly defended pillboxes blocking their advance. Early in the afternoon they dug in on the northern edge of Merksteim Hofstadt. Our Third Battalion had tried to keep abreast of the First, but had been held up. Capt. Francis J. Del Bene went forward to locate the trouble and found that the forward elements were pinned down by machine gun fire from several pillboxes. He personally led a squad of riflemen and two self-propelled tank-destroyers against the nearest enemy position. Two pillboxes were captured in rapid succession, with a number of prisoners in each, and in the late afternoon the Battalion made contact with the right of the First near Merksteim Hofstadt.

As the battle around Mortain in August had made permanent the breach in the Atlantic Wall, the 30th Division's breach in the Siegfried Line above Aachen made it clear by the fifth of October that the invasion of Germany was here to stay. The Germans had failed to push us out of the Siegfried Line and though they still talked about it, and even about pushing us back to the Channel from Aachen, we knew better. Although we see hard fighting ahead, by the sixth of October the war seemed clearly a matter of time.

On the seventh, the 119th Infantry continued its attack south, with the Third Battalion of the 120th on the left and our First Battalion on the right. Our Second Battalion





*Company G attacks the Siegfried Line while British and American Correspondents view the battle.*

was echeloned to the left rear and our Third to the right rear of the Regimental front. The Third Battalion of the 120th cleaned out Herbach, went through Merkstein Plitschard, and was held up a while by fire from the slag pile south of the town. It by-passed the slag pile to the right, and the 80 enemy soldiers at the position surrendered to Company G, which came in on them from the left. Shortly after noon the Third Battalion of the 120th had gone through Zu Merkstein and reached the edge of Merkstein, where, abreast with our First Battalion, they held up for an air attack on targets between Merkstein and Herzogenrath. Our First Battalion had spent the morning advancing against light resistance past the road spider north of Merkstein Wildnis to Merkstein. After the air attack, the advance was resumed and reached the edge of Herzogenrath. Our Third Battalion cleaned out Merkstein Worm. There had been very little serious resistance during the day. For a short while, a platoon of Company C had been pinned down 150 yards from the northern outskirts of Merkstein by machine gun fire. The fire was coming principally from a pillbox concealed in a large building with outer entrenchments and supplementary machine gun nests in the sheds and barns nearby.

Pvt. Salvatore Pepe figured that it was a one-man job. He crawled over the crest of a small hill and through an open field, and when he had come within 25 yards of the box, took cover in a shallow ditch. From there he threw four grenades into the outer emplacements and forced the enemy to abandon them for the cover of the pillbox. With his rifle he maintained fire on the embrasures and kept the whole box

buttoned up and neutralized for 15 minutes, while his Company surrounded it. The strongpoint yielded 53 prisoners, four of them wounded by Private Pepe's grenades. A large amount of material was captured, including a small ordnance dump of small arms and ammunition.

North of Merkstein Worm the leading platoons of Company L had by-passed a group of four pillboxes and entrenchments, and had advanced about 500 yards. A squad which had been protecting the right flank of the rear platoons was pinned down by machine gun and rifle fire from the strongpoint. S/Sgt. Vyron D. Woodward crawled among his squad and organized a withdrawal, leaving a BAR team as a covering force while the others took up positions 200 yards to the rear. He received a heavy machine gun from Company M, and with that and the BAR, the enemy was held fairly harmless until the TDs could move up. With the fire of the TDs, the squad advanced and knocked out the four pillboxes.

On the morning of the eighth, the Third Battalion of the 120th was relieved from attachment to the 119th. Our First Battalion pushed into Herzogenrath, but was held up

*The "Rimbürg Bridge," the smallest and most important bridge in our history.*







*One of the 200 positions knocked out by the 119th Infantry*

by a great number of mines in the streets of the town. Sgt. George L. Potts and others of the A & P Platoon worked three hours clearing a path through the town for the Battalion. Some mines were under the cobblestones of the streets and under the sidewalks, others were booby-trapped, and those in the street usually had primer cord attached so that the detonation of one mine would detonate a second. We sustained 11 casualties from these mines, but we would have had considerably more if the Germans had not withdrawn in such a hurry that they left some of their minefields with loose cobblestones and many mines lying unplaced by the sides of the road.

The Third Battalion accomplished its mission of mopping up the Regimental flank along the railroad into Herzogenrath and joined the First Battalion to remove mines in the town.

Before noon, however, elements of the First Battalion had passed through Kanerhof and were fighting in the woods northeast of Nieder Bardenberg. In the early afternoon the Third Battalion was ordered to swing around the right of the First and take Pley. They met resistance that persisted and stiffened, and got no further than a point northwest of Nieder Bardenberg.

The First Battalion also was meeting greater resistance and had been stopped just north of Nieder Bardenberg. The enemy resistance at this town, which we called North Bardenburg, and the violent battles of the next week, were a struggle for the main highway running northeast out of Aachen. The Germans were completely confused when our attack from Rimbürg did not continue east as they expected, but turned south.



As usual, the unusual confused them, and by now they caught the idea and defended their last escape and supply route bitterly. The First and Third Battalions dug in, and the Second Battalion, which had remained near Zu Merenstein, reverted to Division Reserve southeast of Herzogenrath.

On the morning of the ninth, the Third Battalion swung wide to the north and west and then drove south toward Pley. They surprised scattered strongpoints and in three hours occupied Pley. The First Battalion occupied North Bardenburg, and at 1100 both battalions were ready to cross the road running between Wefelen and Kohlscheid, to attack Bardenberg.

An air strike before the attack softened things up and the attack was launched. The Third Battalion reached the southern edge of Bardenberg early in the afternoon and spent the last hours of the day cleaning out that section of town. The First Battalion was held up shortly near Hühnerneist, but reached the southern edge of Bardenberg at about the same time as the Third Battalion. Meeting slight resistance, the attack continued south about 1,000 yards, into North Wurselen. Company A in reserve, was hurriedly sent east of Bardenberg to maintain roadblocks, while Company I was left in the town to cover the rear and right flank.

The balance of the Third Battalion continued the attack into North Wurselen. Company K, leading, began to receive tank fire shortly after reaching the edge of town. Lieutenant Hansen of the 743rd Tank Battalion had already lost two of his five tanks from enemy fire. Consequently he went forward on foot under mortar and small arms fire to locate the enemy tank. He finally located it, a Mark V, and reconnoitered a covered route for engaging it. His own tanks were some distance behind, and as speed was essential, he commandeered an M-10 Tank Destroyer attached to Company K. He mounted the turret and rode along a route hidden from the enemy tank into a firing position. The Mark V was destroyed before it could fire a shot. Company K then consolidated its objective without difficulty.

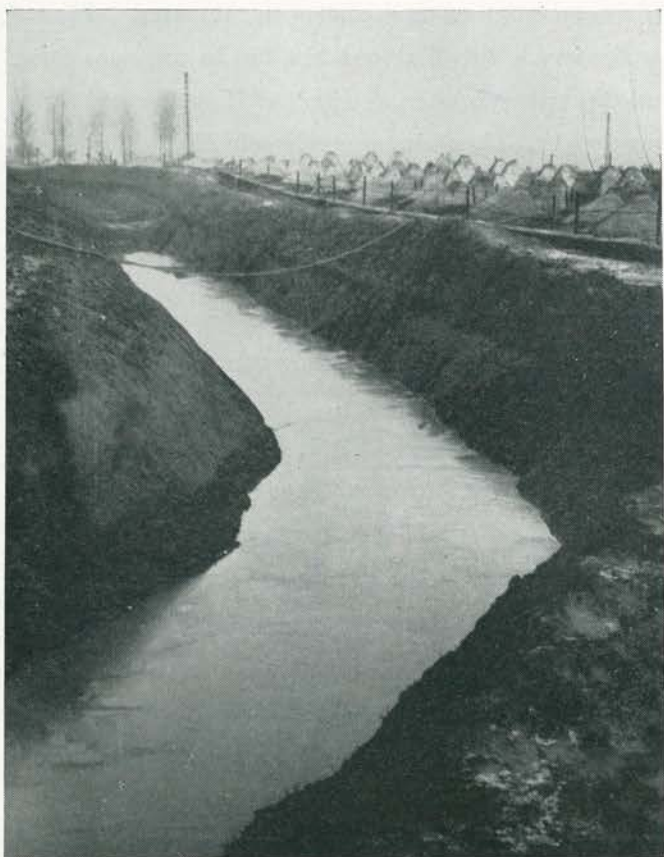
At 1900 the forward elements of the First Battalion were hit by a counterattack from the southeast, which they threw off without much difficulty. Within a few minutes Company A was struck from the east by a swift and vicious

attack by five tanks and 22 half-tracks, carrying several hundred infantry. Company A was dug in around the cemetery at the main crossroads east of Bardenberg. The enemy armored deployed at this point and broke through Company A, proceeding 300 yards into the town. The tanks and half-tracks cut the main north-south street of Bardenberg completely by their fire, while the enemy infantry spread out through the town. At the cemetery Company A fought a hand-to-hand battle until almost surrounded. Withdrawal under these circumstances was extremely difficult. A platoon of Company G had been sent to reinforce Company A, but was unable to get near Bardenberg because of the heavy mortar and artillery barrages. Eventually a platoon of Company A broke contact and managed to withdraw to the north. Other elements turned up little by little during the days and nights that followed. They attached themselves to the first troops they met and fought on.

The withdrawal of the platoon was mainly the accomplishment of Lt. Raymond B. Scheuring, who organized a delaying force while the remainder of the Company withdrew. He remained in the line with his men, bitterly contesting every foot of ground he had to abandon to superior force. The Second Battalion came up at midnight and was committed to pinch off the enemy penetration. Little progress was made against the severe barrages, tank and small arms fire. Thus the forward companies of the First and Third Battalions were cut off. No communication with them was possible, as the wires were soon cut. The situation of the enemy force in Bardenberg was not much more promising, since we had infantry and tanks on both the north and south flanks, and our artillery threatened to cut them off by fire east and west. Both forces attempted simultaneously to relieve their isolated elements and prevent relief from reaching the isolated elements of the other side. When Company B realized that they were cut off, they took up defensive position and waited.

Shortly after dark 90 Germans came marching out of Wurselen in column of twos toward Company B's positions. They were obviously on their way to augment the German unit in Bardenberg, since they did not seem to expect contact. A member of our outpost, seeing the column approaching, came back to the lead platoon of Company B and reported to S/Sgt. William J. Widener, who rushed from his position





*Anti-tank ditch in the Siegfried Line—Dragon's teeth in the distance.*

to find the enemy precariously close. As there was a machine gun section attached to his squad covering the road on which the Germans were advancing, he assumed the section was holding its fire in order to surprise and destroy the column at close range. The machine guns did not fire and the Germans were coming closer. Suddenly a shot was heard and a fight with small arms began. Sergeant Widener ran down the open street and found a machine gun without personnel. It had been set up in the street with no cover available. The Germans by this time were about ten yards away.

Sergeant Widener pulled back the bolt and began firing. He blazed 500 rounds into the group of Germans and settled the argument. In the morning eight German dead were found lying near the machine gun and farther down the street an aid station had been set up to care for 35 wounded. Five Germans were captured in a house nearby, too frightened to fight or try to escape with the others.

During the night a First Battalion party of five men went into Bardenberg to repair the wire to the companies in North Wurselen. The party was subjected to violent fire from the enemy half-tracks and was pinned down behind

a wrecked TD for 15 minutes by continuous 20MM fire. Against great odds they finally repaired the breaks and temporarily restored communications before they were driven back. The two Battalions were isolated with no known supply or escape route.

At 0300 of the 10th, the Second Battalion, with Companies A and C of the 743rd Tank Battalion, made a second attempt to break through. This time they forced entry into the town before they were stopped by heavy small arms and direct cannon fire. Company E, leading the attack, became disorganized and was split into two groups. T/Sgt. Neal M. Bertelsen and a small group of men became separated from the rest. He organized his men for defense and security and notified the Battalion Commander of developments by radio. The group held a position very close to the enemy cannon and were in constant danger of being encircled in the dark. Nevertheless they remained at this position far into the morning, reporting all enemy movements to headquarters. In the late morning a counterattack was launched by the enemy tanks and infantry with the apparent object of breaking out of Bardenberg to the west. Companies E and F repulsed the attack with heavy losses on both sides.

At the same time, Company K in Wurselen was occupied fighting off four tanks which were leading a strong counter-attack. Our tanks were called up. The lead tank was mistaken for an enemy tank by friendly fighter-bombers, which suddenly appeared, accurately bombed and set it afire. Only one member of the crew was seen to leave the tank. When everyone, including the tanker who escaped, ran for cover, Pfc. Kenneth C. Thayer, a rifleman, ran toward the tank in an attempt to rescue the men inside it. In full view of the friendly planes and the enemy tanks he climbed to the turret, though machine gun and 75MM ammunition had begun to explode inside. He reached down through the smoke and flames and grasped a man who was wounded and badly burned, lifted him out, and carried him to a nearby cellar. Returning rapidly to the tank to rescue the others, he found the tank fully ablaze. Company K had moved to meet this counterattack, leaving its sector of 400 yards to be defended by the first machine gun platoon of Company M. This platoon was under strength in both men and guns. It had just reached its positions when a patrol of six enemy soldiers was seen leaving the extreme right front of the sector. Presently a group of 30 of the enemy entered the sector from the



same direction. S/Sgt. Robert B. Stiles decided not to disclose the positions of his guns, since the enemy clearly had other units in position to maneuver in superior force. He took eight of his men and laid a trap. The eight men were not discovered until they were coming in on all sides. Consequently the surprised group of 30 surrendered.

As they were being disarmed, an attack was being formed and launched by a reenforced Battalion of enemy infantry against the small platoon's sector. This attack was preceded by an artillery and mortar barrage and accompanied by tanks. Sergeant Stiles lost no time in sending the prisoners to the rear. On the double, he led his men back to the machine gun positions under the preliminary barrages. At first he directed the fire of his section against the advancing enemy. Lt. Eugene Cook decided they could hold out longer from a more advanced position, so the two of them moved forward on reconnaissance. They found a good position 200 yards ahead and ordered a gun crew forward. They opened fire at first from a window on the ground floor of a house, but as the enemy closed in and wounded the gunner, the gun was taken to an upstairs window. The sill was too high to allow the use of a tripod, so Pfc. Benjamin E. Tagg stood fully exposed in the window, cradling the heavy gun

in his arms and bringing fire down on the enemy. The enemy fire struck the sill around him, but he continued firing until the order was given to withdraw if possible and to destroy the gun. The enemy was now only 25 yards away and threatening to envelop the position. The crew destroyed the gun and succeeded in getting back 200 yards to the second position. Sergeant Stiles organized the crew around the second gun in a perimeter defense and manned the gun himself. The position was soon smothered and the crew wounded or captured. Sergeant Stiles refused to surrender and kept firing until he was killed. The enemy then manned the gun and turned its fire on the platoon's third gun position. Suddenly the third gun developed a malfunction and would only fire one round at a time. Pfc. Harold G. Jones dismantled and repaired it, while Lieutenant Cook and his men held the enemy back with rifle fire.

Shortly after the machine gun returned to action it was discovered that the supply of ammunition was dangerously low. Pfc. Jones and Pfc. Tagg started back toward the ammunition dump. On the way they turned a corner, to be fired on by a group of three Germans who had infiltrated through the buildings to the rear of the platoon. Pfc. Jones fired and wounded one of the enemy, and the other two withdrew. Machine gun ammunition and 350 rounds of rifle ammunition were brought up, and the fight continued. Lieutenant Cook had heard friendly tanks moving in the rear and had sent a runner to bring them up. With their help, and the help of mortars, the body of the enemy attack was broken. This small group of men had taken 30 prisoners and inflicted at least 85 casualties on the enemy. The platoon's losses had been 70 per cent.

Other groups of the enemy had worked their way into the rear of the platoon from the right flank. After helping to capture the 30 prisoners, Pfc. Lewis A. Hunnewell was walking down the street on his way to the Company CP when he was fired on from the rear by an enemy machine gun. He took cover in the nearest house and while attempting to escape, saw, from a back window, a group of 25 Germans. Ten of them entered the house next to his through the back. They tried to leave by the front door and found it locked. While they were breaking it down, Private First Class Hunnewell, carrying a machine pistol he had removed from one of the 30 prisoners, left his house, and started towards the locked door. He had just reached the street





when the door was kicked loose and the 10 Germans came piling out into the street. Private First Class Hunnewell fired into the group, killing three outright and wounding two others. The rest fled and were taken care of later in the mop-up.

On the 10th the enemy launched five powerful attacks against the Third Battalion, sending in first a small wave of approximately 30 men and then a second wave of a battalion, which covered the advance of the first with its fire. In general, the Third Battalion stopped the first wave with machine guns and small arms, and the mortars broke up the second wave before it could develop.

Artillery was not available, but our mortars were extremely effective. Lt. Donald J. Conway had pushed an observation post forward to one of the high towers of a coal mine 450 yards from the enemy. From this position he could usually see the enemy attacks as they formed. The OP was maintained through four direct hits by enemy artillery, but the fifth made it untenable. Prisoners taken during the action admitted that casualties from our mortar fire were very high. Air support came to the rescue and worked over the enemy troop concentrations to the south.

Meanwhile, the Second Battalion, with tanks attached, made another attempt to break through Bardenberg, entering this time from the direction of Pley. Fighting bitterly, they reached the center of Bardenberg. The lead tank, commanded by Lt. Lambert V. Wieser, tried to cross an intersection and was fired on by an assault gun set up in the street to its left. Lieutenant Wieser turned his tank into the face of the fire and traded shot for shot with the assault gun as he bore down upon it. Although his fire had no effect on the assault gun, he continued firing until he was 50 yards away, even though his tank was burning. He evacuated his crew, took command of another tank and went after the gun again. The second tank was destroyed by a German bazooka, and Lieutenant Wieser sustained burns which caused his death.

This attempt to break through Bardenberg finally failed, and the situation in North Wurselen was becoming more and more critical. No supplies could get through except for a small quantity brought in jeeps that had the audacity to run the seriously wounded back from Wurselen through the fire at the intersection at Bardenberg.

Lt. Milton J. Parks established an aid station in the mine



with the help of two medics and their aid kits. On the morning of the 10th he already had a large number of serious cases who had to be evacuated, among them Lt. David S. Drake. Lt. Drake was placed on an improvised litter in a trailer with three men holding him in place. The vehicle, driven by T/5 Sidney Bosofsky, left the mine area at 0800 in a convoy with three other jeeps carrying wounded. The three other jeeps took cover from the fire on the intersection, but T/5 Bosofsky dashed through the 20MM, machine gun, and sniper fire to bring his vehicle to cover 400 yards beyond the intersection. Lieutenant Drake told him, "I owe you my life."

At 1900 the Second Battalion was withdrawn to the northern edge of Bardenberg while our medium and heavy artillery shelled the town throughout the night. That night we intercepted a German radio message sent to their force in Bardenberg exhorting them to hold their ground as help was on the way. On the morning of the 11th, the comparatively fresh Third Battalion of the 120th was attached to us. Maj. Howard W. Greer, with Companies I and L of that Battalion, plus a company of tanks, was given the mission of breaking through Bardenberg and relieving the First and Third Battalion. After a 15-minute artillery preparation, this task force passed through our Second Battalion and began a methodical cleaning up of the town, house by house.

By the middle of the afternoon they had cleared the intersection and were held up by the fire from the enemy tanks and half-tracks. Major Greer borrowed a bazooka and made his way forward to a position from which he could fire at the foremost enemy tank. Just as he fired the first rocket, the





*Friendly and enemy artillery destroyed this landmark of Bradenburg, Germany.*

tank spotted him and fired. His rocket destroyed the tank, and the shell from the tank struck the corner of the building he was using for concealment. Fragments of the building cut his face and hands, knocked him down, and knocked his helmet off. He got up and started after the second tank, which he also put out of action.

This turned the tide, for after that the Task Force destroyed six tanks, 16 half-tracks, and took 96 prisoners in short order. At the same time, Company I made contact with the other companies of the Third Battalion in Wurselen after a strong drive south down the right flank. They had destroyed 10 half-tracks and captured 40 German soldiers and three officers. Soon afterward the Task Force made contact with the companies of our First Battalion in Wurselen, and then withdrew to a defensive position north of Baidenberg.

Our Second Battalion occupied the town and the Regiment was regrouped. Although the enemy had been seriously weakened in that sector, the battle was by no means over.

On the 12th, the 116th Infantry passed through our lines to contact the left flank of the First Division and thus com-

plete the encirclement of Aachen. Unfortunately they were held up by the enemy's strong defense of Wurselen and made little progress. Meanwhile, the 119th Infantry was holding the west flank of the 30th Division from Herzogenrath to North Wurselen against an enemy counterattack through Kohlscheid. Since the 10th, this flank, as far as Bardenberg, had been held by the 30th Division Reconnaissance Troop and the Regimental I & R Platoon, which had met a number of enemy patrols in the wooded valley before Kohlscheid.

On the 12th, a group of 100 enemy infantry was spotted grouping for an attack across the bridge near Kohlscheid. Our artillery broke it up. From Bardenberg south toward North Wurselen the flank was held for a period by elements of Company D and by the kitchen train of the First Battalion. The German counterattacks did not strike this lightly-held flank of the Division, but hit Wurselen in defense of the highway running through it out of Aachen. Between the 12th and the 15th there were five serious counterattacks. On the 12th a counterattack by tanks and infantry had been repulsed in the First Battalion sector (on the Regimental left), and on the 13th there were still tanks wandering around.

Company B was prevented from clearing the area ahead by some five tanks to their left and three to their right front. Capt. Edward E. McBride, Jr., went forward to a building 75 yards from the first enemy tank and directed artillery on it. When it was knocked out, he directed two additional hits on a second tank. Despite our attempts, we were not making satisfactory progress in Wurselen. We threw in heavy concentrations of artillery, but the enemy was stubborn. At dusk on the 14th, a company of enemy infantry hit Company K, on the left of the First Battalion. The enemy approached along a hedgerow beside the railroad tracks, opposite the positions of the Second Platoon of Company K. The machine gun fire supporting their attack was heavy enough to temporarily neutralize our fire. When the enemy company closed in, they began throwing a large number of hand grenades into our positions. To stop their advance Lt. Donald A. Ward filled his pockets and hands with fragmentation grenades and began crawling toward the hedgerow. The enemy attempted unsuccessfully to stop him with grenades. When it became dark he crawled up close to the hedge and let loose. After the rapid explosions, the enemy filled the air with screams of pain. At daylight five enemy



dead were found behind the hedgerow. They had carried their wounded with them. Our platoon had suffered no casualties.

Late on the 15th, the Second Battalion relieved the First Battalion in North Wurselen in preparation for the series of attacks which was to take Kohlscheid. The First Battalion was to reduce northern Kohlscheid while the Third Battalion was to take the southern part and continue south about 1,000 yards to an objective near Sors. The Second Battalion was to make a hard push head into Wurselen. Shortly after midnight the Third Battalion sent a squad into the southern outskirts of Kohlscheid to feel out the enemy before the attack. The patrol had just entered the defense perimeter when it received a mortar barrage, which wounded three men. Pfc. Paul L. Howard, a medic with the patrol, helped the three men to the shelter of a house 30 yards away, while the barrage was still falling.

After reconnoitering the enemy territory, the patrol started back, but was intercepted by a strong enemy patrol and took up defense in a house. A fierce close encounter with rifles and grenades followed and the patrol was captured. On their way to the enemy rear under guard, our artillery barrage preparation for the attack of the Third Battalion fell on the group and two Americans were wounded. Private First Class Howard refused to take cover, gave the wounded first aid in the open, and then helped carry them to an enemy bunker nearby. He remained with the wounded until the Third Battalion came through.

When Company I came down the road into the outskirts of Kohlscheid, they received machine gun fire from a dug-in position about 100 yards ahead. There were several casualties, and the column scattered to the sides of the road for cover.

Lt. Vincent S. Scurria was ordered to swing his platoon 500 yards left, thus bringing it into enemy territory to cover the route of the tanks which were coming up. After the platoon had advanced 300 yards it was pinned down by crossfire from two dug-in machine guns 500 yards away. Mortar fire was called for but had no effect.

Lieutenant Scurria stood up in the machine gun fire and maneuvered his platoon into positions from which they were at last able to knock out the machine gun nests. The tanks then coordinated their attack with that of the infantry, and rapidly cleaned out the southern end of Kohlscheid. The

Third Battalion reached its objective near Sors early in the afternoon.

The First Battalion had, long before dawn, bridged the Wurm River in front of Kohlscheid and proceeded to the north edge of the town, meeting scattered but stubborn opposition. The Wurm River ran generally south to north. It was small and could be termed a good-sized creek. However, in the "Line" battle, the Regiment had to bridge it three times—once moving east at Rimburg, once moving west at Kohlscheid, and once moving east, south of Kohlscheid.

The leading platoon of Company A was pinned down by machine gun fire until T/Sgt. John Overman, a mortar observer, charged the machine gun position with his sub-machine gun and killed three of the enemy crew. After that, progress was fairly rapid. First Battalion had the downtown area cleared before noon and was on its way southwest in the direction of Ursfeld and Richterich. Second Battalion jumped off at daylight, and though it soon ran into resistance from tank, machine gun, and artillery fire, it was able to knock out one tank and two pillboxes. Secure footholds were established finally on the northern and western edges of Wurselen.

Our plan was not to push directly through Wurselen to cut the highway, but to come down the western side of the city and cut the highway at a point southwest of it, making contact with the First Division at the same time. In the afternoon the Second Battalion held positions reaching down the slope to within 500 yards of the highway, and a company of the 99th Infantry Battalion, an American Norwegian Battalion attached to us, had men dug in just short of the highway. The enemy held a considerable force of tanks and infantry on the high hill directly south of Wurselen overlooking the highway. This force brought such heavy fire to bear on the men of the 99th that they were unable to leave their foxholes by daylight.

The enemy also had pushed tanks along the road and sent six of them, accompanied by 40 infantrymen, against Company E holding the extreme right of the Second Battalion west of the highway. One of the tanks, a Mark VI, was able to advance to within 175 yards of our lines. A bazooka team was sent out, but, finding that the bazooka had no effect on the heavy armor of the monster tank, the team came back. In a second attempt Pvt. Blair L. Mutimer took





"Sweatin' it out"

the bazooka and went forward 50 yards and fired. One rocket hit the tank, glanced off without doing any damage, and two others, though they missed, accounted for 15 of the accompanying infantry. The attack was finally driven off by artillery and small arms fire.

At nightfall, a patrol was sent from Company F to contact the 18th Infantry of the First Division. The patrol slipped forward in the darkness and rain, coming within 200 yards of the First Division front lines before they were fired on by an enemy outpost. S/Sgt. Frank A. Karwel, who was in charge of the patrol, vanished. Fortunately he had given orders to avoid a fire fight and get on to the First Division. Two lead scouts, Pvt. Edward Krauss and Pvt. Evan F. Whitis, succeeded in crawling out from under the concentrated small arms and mortar fire, and in reaching the First Division lines. The seven other men of the patrol managed to work back to our lines in the dark. Private Krauss and Private First Class Whitis guided a patrol from the First Division back to our lines later that night, but found no trace of Sergeant Karwel. It was not known whether he was killed or captured.

Another patrol was sent from the Third Battalion sector near Sors to contact the First Division. It was led by Lt. Robert L. Kelly of L Company. The enemy discovered them when the lead scouts were within 20 yards, and in order to avoid capture or sudden death, all the members of the patrol trusted to the darkness, turned, and slipped back along the route they had come. Although Lieutenant Kelly stum-

bled, fell, and lost his weapon, the others continued on to a covered position 150 yards away. Lieutenant Kelly, alone and unarmed, crawled more than 100 yards to a small clump of woods to await developments.

The enemy came out from their positions to investigate and at times passed within a few yards of Lieutenant Kelly. The balance of the patrol, with the exception of S/Sgt. Simone, believed he was captured. S/Sgt. Simone was not satisfied and decided to look for his lieutenant. He walked and crawled forward calling in a very low voice. He found the Lieutenant and led him back to join his patrol.

Thus on the night of the 16th, the circle around Aachen was complete, though not yet strong. We were to spend the next weeks consolidating the encirclement and cleaning out pockets, fighting off counterattacks and keeping the Germans from breaking out or in. On the morning of the 17th the First Battalion held its positions southwest of Kohlscheid and pushed forward reconnaissance in force. Company A with a platoon of tanks reached Richterich and took 24 prisoners. Company B and a platoon of tanks cleaned out the pillboxes around Forsterheide and then moved south to join Company A north of Richterich. The Second Battalion defended its sector in the western part of Wurselen, and with the help of TDs, covered the highway at a point due east of Wolfsfurth. An enemy tank was destroyed there in the afternoon. The Battalion also cleaned out pillboxes in its sector and took 25 prisoners.

In the evening, the Third Battalion sent two patrols to secure the bridge east of Eulersweg, where the highway crosses the Wurm River. Both patrols received fire, but succeeded in by-passing it and reaching the bridge, where they made contact with the First Division. During the night the road-block in the Second Battalion sector was reenforced. Two mine fields were placed on the road by members of the AT Mine Platoon led by Lt. Warren Behrens. They laid one of the mine fields within 10 yards of an enemy tank, trusting to the darkness and the sound of the motors of other enemy tanks to conceal their activity. Earlier in the day Lt. John Boots, then in command of the platoon, had been killed by tank fire while reconnoitering the terrain for these mine fields.

The enemy had excellent observation on the area from their pillboxes and other defenses on the hill to the east, known as "Crucifix Hill." At night they shot frequent flares illuminating the opposite slope occupied by our troops.



Because of the flares and the muddiness of the ground, Sgt. William H. Crabtree was unable to take an AT gun directly down the slope against the column of enemy tanks in the valley. After a difficult reconnaissance, during which he moved in and out of enemy territory, he found a less exposed route. Even so, the gun was spotted as it was dragged by hand down the slope. Enemy artillery and small arms were augmented by tank fire from the hill and valley. The crew fired the gun from the slope on the enemy tanks and, alternately dragging and firing, fought their way into a position at the base of the slope covering a stretch of the highway.

At 0900 of the 18th, the Third Panzer Division launched an attack against the roadblocks held by Company A of the 99th Battalion, inflicting heavy casualties. The attack was thrown back within 30 minutes with a loss of three Mark VI tanks. Two of them were knocked out by our TDs and the third by a bazooka from Company F. Company A of the 99th had been driven 100 yards back from the roadblocks.

Later that afternoon the enemy launched another attack through the left flank of G Company. This attack, preceded by artillery and mortar barrages, was made by 10 tanks and 100 infantry. The onslaught quickly overran a light machine gun platoon supporting Company G on that flank and bore down on an intersection near the G Company CP. Twenty men of the Company were lost and the majority withdrew 100 yards. Lt. Winslow H. MacDonald grabbed a bazooka and a bag of rockets and took up a position at the intersection. As the first tank came rumbling down the street he fired two rockets at less than 100 yards. Although both rockets glanced, the tank was somewhat intimidated and withdrew a short distance to cover. Lieutenant MacDonald then ran across the open street to move in on the tanks. Almost immediately they started forward again, protecting each other with fire. Lieutenant MacDonald stood fast, fired four more rockets, and brought the attack to a standstill in that sector.

Hitler had publicly announced that Aachen would not fall, and it was obvious that he had committed his full strength to its aid. Elements of four Nazi divisions were identified in our sector, and they were on the offensive.

A prong of the enemy attack again threatened the positions of Company E. Mark VIs chewed up our outposts only to be

finally stopped by our tanks at ranges of 100 yards. Other prongs continued to hit up and down the line.

Sergeant Crabtree was observing his sector from the second story of a house near his 57MM AT gun when he saw three Mark IVs moving directly toward his position. Tank fire had already driven all but one of his crew into the cellar of the house. Sergeant Crabtree, aided by Robert J. Kochanowicz, manned the gun and brought fire on the enemy tank 700 yards away. The enemy spotted them and returned their fire, blowing off a wheel of the gun and wounding Sergeant Crabtree. Even with the wheel gone, he fired three more rounds, disabling the lead tank and forcing the two others to halt 300 yards short of his position.

In breaking through the flank of Company G, the enemy isolated Lt. Louis A. Daugherty, Jr., mortar observer in support of the Company, and eleven men of various units. They took cover with Lieutenant Daugherty in the cellar of the house from which he was observing. Active enemy infantry broke into the ground floor of their building and tried to dislodge them with grenades. The group answered with grenades and even made a number of forays from the cellar. Lieutenant Daugherty killed two and wounded three others, while Pfc. Edmondo D. Richeidie took two prisoners. Four of the men in the cellar were seriously wounded and not evacuated until shortly after nightfall, when the enemy force at last reluctantly gave up the attack and withdrew.

In the early morning the First Battalion and two platoons of tanks jumped off with the mission of taking the high ground 1,000 yards south of Richterich and establishing road-blocks on the complex highways running northwest out of Aachen near Laurensberg. The Battalion accomplished its mission in half an hour, taking 115 prisoners. It was quickly relieved by the 1104th Engineer Group and drove southeast to an objective west of Sors. Sors had been taken earlier in the day by the Third Battalion, who had established road-blocks at Scheuer, below Heumesser, and across the main highway near Grosstuck. This last road-block, established by Company I, finally made a solid junction with the First Division, and the ring around Aachen was physically complete.

The breaching of the Siegfried Line and the encirclement of Aachen had taken us 16 days of continuous fighting, during which the Regiment suffered 661 casualties. Of these, 45 were killed, 482 were wounded, and 134 were missing in ac-



tion. We had reduced 131 pillboxes, 73 fortified positions, and had taken 1243 enlisted prisoners and 26 officers.

Without the drive of the 30th Division from the north, the First Division could never have taken Aachen, as the Commanding General of the First Division observed. The 119th Infantry had met the heaviest fighting of the Division in this action. We had every reason to be proud of ourselves. Even the Germans, with their customary ineptitude, flattered us by calling us the Roosevelt SS. Later they called us the Red Devils, from the color of the Division patch. Our reputation with the Wehrmacht was so great that in December certain German commanders were influenced by the assurance that the 30th Division was too heavily engaged in the north to interfere. Such praise as that was rather more convincing than the various utterances of German officers about the brilliance of our tactics or that it was a pleasure to surrender to us because we were an honorable enemy.

Meanwhile the other American armies in the European Theater had seriously outrun their supplies. After the capture of Aachen the entire front was reduced to minor activity. In our sector we did little more than consolidate our gains and push little by little toward the next natural barrier, the Roer River.

*Holland border at Kerkrade*



On the 19th the enemy still held Wurselen to the east of the highway and the highway itself along most of the Second Battalion front. That morning the Third Battalion attacked northeast up the highway, and knocked out a pillbox opposite Wolfsfurth. In the afternoon the enemy launched a counterattack north of this area against the Second Battalion with six tanks and a company of infantry. This time the enemy had less success, for they could not penetrate our line and in less than an hour were forced to withdraw with a loss of two tanks. On the 20th, the First Battalion relieved the Second, which withdrew to Kohlscheid. The next day the First Battalion drove toward the "Triangle" formed by three crossroads, two of them on the main highway about 200 yards north of the railroad. The Battalion, supported by a company of tanks and a platoon of TDs, made little progress against the enemy mortar, tank, and machine gun fire. When C Company reached the highway it was obliged to withdraw a short distance to permit the use of fire to its front. Just before nightfall, the Company was hit by a counterattack which forced it to withdraw 200 yards. Lt. Vector Ortega, the leader of the Third Platoon, had suffered a compound fracture of the upper leg and was unable to move without assistance. He stayed behind and directed the withdrawal of his

*Enemy defenses at Kohlscheid*







*The First Battalion counts prisoners at Richterich*

men until the enemy was actually intermingled with them in hand-to-hand fighting. After all but a handful of his men had withdrawn from their positions, he allowed himself to be helped to the rear.

The Second Platoon was cut off by the enemy on both flanks, until Lt. Frank A. Sparke, at the head of his platoon, forced his way across 100 yards of open ground to contact the 29th Division to his left. The enemy had also driven a wedge between C Company and A Company on the right. The next morning, Sgt. James B. Case, Pvt. Sherman C. Shelton, and Pvt. Max E. McGowan of C Company volunteered to regain contact. At the start they had to cross 75 yards of open ground under machine gun and small arms fire before reaching the first house, which was held by at least seven Germans. The patrol drove the enemy through the cellar to the cellar of the next house (most of the houses in this sector were connected by underground passages). The Germans were driven through the cellars of four houses until cornered. Seven prisoners were taken. The patrol then pushed on to contact A Company and to coordinate the fire over a gap of some 400 yards.

The ground which C Company had lost the day before was recovered with difficulty after a counterattack had been emphatically repulsed and the Battalion had taken 103 prisoners. The fighting during the counterattack was at close

quarters, in cellars and houses. Grenades, bayonets, knives, and fists finally made our position secure.

The enemy held their positions along the highway with artillery, tanks, and small arms, and though the First Battalion reached the highway again, it was unable to establish road-blocks at the two crossroads. At the end of the day the Battalion retired to about the same positions it had held the night before. This sector stagnated, and for the remainder of the month of October there was plenty of fire but very little movement. Both forces built defensive positions and did not attempt vigorous attacks in force. The Wurselen sector was held by the battalions more or less in rotation, and when not at Wurselen they were at either Kohlscheid or a monastery rest center in Holland, nine miles away.

Kohlscheid offered us our first thorough acquaintance with the German people. The situation at first seemed rather alarming politically, because we got along too well with the Germans. We were in an industrial section and it was American enough to make us feel a little at home. We had in common a northern, half-Catholic and half-Protestant tradition, and we shared certain sentimental feelings about Christmas, and Mother, and Cleanliness being next to Godliness. The maniacal scrubbing and dusting the Germans engaged in morning, noon, and night failed to impress us as it had in Holland. Maybe we were prejudiced. The German





*Our supporting tanks prepare for the attack on Wurselen, Germany.*

ideas of beautiful furniture, clothes, and accessories corresponded quite recognizably to the ideas of the American middle class.

But naturally, the principal attraction Germany had to offer—and did—was its women. They were usually clumsy and had little style, yet they did have a great deal of enthusiasm about certain things. In spite of threats, lectures, orders and fines of 65 dollars, fraternizing was believed to flourish. It was simply biological pressure and was taken too seriously. After a few days' rest we had the detachment to realize that the Germans had a gross energy and no real liveliness. They had a fatal lack of humor; even their dirty jokes were somehow not funny. They were stupid to a degree that even their enemies in Europe did not exaggerate. They struck an American as essentially corny, and in a month or two we knew that even the good Germans, if such existed, were uncivilized to a degree unknown to us. Their minds, habits, and life were so regimented and systematized that the slightest interruption disorganized their entire life. When curfew hours were established, they assumed a bewildered look of despair. One woman, for instance, complained,

in tears, and requested that she be allowed to go to her baker's at 11:00, as she had for 46 years, rather than at 1000. Well-dressed men and women stooped, without hesitation, to "shoot a snipe" in the gutters. Many of our soldiers took to throwing recently-lit cigarettes at their feet, just to see their arrogance humbled as they leaned down and mumbled a subdued "Bitte."

During the month, the Regiment captured 2,080 PWs, including 33 defiant Nazi officers, and knocked out 21 tanks, 18 half-tracks, four self-propelled guns, and six AT guns. On our side, there were 79 killed, 730 wounded, 35 captured, and 250 missing, bringing the casualty total to 1,094.

## NOVEMBER

Wurselen—Weiden—Freidaldenhoven—Merzenhausen—  
Pattern

For the first two weeks of November no serious action developed. We were still west of the highway in Wurselen, receiving regular harassing barrages and replying in kind. Once in a while an enemy tank would drive up and fire a few rounds into our lines and then withdraw. There was some patrolling activity. The weather was dismal and the ground a mire.

The Third Battalion spent a few days in the complicated monastery outside Kerkrade, Holland, which had been converted into a rest camp. The Second Battalion was attached to the Second Armored and pursued training in the coordination of infantry and armor near Neerbedk, southwest of Sittard, Holland, and then in the woods west of Gretenrath, Germany. In short we had passed from a Blitzkrieg to a Sitzkrieg of a peculiarly depressing type. No one doubted that we would eventually win the war in Europe, but it again looked as if it would now go on and on. The longer the front remained stagnant, the more firmly the Germans would convince themselves that they had stabilized their western front and could either push us back or receive, in the words of Frederick the Great, "a decent peace." They could not understand that, from the Allied point of view, any peace short of unconditional surrender would be indecent. So, it appeared that Germany might fight the war to its military conclusion and we would have to pay for the fairly bloodless Sitzkrieg which now existed. Daily the stocks of ammunition and supplies grew. Kohlscheid was converted into an am-



munition dump; the streets and roads were lined with stack after stack.

On the 15th of the month the Germans made an attack on the First Battalion sector in Wurselen. They threw in an artillery and mortar preparation, and when it lifted, three tanks and the infantry 20 yards in front of our lines, opened up. Sgt. Steve T. Puhalla of Company C climbed to a rooftop and, using a grenade launcher, fired 60-mm. mortar shells at the enemy tanks. The enemy infantry directed a good deal of small arms fire at him but he fired eight shells from the grenade launcher, scoring two hits and six near misses.

At the same time T/Sgt. Raymond K. Rhodes was firing at them with a bazooka from the middle of the road, where he was exposed to heavy small arms fire. Each time he fired the bazooka he had to withdraw, having drawn attention to his position, but he returned four times, to score two direct hits on the lead tank. The tanks became irresolute, fired two perfunctory rounds, and then withdrew. After that the enemy infantry returned to a quiescent state, and the artillery duels continued in a leisurely manner.

The jump came soon. On the afternoon of the 16th the Third Battalion attacked east to finish Wurselen. Small arms fire was met from the first, but in about half an hour Companies I and L had advanced 500 yards. Company L crossed the highway and advanced until it was pinned down by machine gun fire east of the stadium. Companies I and K had difficulty in reaching enemy-held Wurselen because they were forced to cross 400 yards of open terrain before reach-

ing the first buildings. A platoon of Company I got across, though subjected to crossfire from enemy machine guns. The platoon took cover in a building in which one wing was still held by the enemy. A friendly tank attached to the Company observed machine gun fire coming from the building and began firing at it, unaware that the platoon of Company I was also there. They tried to signal the tank but had no success.

Pfc. Sam W. Larsen, a platoon runner, had become separated from the platoon early in the action, and while moving up to rejoin them, saw the situation. He attempted to reach the Company Commander by radio, to relay the situation to the tank, but he could not get through. Finally he decided that he would have to crawl up to the tank himself in spite of the enemy fire. It was some 75 yards, and as he crawled, the enemy laid in an artillery and mortar barrage. He made it and the platoon was saved.

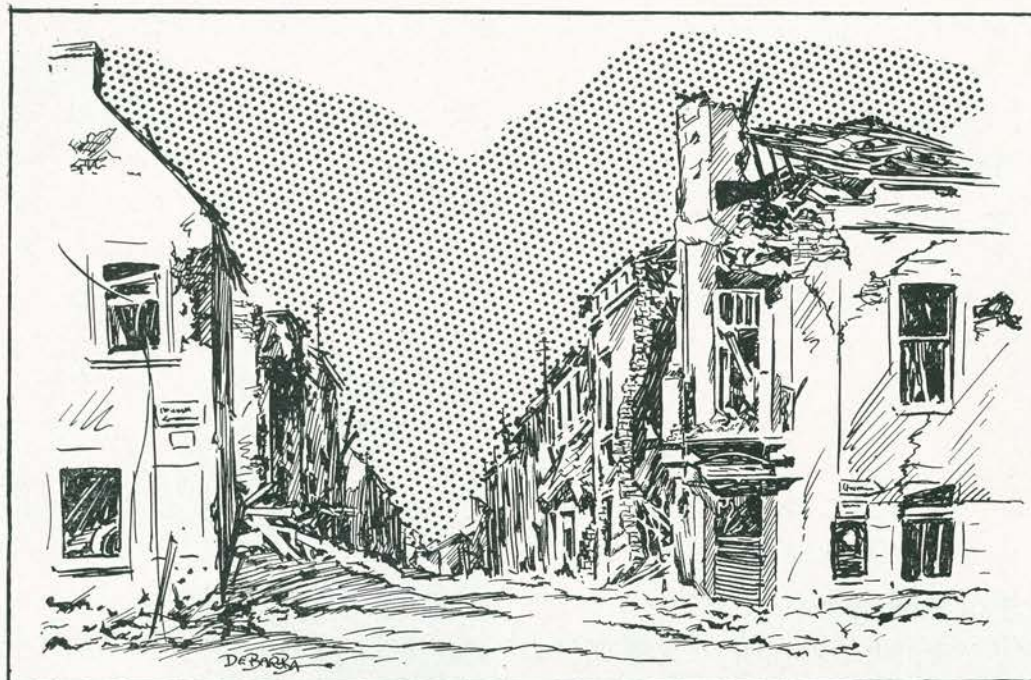
Lead scouts of the Second Platoon of K Company were pinned down 100 yards from the first houses by machine gun fire. The platoon, in the open field, was subjected to severe artillery and mortar fire, and suffered a good many casualties. Pfc. Freeman V. Horner rose up in the face of the fire and dashed across 100 yards of the field. A machine gun from the second story of one of the houses opened up, barely missing him. He fired his tommy gun, and his first burst killed both men at the machine gun. He rushed two more enemy machine gun positions 50 yards from him, dodging and firing.

*G.I.'s walk down the main street of Alsdorf, Germany—you can look, but mustn't touch.*

*USO performers pause for an affectionate greeting with soldiers in Germany. Frank McHugh, center, unit member, surrounded with armament, takes a rest after tramping through debris.*







*Wurselen*

The enemy, unable to hit him, abandoned the two guns as Private First Class Horner broke into the house. As he came into the kitchen he saw one of them disappearing into the cellar and followed him with one grenade and then another, calling to the enemy to surrender. Four of them came out of the cellar with their hands on their heads. When he had made certain that the three enemy guns were out of action, he signalled the platoon to come up. Squad A and part of the Headquarters group reached the house, but enemy artillery and mortar fire prevented further reinforcement of the foothold. The squad and the Headquarters group held out all night. Three runners were killed before Sgt. Benjamin T. Blanten, by taking two hours to crawl the 400 yards across the field, reached the forward group. His pack and field jacket were riddled by machine gun bullets.

Company K lost its fighting commander again that day. The morning of the attack, Captain Hopcraft was heard to remark, after he had gone over the attack plan, "It looks like 'Harry's Night Riders' are going to catch hell again today. If the Germans don't stop this damned foolishness, most of us will get a rest cure in the hospital." A few hours after the attack had been launched, Captain Harry ran into a batch of artillery. He was evacuated to a hospital in Heerlen. Several days later when some of his men went back to see him, a nurse remarked, "Who is this guy, anyway? Seems like every General and Colonel in the Army has been here to

see him." It was just "Captain Harry," an able fighting infantryman.

Captain Stewart assumed command of K Company, later to become Third Battalion Commander.

The next morning Companies I and the balance of K led the attack through Wurselen, passing to the right of the foothold gained by K Company. The enemy had withdrawn; nevertheless 16 casualties were sustained from mines and boobytraps which they had left behind in great numbers. At the end of the day very little of Wurselen remained to be cleaned up. The outskirts were attended to the next morning by Companies I and K. Wurselen was destroyed almost beyond rebuilding. Our artillery and air force had pounded this city for nearly a month. Here some soldier with a sense of humor had quoted on a signboard a sentence from one of Hitler's infamous speeches, "Follow me and in ten years you won't know Germany."

The captured prisoners were amazed at our ability to get into the approaches of the town. They had laid a remarkably complicated pattern of mine fields, the most intricate we had ever met. What they did not know, however, was that one of our patrols had taken prisoners before the attack. Clever interrogation by our own PW team divulged not only the extent of the fields, but their exact location and the gaps used by their patrols. We moved through the hidden gaps and let the fields sleep peacefully.





*"In ten years you won't know Germany." Wurselen after its fall.*





*Aachen*

With the fall of Wurselen, the last main defenses of the Siegfried Line were destroyed. The Regiment alone had reduced over 200 pillboxes, and had badly mauled portions of five divisions.

On the morning of the 18th the First Battalion attacked towards Weiden. In the late morning Companies A and C were held up near the railroad tracks before the town by very heavy machine gun fire from two pillboxes and other positions in the town, as well as artillery and mortar fire. A tank with Company A had been knocked out by a mine, and the Company Commander was wounded. Lt. Ferdinand Bons took command of the Company and, seeing that the greatest obstacle to the advance was the machine gun fire, called up the three remaining tanks against the enemy positions. He mounted the lead tank himself and from there directed the fire and maneuver of the others until the enemy positions were neutralized. By evening the Battalion had taken the greater part of Weiden and in the morning completed the occupation, setting up road-blocks on the highways beyond it. In the afternoon of the 19th the 335th Infantry relieved our First and Third Battalions. The First Battalion retired to the monastery at Kerkrade and the Third Battalion went to "Camp to Kohlscheid." The Second Battalion, with the Second Armored, had moved from Grottenrath to Ubach to Setterich, in preparation for an attack on the approaches to the Roer River.

On the 20th the Second Battalion and the Second Armored attacked the town of Freialdenhoven, with Company G leading. By evening half the town had been taken, and Company F was about 700 yards northeast of it.



*Wurselen*

They had loose contact with the unit to their left, across a 500-yard gap. The enemy sent a patrol of ten men into the gap during the night, but they were stopped by an outpost consisting of S/Sgt. Jack C. Weeren and two other men. Sgt. Weeren fired on the patrol with his M-1, killing four, wounding two, and taking three prisoner. The last of Freialdenhoven fell the next day and the Battalion, though delayed by the AT and AP mines in the town, had pushed more than a mile east of it by nightfall.

On the 22nd, elements of the Second Battalion advanced to take Merzenhausen. The town offered the Germans one of their favorite situations for defense, being on a stream with high ground behind it. They had used it at Mortain, on the Seine, at Valkenburg, in Siegfried Line and again here. The platoon of Company G was held up by fire from entrenchments in front of the town, about 300 yards away. A platoon of Company E was committed and pinned down. The balance of Company G was committed with a platoon of tanks. Enemy entrenchments in front of the town were finally cleared almost entirely by 81-mm. mortar fire. The mortar observer attached to Company E took the assignment. A tank shell hit so close to him that it destroyed his radio and he had to crawl under heavy fire to obtain another from Company E. His fire was effective enough to cause numerous casualties among the enemy and to disorganize the others in the entrenchments. Only then were Companies G and E able to enter the town.

As Company G moved down the main street, a camouflaged enemy tank opened up with machine gun and 75-mm. fire, wounding four men. At the same time, the town was sub-





*119th Troops plod forward on the march to Wurselen*



*Medical party about to pick up German civilian who just stepped on a German box mine.*

jected to a heavy artillery and mortar barrage observed from the hill behind the town. Pfc. Roy Scott, an aid man, left cover and carried the four wounded men to safety just before artillery shells landed in the street exactly where they had been lying. In spite of this fire and infantry defense, the Battalion had cleared about a third of the town before it dug in for the night, still in close contact with the enemy. Mine fields were laid as a defense measure against the enemy armor in the northern part of town, some of it being only a few hundred yards from Company G.

One mine field was to be placed in an open field 50 yards to the right front of Company G. Three members of the A & P Platoon carrying the mines were about to leave the front line when they heard the voice of a German soldier calling to them from the field. One of them went back to the Battalion CP and brought up Pfc. Frank Bartenek, an interpreter. Private First Class Bartenek crawled out from our line, but because of the noise of the battle he could not hear what the German was saying. He crawled ahead to within 15 yards of the enemy outpost. Private First Class Bartenek and the German tried to persuade each other to surrender, until Bartenek settled the argument by throwing two grenades. The mine field was laid. Shortly afterwards the enemy struck with two Mark VI tanks and about a company of infantry.

Our defenses had already been weakened by the loss of eight tanks and a large number of wounded. The enemy overran the forward platoon of Company G and disorganized its support, which was digging in in an orchard on the left of the town. A heavy machine gun section acting partially

as riflemen was sent to hold the left flank from further collapse, until reinforcements could be found. The instrument corporal, Henry C. Klander, who had been in the town with forward elements of Company G earlier in the night, led a three-man patrol into the section of town retaken by the enemy, to contact isolated riflemen. The patrol found 20 riflemen and tankers and brought them back to strengthen the left flank. Though Company G lost considerable ground, it was able to hold a quarter of the town until it could resume the attack again in the morning. On the 23rd they regained control of about two-thirds of the town. The enemy resistance and counterattacks on the Corps front, including the 29th Division on the right, became so serious that the remainder of the Regiment was alerted.

The balance of the Regiment moved by motor to areas near Hongen, Schleiden, and Aldenhoven. That afternoon the Third Battalion, with Companies K and L leading, advanced towards Pattern. Supporting tanks from the 743rd Tank Battalion knocked out three Panther tanks while our companies took 62 prisoners. Resistance was relatively light, and Pattern was taken by the middle of the afternoon. During the night, contact was made with the 120th to our right. Patrols made contact with the enemy on the 24th in the woods east of Pattern, and on the 25th our Third Battalion was attached to the 120th Infantry to continue the attack from Pattern to Altdorf. Our First Battalion was attached to the Second Armored, and what little was left returned to Kohlscheid.

The battle in Merzenhausen bounced back and forth indecisively. Early on the 26th, when E and F Companies at-



tacked, we had barely a foothold in the southwestern end of town. With their artillery and mortar barrages, which inflicted heavy casualties, the enemy was desperately defending the town house by house, with snipers and machine guns in the houses and from foxholes in the gardens. Early in the attack when the leading squad of Company F scattered for cover from the sniper and machine gun fire, S/Sgt. William J. Peterson went ahead, throwing grenades into the windows and foxholes. After four buildings had been cleared, the second platoon was again held up by machine gun and bazooka fire coming from a house 100 yards farther up the street.

Sgt. Rene W. Beaulieu crawled up the street on his hands and knees, armed with an M-1, hand grenades, and AT grenades. When he came within 15 yards of the enemy machine gun position, he fired three AT grenades into the window and then rushed the front door. Three hand grenades killed four Germans and wounded two others. Sgt. Guy C. Bates, who had taken cover in the kitchen of a house nearby, found that he could see an enemy bazooka team from a bedroom window. With AT grenades and a BAR he destroyed the team. The advance of Company F drove a group into the courtyard of another house. Covered by the men of his squad, Sgt. Bates called to the Germans who were in the house to surrender. They found a captain, in command of a Battalion, and a staff of three officers. Eighty enlisted Germans in the barn and sheds around the courtyard followed the excellent example of their staff.

Shortly after Company E jumped off, the platoon leader, the platoon sergeant, and the runner of the First Platoon were seriously wounded by a single mortar shell. The enemy had 36 mortars covering the area and they were hard to avoid. Pvt. Wally Beswerth, a medic, made two trips across a 50-yard space under the barrage to bring the three wounded men to the protection of a ruined house. There were 22 wounds on the platoon leader, 20 on the platoon sergeant, and a bad leg wound on the runner. He tended them for three hours until they could be evacuated over the almost impassable road to Freieldenhoven. Only a few jeeps were able to make the trip, for five of them had been destroyed by enemy fire.

The Third Platoon of Company E was given the mission of clearing the gardens and orchards behind the houses on the south side of the town. The terrain was made difficult by the number of hedges dividing the lots and running across

the line of advance, as well as by the long hedge closing the orchards off from the open fields to the right. At the beginning of the advance, one squad attempted to flank the orchards from the right, was pinned down by small arms fire, and the squad leader became a casualty.

S/Sgt. Norbert V. Osterland went forward to take command of the squad, leaving his own squad with his second in command. He persuaded a TD to drive across the front of the squad and cover their shift left, to the concealment of the hedges. Sergeant Osterland had intended to use the TD to break the hedges in a move down the orchards; however, after a short advance, it was destroyed by a bazooka. Sergeant Osterland was obliged to continue the advance along the houses, clearing each lot in turn. When his squad occupied a bunker in one of the lots, he spotted an enemy machine gun squad of six men moving across the next lot. By simultaneous fire, on his signal, Sergeant Osterland's squad killed two of the enemy and wounded the other four. Soon afterwards, he saw an enemy rifleman run from one of the houses and drop into a foxhole in the same lot. Sergeant Osterland crawled forward along the houses and into a barn about 20 yards from the sniper's hole. He crawled into the loft and knocked out a tile from the roof. When he stuck his head out to observe, the sniper shot his helmet off. Sergeant Osterland hastily pulled in his head and crawled down to the ground floor. Four grenades and a liberal application of a flame thrower squared accounts. Inside the TD two men had been injured and one killed, but the TD itself was still operative and badly needed.

The difficulty was that the surviving members of the crew were too shaken to remove the dead man from the turret. Although the enemy barrages and short range small arms fire made it a dangerous undertaking, Pfc. Ervin L. Livingston, Reginald L. Hazen, Elmer G. Sheeder, and Pvt. Earl F. Humiston left cover, climbed up to the turret, and tried to remove the body by hand. After two attempts they decided it could not be done. They all removed their belts and, with a supplementary tent-rope, rigged up a system of harnesses on the body and succeeded at last in hoisting it out. A new commander and crew took over and the TD went into action again.

Company E was pinned down once more and remained so for about an hour, until Pfc. William A. Ashworth and Pfc. Thomas P. Belka decided that they had all the fool-



ishness they could stand. Leaving their cover they crawled straight toward the enemy 45 yards away, opened fire, and began tossing grenades. They killed four of the enemy, wounded three, and captured three others. The Company was then able to push on, and by evening the town was entirely cleared.

A patrol sent from Company F after dark was attacked on the slope beyond the town by an enemy patrol of 20 men. The Germans lost four men killed and five wounded in the encounter, and another enemy patrol was stopped with similar losses at the bridge by Company E.

At midnight the enemy pierced the eastern end of town in force, with two Tiger tanks, four lighter tanks, and a company of infantry riding and walking. Pfc. Arlon L. Adams and Pvt. Russell R. Teague, of Company F, a bazooka team halted the drive and held until help arrived. They had some success against the enemy infantry with grenades. When the tanks came within 35 yards, two direct hits by the bazooka stopped and turned them back. However, their bazooka flashes had given their position away and the enemy infantry, with grenades and small arms, forced them to abandon their foxholes and take cover in a creek.

They remained in the frigid water for 40 minutes, bringing fire on the enemy infantry. Artillery had been called for and, falling heavily on the enemy tanks and infantry, made them give up the attack, though reluctantly, and withdraw. As the Company recovered its ground, help was brought to Pvt. Mason H. Armstrong, who had been cut off by the enemy attack. With his M-1 he had killed at least one of the infantry riding the lead tank and had fired AT grenades at the second. When the attack passed by and cut him off, he refused to surrender and survived.

Shortly after their withdrawal, the Germans sent back a patrol to the Company F lines. It was discovered, driven back, and one prisoner, full of information, was taken. It was learned that the bulk of enemy armor and infantry had withdrawn to Barmen, leaving the high ground immediately northeast of Merzenhausen unoccupied. He also informed us that a force was being organized to rescue the German captain and the others who had been taken prisoner with him. The force was located on the information and when it refused to surrender, was dispersed with artillery. Company F took the high ground northeast of Merzenhausen before daylight.

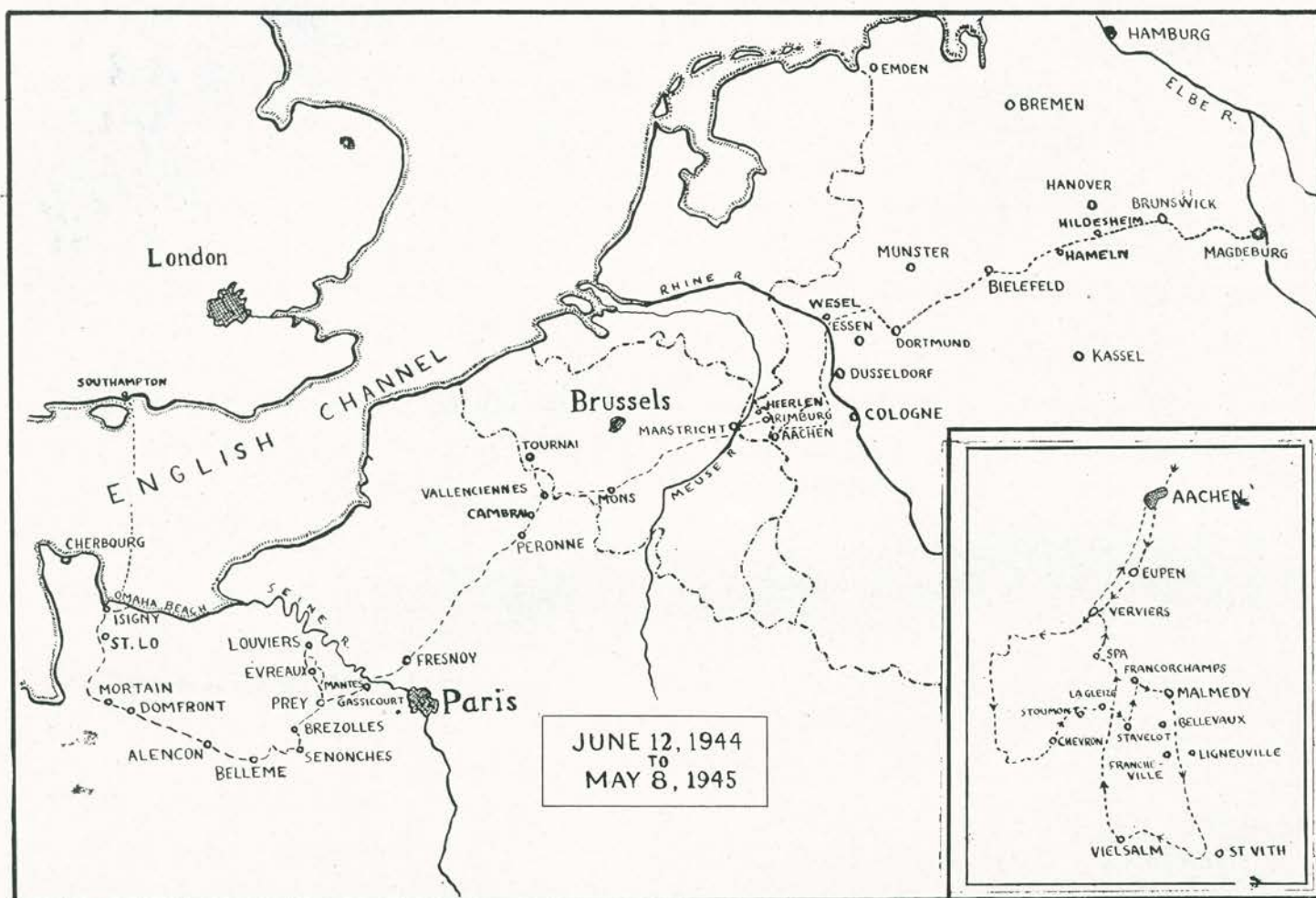


*"All right! All right! So you gonna get married when you get back home."*

On the morning of the 27th, the First Battalion, which had come up from Hongen, attacked north and northeast of Freialdenhoven to take the bare tabletop hill called Hill 1003. Company B advanced astride the railroad track with Company C on its left. The progress of both companies was very slow against heavy fire of all kinds. At the jump-off, the leading platoon of Company B suffered four casualties before it had gone 25 yards. Lt. Gerald E. Posner reorganized his platoon and crawled forward to the two lead men, whom he found dead. While there, he received word over his radio to return to the line of departure. Lieutenant Posner withdrew his platoon to cover, under fierce machine gun fire, and was the last to leave. Artillery smothered the enemy positions and the Company attacked again, advancing 40 yards only to be pinned down again.

The Third Platoon of Company C was also pinned down by an enemy gun 35 yards away. Pfc. Joseph A. Micerri crawled to within 15 yards of the position and, with his M-1, held the gunner down and stopped his fire. Suddenly he saw a German with a burp gun ready to fire down the flank of his squad. Private First Class Micerri was unable to hit the German from his position, so he got up on his knees and pointed the German out to the BAR man. The German fired a burst which hit Private First Class Micerri in the stomach. Micerri pulled a grenade from his pocket and,





holding his stomach with one hand, pushed himself up again, threw his grenade at the German and then slumped back as the German shot him again, killing him instantly. The BAR man could hardly miss his target and killed the German. Company C moved ahead. The enemy resisted bitterly with mortar, machine gun, artillery, and tank fire. When the two companies were 200 yards short of their objective, the fire became so fierce that they could go no farther without tank support.

When the tanks finally came up along the railroad tracks, Lt. Francis J. Brookman, a forward observer from the 65th FA Battalion, climbed down from the haystack he had been using as an observation post and made his way to the nearest tank. From its turret he directed such fire that the two companies advanced to within 100 yards of the objective before they were pinned down again. A final desperate spurt by B Company cleared the hill at the end of the day. Throughout the day enemy air activity had caused numerous casualties. The First Battalion Headquarters had a novel CP. They occupied the cellar of a building which had just

been destroyed by fire. The concrete floor, walls and ceiling were still hot. The weather was cold and wet, so the heat was certainly acceptable.

On the 28th, the Second Battalion returned to Kohlscheid, and on the 29th, the Third Battalion returned from its attachment to the 120th Infantry. On the 27th, the Third Battalion launched an attack from Pattern against Altdorf. After advancing over 1,000 yards of open ground they were pinned down by heavy flanking grazing fire from enemy entrenchments and by tank fire from the town. There were heavy casualties in this action, among them the commander, Captain Eskelin. Lt. Robert J. Kane took command of the Company and reorganized it for a slight withdrawal. The First Battalion of the 120th took Altdorf from the flank the next day.

Our Company A had the mission of clearing the woods between Barmen and Flossdorf, consequently the First Battalion did not return to Kohlscheid from its attachment to the Second Armored until the third of December.

During the end of November the Regiment and attach-



ments had suffered 52 men killed, 210 wounded, and 66 missing in action. We had taken 426 prisoners. On the 29th, there were changes of command. Lt. Col. Roy G. Fitzgerald assumed command of the Third Battalion, relieving Lt. Col. Courtney P. Brown, who became Regimental Executive officer. Maj. Hal D. McCown assumed command of the Second Battalion, relieving Lt. Col. William C. Cox, who was transferred to Regimental Headquarters.

## DECEMBER

The Bulge—Werbomont—Stoumont—Rouat La-Gleize—  
L'ambleve River

On the first of December the general outlook of the war was good. The Allied forces had driven from the beachhead across France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and well into the industrial Rhineland. The end of the war still loomed in the future but not as promisingly as it had at the beginning of October, when the assault on the Siegfried Line seemed to the ordinary soldier the end of Germany. The Germans were masters at shifting forces and reserves from a quiet sector to one of action. Later, in the battle for the Rhine, this fact alone contributed greatly to their defeat. The loosely formed Battalions and Regiments had little coordination or communication. Individual commanders used tactics detrimental to the units on their flanks. As a whole, it could be now said that a general overall breakdown of German Army command and control was developing. The battles in the "Line" were exhausting; the First, Ninth, Third, and Seventh Armies had so depleted enemy units that companies were reformed on squads and groups of companies from different units into battalions. Other companies were kept alive, although their strength might be only 15 to 20 men. Later, it was not uncommon to find troops of five or six different German companies in one company's sector.

The picture in our own sector looked bad. We had cleared the west bank of the Roer. The enemy still held the dams controlling the headwaters of the river to the south. They could at any time destroy the dams and flood the entire region. If the attack were resumed, Allied Troops on the east bank would be cut off and could be destroyed at the enemy's leisure. The 29th Division, on our right, was badly depleted, and the Second Armored Division, on our left, had lost a large portion of its tanks and armored vehicles, some of which had been lost in the "Line" and not yet replaced.

Our weapons and vehicles were in extremely bad condition. We needed an almost complete re-equipping and a long rest after the many days of continuous combat. While the First Army was given the mission of capturing the dams, the Ninth Army stabilized its front and we began to pull back.

On the first of December, the Regiment, minus the First and Second Battalions and Cannon Company, pulled back to Kohlscheid. The First Battalion was attached to the Second Armored Division in the vicinity of Friedenhoven, and the Second Battalion moved into the Division rest center at Herkade, Holland. Our Cannon Company was needed to stabilize the front and was attached to the 197th Field Artillery Battalion near Setterich.

In the days that followed, the First Battalion and Cannon Company returned to Kohlscheid. We now began to receive reinforcements in a number never before known. In a short time all companies were back to strength, some even a little overstrength. Training programs and inspections followed with such rapidity that it seemed as though we were back in basic training.

The quality of the reinforcements was excellent; they learned rapidly and were smoothly absorbed into the unit. Many of these men were soon promoted to the vacancies left by our heavy non-commissioned casualties. The battalions and separate companies were rotated at the rest center. Beards and long hair disappeared and pants once again wore creases. Smiles and laughter came out of hiding and liquor of a very dubious quality became plentiful. Some mathematician with nothing else to do computed and announced the fact that if all the foxholes we had dug were joined end to end, a ditch two-and-one-half feet deep, three feet wide, and 754 miles long could be used to bring "pin ups" and booze from the beachhead to his personal door step.

Life was simple and quiet, and hot food was shoved down our throats three times a day. Crap and poker games flourished, even with the complications involved in the use of currency from four countries. Christmas packages arrived in their usual battered condition and the Christmas spirit prevailed. Men started to make Christmas presents for each other. Hand-carved pistol grips and a type of suspender used to hold up a cartridge belt were most popular. Men gave as presents their cigarette lighters, knives, and captured pistols to their buddies, who had admired these articles at some time in the past. One man gave to his foxhole buddy a





lucky rabbit's foot which he sincerely believed had carried him safely from the beachhead. As trivial as this may seem, it really was a noble gift, for soldiers in battle become a superstitious lot. Without his rabbit's foot, the man was killed, 5 days later.

The sudden news of the German counterattack into Belgium brought us back to reality. The Second Battalion was alerted and at 1000 was trucked to the vicinity of Erberich, Germany. Almost upon arrival, in the rapid occurrence of events, the Second Battalion was ordered back to Kohlscheid, and the entire Regiment was alerted for an instant move upon order, destination unknown. Our attachments rapidly arrived and the Combat team now consisted of the 197th Field Artillery Battalion; Company A, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company B, 105th Engineer Battalion; and Company A, 105th Medical Battalion. In a matter of minutes the town awoke. Equipment, guns, supplies, and ammunition were quickly loaded and prepared for the move. No stage could have presented a more beautiful scene to a Commanding Officer than that of a well-trained Regiment in motion, each man at his individual task, no confusion—only quiet, smooth efficiency.

It was only then that we began to realize that for the last months the German High Command had been desperately hoarding its last major air, armored, and infantry forces for a final blow at the growing Allied strength. Suddenly on December 16, Field Marshall von Runstedt had launched his abortive winter offensive. Masses of armor broke through the American front and fanned out into the snow-covered hills of the Ardennes. By the 17th the true magnitude of the offensive was realized. Supply and administrative installations were being overrun on a large scale, and the security of the Allied front was threatened. Movement orders and the Quartermaster trucks arrived quickly, and by 1800 on December 17, the Regiment was motorized and moving south toward the fluid zone of the German breakthrough.

The Regiment moved quickly, yet cautiously, with air cover. Enemy information was lacking, and the move continued until after dark when the Regiment occupied an assembly area near Eupen, Belgium. Enemy aircraft were active on a scale unknown for months. During the night all anti-aircraft weapons were used to fight off consistent bombing and strafing attacks. Service troops stationed in the area provided conflicting reports of location of nearest enemy troops and direction of their movement. Retreating troops continued to pass through our column to the rear. Their movement and fresh rumors added confusion to the already scanty enemy information known.

No enemy contact was made that night. The following day, December 18, orders were received assigning the Regiment a wide zone of advance running south and southeast from Spa, Belgium, with instructions to move on all main roads, find the spearheads of the German Panzer columns, and stabilize the front as rapidly as possible. Again the Regiment mounted its trucks and moved swiftly to the southwest.

The Second Battalion was assigned the mission of covering the right, or westernmost, of the two main roads in the Regimental zone of advance. It moved quickly to the key road junction of Werbomont, Belgium, detrucked, and continued on foot with one platoon of self-propelled tank destroyers from Company A, 823rd Battalion, following closely behind the infantry point. Three miles from Werbomont they ran headlong into a German armored column of six half-tracks loaded with infantry, and six Mark VI (Tiger) tanks speeding west toward Werbomont. The platoon on the point



deployed quickly and took the enemy under fire with bazookas and TD's. Four half-tracks were destroyed, 15 of the enemy killed, and one prisoner taken. The six German tanks with the two remaining half-tracks turned around hurriedly and withdrew to the first defilade, from which they sent 88-mm. shells screaming in the general direction from which the surprise American attack had come. The remainder of the Second Battalion moved up behind its point and established road blocks and security for the night. They were ordered to hold this position till late the next day, December 19th, when they were relieved by the 82nd Airborne Division and instructed to rejoin the Regiment.

In the meanwhile, on the 18th, the Regiment, less the Second Battalion, had continued moving by trucks on the main highway running through the western half of the Regimental zone. As darkness approached, the First Battalion detrucked and went into a temporary defensive position north of Lorce-Chevron. The Third Battalion detrucked at Stoumont, established road blocks and security, and sent out a strong patrol farther down the road.

At 2130 the first definite enemy information was obtained. The Third Battalion patrol discovered approximately 40 heavy German tanks coiled in an assembly area only 500 yards from Stoumont. Numerous infantry lounging around half-tracks were observed. These troops later proved to be the striking force of the First SS "Adolf Hitler" Division, the elite of the German armored divisions, chosen by the German High Command to drive up the Malmedy-Stoumont highway and seize the supply and communication center of Liege, thus threatening encirclement of the entire First and Ninth American armies. Spa, Belgium, was only a few miles north of this powerful German force and was First Army Headquarters. It contained many important administrative installations and large stores of vital war supplies.

Upon receipt of this information, the Regiment immediately regrouped its available resources with a view of stopping the German advance up this vital valley. The Third Battalion established a defensive position on the southern end eastern edges of Stoumont, blocking all roads with mines and AT guns, and pushed out strong outposts. Company A, 823rd TD Battalion (less one platoon), the 400th Armored FA Battalion (which did not get into firing position until 1700, December 19), plus four 90-mm. guns of the 110th and the 143rd AA Battalions, were attached to

the Third Battalion to augment its defense. The 90-mm. guns were deployed in depth along the main highway as anti-tank secondary defense. The remaining 40-mm. and .50 cal. AA weapons were attached to the First Battalion in Regimental reserve and on road blocks in the Lorce-Chevron area. No tank support was available on the spot, although it had been promised and was reported on the way. One lone regiment, less one of its battalions, stood between one of the crack divisions of the German army and Runstedt's main intermediate objective in the west, Liege.

At 0615 on the 19th, Company I reported that a large enemy tank and infantry column was forming just east of Stoumont. By 0645 the full force of the attack struck the Third Battalion. Massed armor and infantry charged the Battalion outposts. Mark V and VI tanks, moving abreast parallel to the highway, were closely followed by shouting infantry. The enemy, by sheer force of numbers, poured through the advance positions. Third Battalion riflemen ignored the charging tanks and poured concentrated small arms fire on the fanatical foot-troops dodging behind the armor. Regardless of the casualties they were suffering they continued to attack.

Waves of fresh German infantry moved forward behind the steady advance of the tanks. Four towed tank destroyers fired repeatedly, to see their shots bounce harmlessly off the front plates of the oncoming heavy armor. All four TD's were finally overrun. One 90-mm. gun in this sector was destroyed completely by an 88-mm. tank shell, but not until one of its rounds had gone completely through the turret of a Mark V and set it afire.

With anti-tank support gone, the Third Battalion fought a hopeless action to hold the town of Stoumont. Four medium tanks from Company C, 743rd Tank Battalion, arrived and were rushed up to form a fall back line for the overrun troops of the Battalion. Although the bulk of the German armor was through the forward positions of the Battalion, men continued to fight savagely with the German infantry. Casualties fell in increasing numbers on both sides. Aid men continued to evacuate the wounded and render aid in the open fields until they were captured. Single men and isolated squads remained behind to cover the withdrawal, when they saw it was impossible to hold against such overwhelming superiority. One rifleman, calmly selecting his targets, destroyed two half-tracks with rifle grenades as they rolled past





*How the hell did he ever get 85 points?—What do you think he did the three years he was married?*

his foxhole. Two more Mark V tanks and one half-track were destroyed by bazooka fire at close range as the armor entered the built-up area of Stoumont. The American medium tank platoon, waiting on the western edge of Stoumont to cover the withdrawal, opened up and accounted for one Mark IV and one Mark V making the total casualties inflicted on the enemy thus far: four Mark V tanks, one Mark IV, three half-tracks, and an unknown but large amount of infantry.

The Third Battalion withdrew through the First Battalion and began reorganization. It had suffered 267 casualties, 152 of which had remained behind to cover the withdrawal and were for the most part captured.

The fanatical attack swept on through Stoumont, 1,000 yards on to Targnon, and 2,000 yards beyond to a point just past Stoumont Station, where it came to an abrupt halt when it ran against the fresh and waiting First Battalion. By this time the delaying action of the Third Battalion had forced the main body of the enemy to deploy and to commit part of their reserve on the right flank. The Third Battalion had absorbed most of the shock of the spearhead and had definitely blunted its penetrating power.

Meanwhile the Regiment was exerting strenuous efforts to improve its precarious position in the face of the overwhelming strength of the enemy. Headquarters were stripped to furnish riflemen to man road-blocks on the dangerous open flanks. Service Company furnished an assorted but deter-

mined group of 60 men, recruited from the cooks and clerks, to form the Regiment's last available mobile reserve. AT Company moved most of its guns from the exposed flanks down the road into the First Battalion's position to strengthen the forward defense. Then Fortune smiled a little and the Regiment received its first stroke of luck since joining the action. The 740th Tank Battalion was attached to the Regiment and arrived just prior to the final withdrawal of the Third Battalion. This tank battalion had never seen action in combat before and was using hastily secured tanks from a nearby Ordnance Depot; yet these, though inexperienced, were far better than none at all. It was with a feeling of relief that the Regiment watched them rumble into the forward positions of the First Battalion to await the oncoming enemy.

This second stage of the action opened with the enemy's sending three Mark V tanks with infantry down the road from Stoumont Station, apparently to see if there were any organized American defense left to their front. When the lead tank reached a point 600 yards from the Regimental CP, the First Battalion struck, and the 740th Tanks opened up. One tank was knocked out by bazooka fire, two destroyed by tank fire, and all of the accompanying infantry killed or captured. One more Mark V moved up from Stoumont Station to cover the possible evacuation of the knocked out tank crews and it, too, was added to the score by one of the 740th Tanks.

From this point on, the trend of the battle changed. Heartened by the addition of the fresh and willing tank unit, the Regiment had also received the information that its Second Battalion would return to it during the coming night. The Regiment still smarted from the drubbing it had taken that morning. Every man in every echelon knew that the Regiment's mission was not merely to halt this panzer column, but to destroy it or be destroyed, and that it would take every available resource to do so.

During the remainder of the afternoon of the 19th of December, Service Company borrowed and salvaged deserted equipment and raided abandoned supply and ordnance dumps to replace the lost equipment of the Third Battalion. Men of this Company traveled throughout the day and night over uncleared roads and without maps to locate and replace AT guns, small arms, mortars, ammunition, radios and vehicles. By daylight the next morning the badly mauled Third Bat-



talion had regained much of its equipment and was once more ready to close with the enemy.

On the morning of the 20th, the Regiment opened its new offensive phase with an attack of the First Battalion, with one company of the 740th Tank Battalion and one platoon of Company A, 823rd TD Battalion, attached. At 0830 they jumped off from their original defensive positions and ran into an organized defense of infantry supported by direct tank fire. Direct approach down the road was impossible, so the action developed into a slow, strenuous business of flanking each position by hazardous routes up the hills north of the road. The SS men resisted, with unusual ferocity, any attempt to drive them back and had to be killed or completely encircled. By nightfall these tactics had regained the Regiment a large portion of the lost ground, and the First Battalion now occupied a position 500 yards west of Stoutmont. The final prize of the day was a large chateau on commanding ground above the road.

The Third Battalion had been moved on the 20th around through Menthouat down to a position 1,200 yards north of Stoutmont to partially encircle that position. The Second Battalion was moved up to Targnon, where it established a second strong defensive line behind that of the First Battalion's farther east.

At 2200 on the night of the 20th, the enemy struck back viciously in a strong tank and infantry attack. The First Battalion had moved its attached tanks well forward from their usual night positions for just such an attack. They immediately opened up, and a fierce tank fight raged in the darkness, each force firing at the other's flashes. Three American tanks were hit and burning. Finally one of the enemy tanks exploded as one of the First Battalion's tank found its mark. The darkness permitted the German infantry to work in close before they were discovered; then they charged with their characteristic shouting.

Their favorite cry seemed to be "God damn Roosevelt!" The German radio had been calling us, for some time, "Roosevelt's SS Troops." This cry was evidently supposed to be a grave insult, but what they failed to understand was that we also had a few Republicans in the Regiment.

The old chateau quickly became the focal point of the fighting. One platoon, defending in and around it, found itself attacked by an enemy company. The fighting was close and in some cases hand-to-hand. Grenades were tossed

in windows and from room to room as both groups fought for possession of the building. The remainder of the First Battalion's line repulsed the attack in the other sectors. One unit, Company F, from the Second Battalion was alerted and moved up into the First Battalion's positions as safeguard against a possible breakthrough in the chateau area. The fighting here raged all night and into the next day (the 21st).

When daylight came, the First Battalion's positions were still practically intact. One small band still held out in one room of the chateau and directed artillery fire to help stop each new lunge of the German attackers. Fresh tanks from the 740th were pushed up to replace those knocked out the night before. They added their fire-power to the fight by shooting straight down the valley into the trees lining the sides of the highway, where the bulk of enemy was concentrated to form each attacking wave. In the face of this increased show of strength, the German effort lost power and finally stopped altogether, both sides holding their ground for a much needed breathing spell.

During the 20th the Combat Team artillery, the 197th FA Battalion, had arrived in the area and had started intensive harassing fire on the enemy, much to the relief of the Regiment. In the German counterattacks thrown after its arrival it inflicted heavy casualties.

After the final German thrust was stopped on the 21st, the rest of the day was spent in desperate preparations for a concentrated effort by the whole Regiment. Ammunition for tanks, .50 cal. guns, and artillery, all of which had run dangerously low, was hunted out in the far separated ammunition dumps of this sector. Briefings of the plan were held. The Regiment was going to reduce the enemy garrison at Stoutmont by complete encirclement. The fresh Second Battalion was to swing around in a wide move to the north and chop the Stoutmont-LaGleize Road. The Third Battalion would attack from the north and the First from the west.

Early on the morning of the 22nd the Second Battalion moved out on its cross-country operation. Under full combat equipment men worked their way up the steep snow-covered slopes. In spite of the bitter cold, every man was soon drenched with sweat from the strenuous exertion. Through thick underbrush along the crest of the high ridge, the Battalion swung due east, moved on past Menthouat





deep into the thick evergreens halfway to LaGleize. Then it cut straight south, right at the vulnerable rear of the Stoumont position.

At this time the First and Third Battalions jumped off to assault Stoumont frontally. The enemy immediately moved up his heavy armor and blasted straight up the main highway and the Menthouat road, denying their use by friendly armor. An intensive barrage of small arms opened up as the Regiment attempted to push into the open fields just north and west of the town. The 197th and 400th FA Battalions laid continuous heavy concentrations on the town and adjacent high ground to neutralize this deadly fire and assist the infantry through the flat open fields. Both battalions worked closer toward the town, but the amount of casualties being suffered in the frontal assault became excessive, and the Regiment was ordered to hold up these two battalions.

In the meantime, the Second Battalion had chopped the main road between Stoumont and LaGleize at a point approximately halfway between these two towns. Trees were being felled and mines laid straight across the highway covered by bazooka fire (no tanks or AT guns were able to move on the tortuous cross-country route). The Battalion Commander was moving at the right rear of his right company in an effort to personally contact the Third Battalion when he was captured with two of his men by a strong German outpost. In view of this, and also because of the unsuccessful assault on Stoumont, the Battalion was ordered to abandon its road block and withdraw to the north to the high ground, moving out of its present precarious position.

At that time a German staff car and motorcycle raced up to the roadblock and were destroyed by bazooka fire. A captured jeep further down the road saw this action, turned and raced back to Stoumont with the news of this American force on the German rear. One platoon of Company G was left in position at the roadblock as a covering force, and the remainder of the Battalion began making its way back up the steep brush-covered slope. In less than half an hour, a company of armored infantry, supported by three self-propelled guns and five Mark V tanks, moved rapidly out of Stoumont to engage this new American threat. They stood off beyond bazooka range and shelled the area for 30 minutes with tank and 20-mm. fire. Meanwhile, the bulk of the Battalion had successfully withdrawn to the high ridge 1,200 yards to the north. The enemy suddenly lifted its fire and charged the small covering force. The platoon leader immediately gave the order to break contact as his mission was now complete. One 60-mm. mortar squad and the platoon leader himself remained alone in the face of the attack until his last casualty was carried back up the slope. Then they, too, made a successful withdrawal.

Meanwhile, by 1200 the Third Battalion had managed to seize Rouat in bitter hand-to-hand fighting, further compressing the ring closing around Stoumont. The concentrated fires of the 107th and 400th FA Battalions, 823rd TD Battalion, 140th Tank Battalion, one 155 SP gun, and all the AT guns, mortars, and MGs of the First and Third Battalions were being poured into Stoumont to swamp the heavy resistance found there earlier in the day. At 1418 the First



Battalion jumped off again and drove into Stoumont. Surprisingly enough, little resistance was encountered, and the town was rapidly cleaned up. The sudden appearance of the Second Battalion on the rear of the town had apparently caused the German commander to abandon his position, but not before the American preliminary bombardment had exacted a heavy toll, as the dead and wounded left lying in the streets gave grim testimony. The First Battalion pushed on 500 yards past Stoumont and established road-blocks.

The Regiment was then concentrated in Stoumont and girded itself for the final blow. The main enemy force was now compressed into the town of LaGleize and the surrounding high ground. A friendly unit had moved up the main highway from the east of LaGleize, blocking escape in that direction.

On December 23rd the First Battalion pushed off toward LaGleize. Progress was rapid at first. When the advance elements reached a point 1,000 yards west of the town, they hit a mine field covered by two MG nests and an AT gun. In the resulting action the lead 740th tank was knocked out, and the German gun was destroyed by a well-placed shot by the second American tank. One other friendly tank was lost in the mine field before engineers of Company B, 105th Engineer Battalion, working under fire, could clear a path. Infantrymen moved in and eliminated the machine guns, and the Battalion drove forward another 300 yards, only to encounter another well-placed road-block.

Simultaneously the Third Battalion drove along the north side of the highway. The enemy had planned his defenses well and they, too, ran into cleverly-placed road-blocks. The Battalion hit its first resistance on a small wooded trail which led into the objective. A medium tank was lost before the infantry could reduce the position. The attack was then pushed rapidly until the Battalion reached a point 500 yards from LaGleize. Here the enemy showed some of his main strength. The area was smothered by 20-mm., tank, small arms, and mortar fire. The Battalion deployed and the battle developed into another slugging match.

LaGleize was now almost completely encircled. Elements of the 117th Infantry, with holding orders, were in position on the eastern side. The Third Battalion of the Regiment was on the north of the town and the First Battalion on the west. The Ambleve River on the south blocked any vehicle

movement, yet still afforded a means of escape for foot troops. Although the enemy's aggressive spirit had not decreased, he seemed well aware of his precarious position and fought tenaciously to hold all approaches of the position he now held.

The stage was now set for the knockout blow. The Regiment's chance for complete revenge had come. Orders were issued which involved every element of the Regiment and its attachments and called for the complete annihilation of the enemy garrison in LaGleize.

Throughout the night of the 23rd and 24th, eight-inch howitzers of the 187th FA Battalion poured high explosives into the town, slowly turning the built-up area to rubble. Toward morning, this fire was supplemented by the light battalions and direct fire by the 823rd TD Battalion and the 155-mm. SP gun. Forward observers, with their radios, climbed steep hills overlooking the town to adjust accurately fire on every part of the enemy position.

Early on the morning of the 24th, the time for the jump-off came. The comparatively fresh Second Battalion, less Company F, had been selected to make the opening move. The two companies slipped silently through the morning fog through the left portion of the Third Battalion's line and

*Move up. Move up. Move up.*







launched the attack from a point 300 yards due north of the town. The First Battalion was to jump 15 minutes later, and the plan called for the Second Battalion to be close into the main defenses by that time. They ran into surprised outposts, but quickly smothered them and pushed on toward the buildings. They followed a large draw and came upon six half-tracks surrounded by armored infantry. A bitter, close-in small arms fight followed, with the Germans breaking and falling back into the town, abandoning the vehicles. A German patrol of 30 men hit the flank of the Battalion and was taken under fire and eliminated by the second wave without slowing the momentum of the attack.

At 1745 the First Battalion jumped off and encountered tougher resistance due to the alert given the German garrison by the earlier attack. One troublesome Mark VI tank was knocked out by the supporting fire of the 155 SP gun. The Battalion closed closer into the buildings and bitter fighting ensued. Then the combined pressure of the two-fold attack began to tell. Both assaulting battalions began pressing farther and farther into the town, and the German perimeter defense cracked and broke. Disorganization was evident as trapped German tanks were abandoned by their crews when they saw the approaching Americans. Others blew up their vehicles with demolitions. Half-tracks loaded

with German infantrymen raced up and down the streets of the town to be blasted by guns of the 740th tanks. Individuals and groups of Germans still fought from most of the piles of rubble that served as houses.

The Third Battalion was ordered into the town from the northwest to assist in mopping up the houses and rounding up prisoners. They moved forward, to run into isolated groups of SS men who put up bitter resistance for the most part. Some, however, surrendered as their situation became apparent. The attack of the Third Battalion overran the large cellar which housed a group of 152 American prisoners who had been captured from the Regiment earlier in the Ardennes action. The Second Battalion Commander was not among them. He had been taken along by the German commander, with a selected group of his original force, in an effort to escape the LaGleize trap. They had crossed the Ambleve River on foot in an effort to find their way back to German lines. The Second Battalion Commander escaped from his captors later and made his way back to the Regiment on Christmas Day.

Meanwhile the attack raged on through the town. The houses were cleared and the search for the demoralized enemy carried on into the woods south and east of the town. By 1000 the entire LaGleize pocket had been wiped out and the Regiment was fully avenged.



The six-day struggle had been costly for the Regiment, but its mission stood accomplished. It was the list of German losses which gave the Regiment grim satisfaction, however. It read: 210 known killed, 189 prisoners, 39 tanks knocked out, 148 half-tracks and flak-wagons destroyed, 12 AT guns and 12 120MM mortars captured. Also in the Regiment's mind was the fact that this was the best fighting force Germany could offer. The bulk of the striking power of Hitler's personal division composed of picked SS men had been destroyed. This unit was so thoroughly mauled that it was never again reconstructed as a full division.

During this action officers and men of the Regiment won the following awards:

- 4 Distinguished Service Crosses.
- 52 Silver Stars.
- 2 Silver Star Clusters.
- 135 Bronze Stars.
- 21 Bronze Star Clusters.

Ten non-commissioned officers received battlefield commissions as a direct result of their respective parts in the six-day battle.

The Regiment had moved into the sector without tactical maps, without knowledge of the enemy location, and definitely without knowledge of the power of the German thrust. It hunted, located, and absorbed the full fury of a crack German armored force. The Regiment rallied under this heavy blow, beat it back, and finally delivered the knockout blow itself, fighting under the most severe weather and terrain conditions.

*Chaplain Ansbro holds Christmas Mass in La Gleize, Belgium.*



*Lt. Col. Hal D. McCown*

It was apparent from the beginning that this particular panzer spearhead could have caused the greatest damage to the entire Allied plan by capturing Liege and splitting the 12th Army Group in half. With the German defeat at LeGleize, von Rundstedt lost his chance to accomplish this objective, and from that point on, there was no major offensive action by the Germans in the northern shoulder of the Bulge.

At the end of the action, mail and hot food were brought in while the bridges from Targnon to Grand Coe were prepared for demolition. Fate and the fortunes of war had given us a fine present-victory on Christmas Day.

The following day was spent outpostting the L'Ambleve River from Arret De Coe to Halt De Lorce Chevron with the First and Third Battalions. Contact was established during the day with the 505th Parachute Infantry, and the sector became very quiet. At noon the Second Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 117th Infantry near Trois Ponts and moved to Ster, in Division reserve. Reports were received that the Germans were beginning to withdraw from the west and were building up just south of Malmedy to protect or hold their northern flank. Minor shifts in disposition were made the next day with the Third Battalion pulling back to Stoumont for a complete reorganization.





*We attack south from Macmedy*

On the 28th the First Battalion continued to improve its positions and began actively patrolling its front. Meanwhile the Third Battalion traded places with the Second Battalion in Division reserve at Ster. The Second Battalion immediately occupied positions on the left front of the Regiment and sent patrols to the Warche River. With contact almost lost in our sector, enemy information became again a paramount factor. The Second Battalion supported by fire a surprise raid of the 120th on Otai mont. An I & R night patrol moved deep into enemy territory, sustained casualties, and was forced to return. Enemy aircraft were active throughout the day and night, bombing and strafing at leisure. The remaining three days of the month were concluded without serious action. Heavy patrolling was maintained and artillery duels raged 24 hours a day.

### JANUARY

Malmedy—Hedomont—Bellevaux—Reclumont—Thioux—Beaumont—Kappelle—Krombach—Hinderhause—Belgium.

The failure of the German winter offensive (operation "Grief") in December has been termed by many military authorities as the immediate factor contributing to their defeat. Although the enemy held a deep penetration into the Allied front, it was soon realized that he had lost freedom of action and his ability to continue in strength or exploit his gains. The securing of an additional 20 miles and the capture of Liege, which would have fallen with little difficulty, would have changed the entire conduct and character of the war.

Liege, Belgium, a major river-crossing site on the main supply route and dump for two armies, would have been a serious loss. Here was concentrated the major portion of their supplies, indispensable to their ability to wage war. Its loss would have undoubtedly called for a general withdrawal from Germany back into Holland and Belgium, or possibly even farther. The Germans, with the realization of another lost war, had "shot their wad." As in the last war, they had concentrated their forces and last reserves for an all-out attack on a grand scale, to either win the war or to suffer certain defeat in one final gamble. In World War I the famous taxicab army of Paris had stopped them; in this, a few gallant regiments of infantry such as those who stood fast at St. Vith, Bastogne, Stavelot, and Stoumont.

The German Sixth SS Panzer Army finally withdrew its two battered divisions from our Division's sector and replaced them with infantry. As time passed, our air and ground forces, combined, began to aggravate their supply problems, and they turned the attack to the west again. Meanwhile the Allied garrison in Bastogne still held out. The enemy had not given enough serious thought to this important communications center. In spite of the subsequent diversion of reinforcements, the enemy found himself gradually forced back as aid arrived.

The Russian advance in the east was going well, with Budapest encircled. The enemy began hurriedly to withdraw troops from Norway, Yugoslavia, and Denmark. At the height of the "Bulge" action, 80 German divisions had



been identified on the western front—more than 20 of them in the Bulge area alone—with an almost corresponding number absorbed in the support, either directly or indirectly, of the offensive. It was estimated that the enemy had committed 1,300 artillery pieces of 105MM, which, in itself, composed approximately one-third of all his available artillery on the entire western front. So it became even more evident that this offensive had been an all-out show.

The American losses in this battle were great, but the enemy losses were even greater. His loss in men and equipment alone was so great (estimated at 40 per cent) that many divisions were never again reconstituted. Even Herr Hitler's personal division, the First "Adolph Hitler" SS Panzer, which we defeated, lived in name only. With the point of the German thrust now stopped, the Allied armies concentrated on the north and south flanks of the "Bulge" to chop it up and destroy it piece-meal. Von Rundstedt realized this and consolidated his forces in an iron circle with his remaining mobile reserves, capable of being committed on any flank, or to the west as he hoped. Meanwhile, St. Vith and Bastogne, thorns in his side which he was never able to pull, held fast, with aid driving in. All in all, the picture seemed to brighten somewhat. Patton's Third Army reported gains in the south, and our air force was again active. The 119th Infantry began the new year holding an active defensive line along the L'Ambleve River. The sector was quiet during the first four days of January, with the exception of seven men of I Company lost as prisoners while on a patrol in Lodomez. Reinforcements arrived and the men became somewhat rested and began to regain their strength.

On the 5th the First Battalion was attached to the 120th Infantry and relieved the 99th Infantry Battalion (Separate) that night. The 526th Armored Infantry Battalion was attached to the Regiment in the afternoon, and completed relieving the Second Battalion before daylight the next morning. The Second Battalion pulled back for a rest in Bernister, Meiz, and Burnenville, Belgium. On the sixth the 99th Battalion was attached to replace our Third Battalion. They pulled back to Xhoffraix, and the Regiment, with the exception of Headquarters, First Battalion, and Special Units, rested. Night patrols on the seventh, eighth, and ninth continued to bring in a small but steady stream of prisoners for interrogation.

On the 10th our awaited counterattack began to develop.

The Third Battalion was moved south to Malmedy in preparation for an attack south and east into the heart of the Bulge. On the morning of the 12th, the 99th and 526th Infantry Battalions were relieved from attachment and continued to hold their defensive positions. The Second Battalion moved into Malmedy to join the Third Battalion. Before dawn on the morning of the 13th the Second Battalion jumped off in the deep snow.

Slow but steady progress was made until Company E ran into a strong enemy strongpoint 2,000 yards south of Malmedy. The enemy had organized a defensive position along a wooded ridge which was the last natural barrier before a large open valley running to the southeast. Numerous well-placed machine guns, supported by heavy mortar and rocket fire, held up the advance for over an hour. During this barrage the leading troops were pinned down in the snow, unable to withdraw or advance, and were suffering heavy casualties.

Although movement had been stopped, Pfc. Gilbert Wagner, an aid man, crawled 200 yards through the fire to give aid to nine of the wounded. Tanks and tank destroyers moved up to give supporting fire. One tank and one TD were lost, and the only road in the immediate area was blocked. Company G was pinned down within 200 yards of the enemy, with its position even more precarious than that of Company E. Lieutenant Oakes and two radio operators—Corporal Vaughn, and Private First Class Carlock of Cannon Company—crawled forward to the leading pinned down friendly elements. They moved on, searching for an observation point from which they could effectively direct fire to reduce the positions. Their forward movement, detected by the enemy, caused almost continuous mortar barrages to be directed at them. They continued forward through this heavy fire to a position 75 yards ahead and only 50 yards from the enemy.

Lieutenant Oakes then directed his radio operators to open their radio and transmit fire orders to his guns. To achieve the maximum observation it was necessary for Lieutenant Oakes to stand fully exposed while adjusting the fire, which resulted in an increased volume of fire being directed at him. In an ensuing barrage, Lieutenant Oakes and his two operators were wounded. Lieutenant Oakes lost consciousness, and died of his wounds two days later.

Company F became involved in the fight when Sgt. Hobby





*The 12th Army Group Commanders line up for a British Award Ceremony*

Hayles and his platoon were stopped and suffering casualties as they lay in the middle of a road. After directing his men, individually, to cover or concealment, he moved forward to reconnoiter. He was able to gain the woods without being stopped. Moving carefully through the woods, he located two heavy machine guns dug in and protected by thick logs and cement fortifications.

The guns were so well camouflaged that they were invisible from his platoon location 200 yards away. He also discovered that a company of enemy infantry was proceeding to encircle his platoon, and also to cut off another platoon which they had allowed to pass on. By running and crawling he was able to cover the 200 yards back to his platoon through exceptionally heavy machine gun and rifle fire. Three bullets penetrated the front of his field jacket without injuring him.

Upon rejoining his men, he led them through a gap in the enemy's fire lanes and contacted the forward platoon. While this platoon used the information gained by Sergeant Hayles to clean up the infantry, he organized a special squad carrying bazookas, rifle grenades, and one light machine gun. He led the assault of this squad on both fortified positions and succeeded in knocking them out. This squad alone took 30 prisoners and killed 24 of the enemy force. With the help of the other companies the entire position was reduced. The tanks had been lost from the action when the road became blocked by a knocked out tank. They took an alter-

nate route and rejoined the Battalion that afternoon. The Battalion continued to push the attack, and by the middle of the afternoon had reached a position on the high ground north of Bellevaux. Patrols were sent down into Planche Thioux.

Simultaneously, the Third Battalion had jumped off and had reached the outskirts of Hedomont by 0745. Intense small arms and automatic fire pinned down the leading company and the advance halted. Company I was brought up and committed around to the left flank. Lt. Virgil Sowers, a mortar observer, was accompanying the leading elements as they approached the edge of town. They were able to make a little progress against the artillery and mortar fire, but when enemy tanks, machine guns, and rifles opened up, they were stopped cold. Despite the enemy fire directed at him, Lieutenant Sowers remained fully exposed and succeeded in effectively blanketing the enemy positions with mortar fire. Under cover of this fire one platoon was able to work its way into the first houses.

Pfc. Frank Stenger, a member of this platoon, spotted an enemy machine gun firing from a window of a house. By crawling through a slight ditch he was able to reach an adjoining house which was about 50 yards ahead of his platoon. He inched his way along a hedge until he reached a position just below the window from which the gun was firing. Private First Class Stenger reached up, grasped the barrel of the gun, and tore the weapon from the enemy gunner's hands.



Before he could take cover, the enemy threw a grenade out the window which exploded almost at his feet. Although he was not wounded, it was necessary to evacuate him because of concussion injuries.

As soon as the mortar fire stopped, the enemy again gained fire superiority, and the platoon was unable to advance or withdraw. Lieutenant Sowers again moved forward through the enemy fire, this time laying a smoke screen which enabled the platoon to withdraw slightly and consolidate their position.

During the remainder of the day the battle continued at close quarters. Officer and non-commissioned ranks continued to expose themselves to aid in the evacuation of the numerous casualties and to establish gun positions. That afternoon tanks attempted to maneuver to aid the attack, but the area was so heavily mined that they served little purpose. Three officers were lost in rapid succession—Lieutenants Hager, Kane, and Petchulat—to further hinder our position. At darkness the battle still raged with little change in disposition from that of the early morning. Lieutenant Colonel Fitzgerald was relieved as Battalion Commander and Captain Stewart assumed command. Under his command, an all-out surprise attack was launched at midnight; the enemy was routed in the process of withdrawal and the town fell with only one casualty to our forces. Meanwhile, the First Battalion had reverted to Regimental control, and Company C began to move into positions vacated by the 120th. As Company C moved up at daylight, they found that the enemy had already occupied some of the positions. Several men and two machine guns were lost before they were driven out. The remainder of the Battalion moved up behind the Third Battalion and prepared to pass through and continue the attack when Hedomont was reduced. Late in the afternoon the Battalion moved east towards Hedomont. Due to the poor trail, thick woods, snow, and enemy resistance, the Battalion failed to reach the town, and at darkness withdrew to a defensive position behind the Second and Third Battalions.

Just before daylight on the 14th, the First Battalion passed through the Third Battalion and continued the attack south. The intermediate objective was rapidly taken without enemy opposition. The enemy had withdrawn during the night to their next prepared position. As the Battalion pushed the attack towards Reculemont, they began to

receive heavy observed mortar and artillery fire. It was evident that this town had been heavily fortified and that the enemy intended to hold it. The enemy occupied buildings in the town and dug-in positions in the surrounding terrain. As Company B advanced over the crest of the last hill before the town, they were hit by an exceptionally heavy concentration of small arms, machine guns, and mortar fire. The heavy fire forced them to dig in along the crest and the reverse slope of the hill at distances varying from 75 to 300 yards from the enemy. Their positions had previously been zeroed in by the enemy and were constantly subjected to machine gun fire and mortar barrages. In an attempt to neutralize some of the enemy fire, a light machine gun was worked into position 100 yards from the town. Immediately upon opening fire, the enemy directed such a heavy volume of machine gun fire at them, that one man was wounded and the machine gun was abandoned. Sergeant Forbuss, a 60MM mortar observer, saw the crew abandon the machine gun and return to safety.

He carefully observed the direction of the enemy fire and located the machine guns in the houses on the outskirts of the town. As the machine guns were in houses, mortar fire would be useless, so he decided on another course of action. Leaving his foxhole, he started crawling to the abandoned gun. When he left the security of his foxhole, his movements were discovered by the enemy gunners, and they immediately started firing at him. Paying little heed to the fire as it pursued him across the 200 yards of open field, he crawled for 30 minutes to reach the position. When he slid into the foxhole behind the gun, the enemy redoubled their efforts to knock him out. Ignoring the storm of fire hitting around

*German dead in Ligneuville, Belgium*







"Objective taken!"

him, Sergeant Forbuss put the gun into action and fired burst after burst into the enemy gun positions. His accurate fire neutralized the guns and the advance was resumed.

He continued firing until the gun was out of ammunition. Then he picked up his rifle, and as two of the enemy dashed out of a house trying to escape, he killed them both. Although the town was rapidly reduced, only 51 prisoners were taken. The Battalion dug in and outposted the north bank of the L'Ambleve for the night.

The Second Battalion held its positions until 0940, with the exception of Company E, which moved up with the Third Battalion to protect its flank. In a short time Company G was in Thioux, fighting a close-range small arms battle. Company F was in Bellevaux and was receiving a moderate amount of small arms fire from the left front. By 1100 both towns were completely in our possession and the river was reconnoitered for a crossing site. While the Battalion was moving up to swim and wade the river, a flight of friendly medium bombers were sighted. They paid their usual visit with 500-pound calling cards. Fortunately no casualties were sustained.

The attack was pushed towards Beaumont. The village of Beaumont, Belgium, is located on a knoll which dominates the surrounding terrain. The ground 200 yards to the

direct front of the village is completely bare and drops off in a slight slope. From the high ground in the village the enemy had perfect observation and fields of fire covering every approach. Late in the afternoon Sergeant Wease, acting platoon leader of G Company's leading platoon, and his men, began crossing the barren stretch of ground just outside the village. The enemy, located in the outskirts of the village, suddenly covered the area with machine gun and small arms fire.

The inexperienced men of the platoon, some in combat for the first time, were paralyzed by the sudden burst of fire and immediately dropped to the ground. Although Sergeant Wease repeatedly urged his men to continue their advance, they were reluctant to move in the face of such demoralizing fire.

The Sergeant realized that continued exposure meant certain destruction to the members of his platoon. After verbal encouragement had failed, he rose to his feet in the face of the fire and began running through his platoon, shouting encouragement to the men, calling for them to follow him.

By the time he reached the head of his men the platoon were on their feet, following slowly. Sergeant Wease continued charging forward, firing a BAR from the hip. Although he was now the main target, he continued to run up the fire-torn road until he was 90 yards from the village. Stopping and turning to his men, he shouted encouragement as they ran to catch up so that the final assault could be made. A burst of machine gun fire struck his stationary figure and he dropped to his knees. Even though he was mortally wounded, Sergeant Wease called and waved his men on, emptying his BAR as he sank to the ground, dead. When the men saw Sergeant Wease drop, all caution was discarded and they charged on the double into the enemy positions, overrunning them, killing five, and taking 15 prisoners. The small platoon, further weakened by five casualties lost outside the town, immediately attacked the enemy exposed flank and drove them back, allowing the other platoons to enter the town. The house-to-house fighting continued until midnight, when the town was finally reduced. Meanwhile, Company E had branched off to take Villers, and contacted the 517th Parachute Infantry.

Company F pushed on through after the town had fallen and organized the high ground 500 yards to the south. At daylight, Company G passed through them to continue



the attack toward Francheville. By 1000 they had reached the outskirts of Francheville and were engaged in a fire-fight. After several hours fighting, Sergeant Miller, a squad leader, was able to get his depleted squad of four men into the first houses. A squad pushing in from his right rear became pinned down, and he requested that the support platoon be moved up to aid its advance. By the time the platoon arrived, the enemy had also moved in support, and they, too, became pinned down and were suffering casualties.

Sergeant Miller realized that he must advance and engage the enemy at close quarters to relieve a portion of the fire from the pinned-down troops. As he led his small squad from house to house, the enemy snipers succeeded in wounding two of his men. Nevertheless he continued with Murphy and Lyles into enemy territory. He stationed his two men in advantageous firing position and brought fire on the superior enemy force located 75 yards away. He directed the fire of his BAR and destroyed a machine gun nest and its support of six riflemen. In retaliation the enemy began to direct a large portion of his fire into the positions held by these three men. Then under cover of extremely heavy mortar fire, the enemy attempted to dislodge them. With this group destroyed, the enemy could chew up the exposed troops lying in the open. Although Sergeant Moller was wounded by the flying shrapnel, he refused to withdraw and drove the superior enemy force back with rifle fire. After two hours of fierce fighting, the exposed platoon was able to free itself and move into the first houses. The town was swiftly mopped up, and the 33 Germans remaining alive were taken prisoner.

Meanwhile, the First Battalion had driven south to the bridge at Ligneuville and then west toward Pont. With three hours of fighting, the town and 28 prisoners were taken. The Third Battalion had remained stationary during the day and late that afternoon was attached to the 117th Infantry, which was having considerable difficulty in its sector.

With the fall of Beaumont, Francheville, and Pont, the main enemy defenses in our route of advance had been eliminated. The remaining enemy forces, with the exception of a strong rear guard, withdrew to the south and east to protect the main east-west escape highway back into Germany. In our advance south from Malmedy, our patrols had discovered the field which contained the bodies of several hun-

dred American prisoners, who had been ruthlessly slaughtered by the enemy. Although the feeling of hatred ran exceptionally high among our troops, the enemy received all privileges under the Geneva Conference regulations. Those who refused to surrender, however, were eliminated with dispatch and considerable enjoyment.

The 16th was consummated with a short gain to the south, but with one of considerable import. The Second Battalion moved south, hit moderate resistance, and held up, waiting for the units on the flanks to come abreast. The Third Battalion moved through Ligneuville and continued on to the high ground which dominated the enemy escape route to the east. While Company K was moving into position, Sergeant Lotshaw left his platoon to report to the Company Commander. As he moved along a trail to the rear he spotted an enemy patrol of one officer and six men, all armed with machine pistols. Despite the fact that he was armed only with a carbine, greatly outnumbered and outgunned, he jumped back off the trail and prepared for a fight. When the first of the enemy soldiers was only 10 yards away, Sergeant Lotshaw jumped into the trail and commanded them to surrender. The enemy group, completely surprised by the audacity and suddenness of this attack, dropped their weapons and surrendered.

The First Battalion held its position and protected the Engineers while they cleared the main supply route of mines and snow. The 17th was quiet, with the Second Battalion remaining in position and establishing road-blocks in the

*"Hey!!—Look what I just liberated"*







*American Infantrymen bring in a wounded comrade on a sled, in the St. Vith sector, Belgium. Members of H Company, Second Battalion, 119th Regiment, they improvised a litter from a door, on which they placed straw.*

enemy escape route. The First Battalion assembled in Pont late in the day; the Third Battalion was relieved by the 120th.

The 18th and 19th saw little action. Contact was maintained with the 117th and 517th Infantry, and the First Battalion relieved the Second Battalion of the 120th. On the 20th, the First Battalion was relieved by the 30th Division Reconnaissance Troop, and the Second Battalion advanced to the south.

Privates First Class Keith, Mousin, and Holt, pioneers, were leading and clearing the Battalion's advance through mine fields. The enemy spotted the three men, who were well ahead of their advance units, clearing a path through a mine field. An enemy patrol, of squad size, came out of their positions to capture them. The three men refused to withdraw, although outnumbered four-to-one. They remained to fight off the patrol and in two hours had cleared the way for the tanks to move up. The Third Battalion, following on the heels of the Second Battalion, moved in and mopped up. The First and Third Battalions straightened the lines and made contact with the 117th and 290th Infantry Regiments on the 21st.

The action on the 22nd was considerably heavier. The Second Battalion ran into stiff resistance near Kappelle. The enemy had organized the high ground south of and overlooking the town.

Enemy forces in the town allowed the leading platoon of Company F to advance within 150 yards before they opened up. The terrain was comparatively level and was covered with short grass, affording no cover for the advancing troops. Paralyzing grazing fire brought the Company's advance to an abrupt halt, and the men lay almost helpless on the ground.

As in almost every crucial period, God gives some the courage to defy even death. Anthony Pistilli, a private, jumped to his feet and advanced on the enemy with his rifle blazing. By running and crawling he pushed through the fire for 50 yards. The only usable firing position he could find was an exposed spot on a forward slope 75 yards from the enemy. The movement of Private Pistilli as he crawled over the gentle slope into a firing position, was detected, and machine gun fire tore up the ground around him. From this exposed position, he opened fire on the enemy gun, killing its crew of three. Quickly switching his fire to the automatic pistol on his left, he wounded two more. The remainder of the enemy began to withdraw. Private Pistilli continued to fire at the fleeing enemy, ignoring the burst of fire coming from another automatic pistol located in a concealed position 50 yards to his right flank. He kept firing at the enemy until a burst from the automatic pistol killed him instantly.

After four hours of battle and the expenditure of generous



amounts of artillery, the town fell and the Battalion occupied the positions on the high ground. Eighty-three Germans accepted our liberal hospitality and were conducted to the PW cages, while the troops dug in. The Third Battalion fought all morning and into the early afternoon to reduce Hinderhausen. The town fell after Pfc. Alvin King, an M Company machine gunner, fought off, single-handed, an enemy counterattack of 60 infantry, supported by at least one tank.

On the following morning the First Battalion attacked South. Moderate resistance was met in Krombach, which fell with several hours' fighting. The Battalion took 23 demoralized prisoners and dug in for the night.

The Second Battalion jumped off at 1000 and met no resistance until they reached Weisten. The town was assaulted and taken, together with 27 prisoners, in less than one hour. The momentum of the attack continued until the middle of the afternoon. Enemy infantry supported by a dug-in tank slowed down the advance.

Our tank destroyers and tanks moved up and gave the enemy positions the "once-over lightly for effect." The cannon fire proved persuasive, for they withdrew and the advance continued. Contact was made with the 289th Infantry before the day was over. Darkness found the Regiment dug-in and resting peacefully.

The next four days were spent digging deeper, licking our wounds, and preparing to fight again. We were to receive a surprise, for on the 28th we were ordered to a rest area in the vicinity of Vielsalm, Neuville, Ville-Du-Bors, and Renchux, Belgium.

Almost upon arrival reinforcements began to pour in. The next four days were spent in training, reorganizing, and re-equipping for all units. The local theater, which had been partially destroyed, was cleaned up, and two movies a day were shown. But, the best news of all was when someone found a good bootlegger with a new variety of "Buzz Bomb Fluid."

## FEBRUARY

Roer Crossing — Selgersdorf — Daubenrath — Hambach — Hamachforreht — Dufferlich Hollen — Rodigne — Konigshoven — Erft Canal

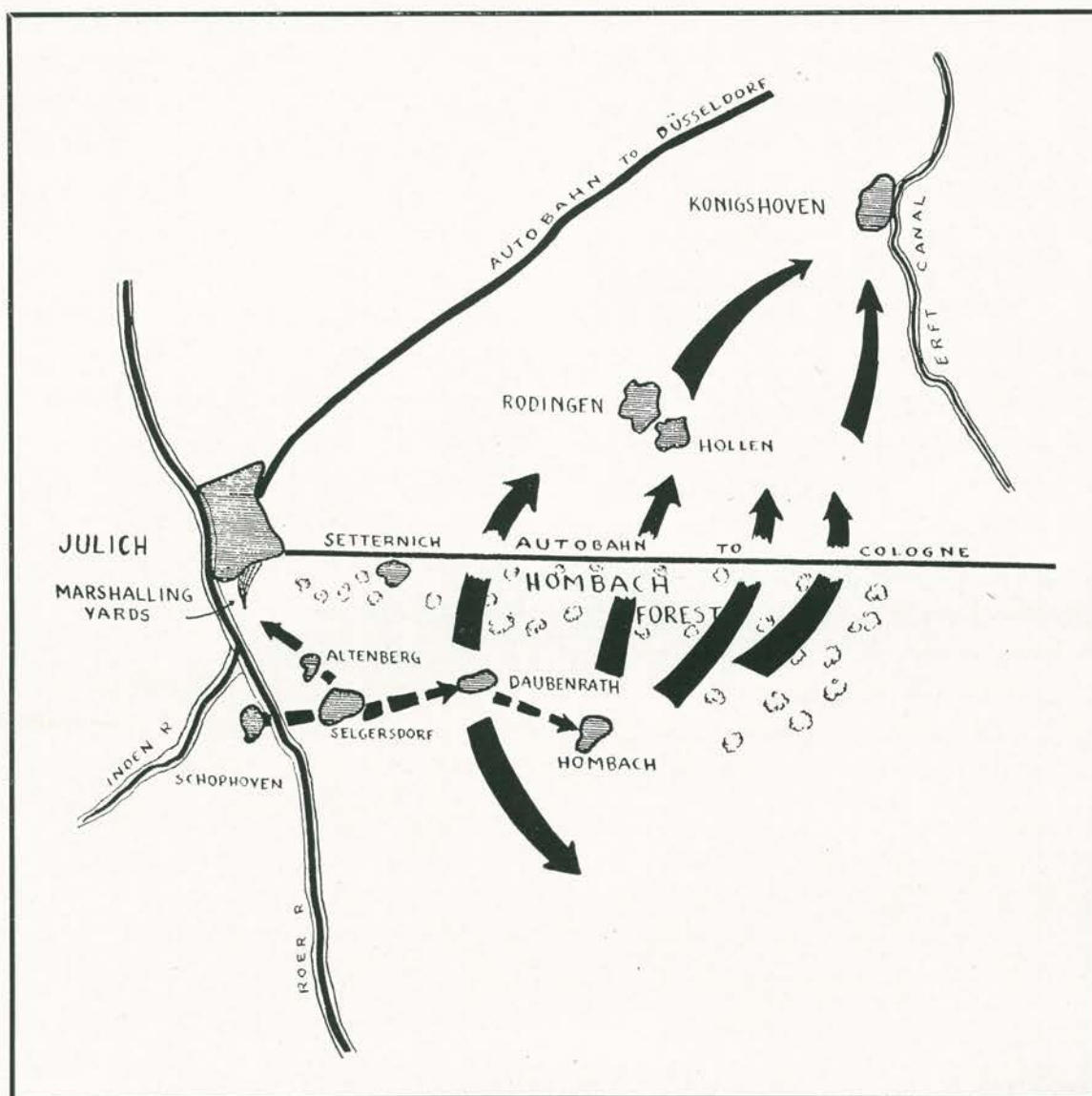
The successful attacks during the last weeks of January had driven the main enemy force into his borders again.

For the first time in over 40 days the First and Ninth Armies had regained almost complete freedom of action. Forces were still mopping up in the east end of the Bulge while others were being assembled in or near their original sectors preparing to force a crossing of the Roer River. The German radio had again returned to its old wheeze, "Germany was forced into the war; it does not want to fight; we fight only to win an honorable peace." They continued the same old story with a new tune. Daily they bragged of the strength of the Volkstrum, the people's army; of how the German people were united, as never before, to repel the invading gangsters. Hitler was once reported to have said, "Make the lie big enough and tell it often enough and they'll believe it," but now it seemed as though they were hopefully using the theory on themselves with little effect. Two months later even the German people were laughing openly at the Volksturm's pathetic efforts. This was not true in all cases, however. Some units were well trained and ably led. This type of soldier, fighting to defend his village or city, could and did fight courageously in some cases.

Intelligence reports indicated that the enemy was building up forces behind the upper Rhine. There was no indication of the size of the force nor of its identification, but the continuous reports of high-ranking members of the General Staff being seen in the area seemed to verify the contention. Attack in strength in the north and south would have separated and spread our reserves sufficiently to give the major portion of their army a breathing spell. The German mechanized forces were now consuming nearly 50 per cent more gasoline than was being produced. A stabilized front and rigid rationing was necessary so that the mobility of their Panzer Armies could be maintained in case of a breakthrough. For them a loss of mobility for their reserves meant disaster. They considered the gasoline shortage so serious that one division was moved from Denmark to the Rhineland by bicycle.

When we received a warning movement order on the first of February, excitement ran high. Rumors had us moving to all points of the compass. One even had us on our way home. Orders were issued on the second to remove all shoulder patches and identification from equipment and vehicles. The secrecy of the move only aided the start of a new flurry of rumors. The Regimental quartermaster party





left that afternoon, destination unknown, but as the miles were traveled north and east, they soon realized that they were on their way back to the Ninth Army sector.

The Regiment began movement just after midnight to an assembly area in Kohlscheid, Germany, which the quartering party had selected. It must have been a very clever and devious security measure, because it had us baffled ourselves. In any case we were glad to be back, for every squad had its old billet and many of them beds with clean sheets. In our absence, an element of the Belgium Army had occupied the town. The Germans were actually glad to see us come back, for they had been given a hard way to go in our absence. They found occupation, under troops who governed with a deep-rooted hatred, a slave's existence. Some of the people, however, accepted their fate philosophically, with a bowed head and "Das ist kreig." As a whole, the

Germans began to realize that they were now to reap the bitter fruit of the weeds they had sown.

During the next four days re-equipping and training continued. Movies were shown, and football games were in progress. Lectures were given on security, camouflage, and, of all things, sex hygiene. Fraternization poked up its ugly head and some men found that it took sixty-five dollars to answer the sixty-four dollar question. The Articles of War were read to all units on the sixth. Very, very, very interesting.

After dark on the eighth the Regiment suddenly moved east to an assembly area in the general vicinity of Alsdorf. The build-up for the crossing of the Roer had begun. The First Battalion was selected as the assaulting battalion. So, on the ninth day they began river-crossing training on the Iden River near Iden, Germany.



The enemy had blown the Roer River Dams several days before, and the rain widened it to flood stage. Water rose so rapidly on the ninth and tenth that the Battalion was forced to abandon Schophoven.

They continued training the next day, and that night moved the Battalion on foot to Frenz. We planned to use "artificial moonlight" during our forthcoming night attack on the Roer, and on the 11th the British moved into our sector to give us a demonstration. "Artificial moonlight" was a British idea. A large number of powerful searchlights would be moved into the sector behind the line of attack. By carefully selecting their positions they were able to reflect the strong light off the clouds down into the faces of the enemy. Friendly troops, with the light at their backs and the area in front of them illuminated, held a definite advantage.

While the Regiment waited for the flooded Roer to recede, all battalions conducted training in river crossing operations. Crossings were made both during daylight and darkness, until the plan of attack became almost automatic. The units were rotated and received two days' rest at the Division rest center at Kerkrade, Holland. The river began to drop from flood stage on the 14th, and continued dropping slowly as the days passed. Each unit in turn conducted training with the 744th Light Tank Battalion and developed close coordination for attacks on built-up areas. The Division had long been famous for its river-crossing tactics, and found itself prepared for this one as it had seldom been before. Our experience and training in this specialized type of operation gave us a feeling of confidence, assurance, and success. Each man had been assigned his specific duty and position in his assault boat; he knew the plan, the time schedule, the routes of advance, and the mine fields. The plan was perfect, and he knew it.

We were prepared; and prayed that it wouldn't rain while we waited for the river to recede. The enemy had sensed our build-up and began giving our assembly area a going over with artillery. All daylight road traffic was restricted, with the exception of necessary messenger vehicles. Each morning the sector was covered with a smoke screen to blind enemy observers and aircraft which had become active. In places the smoke screen was over 15 miles deep.

On the 22nd, when the final attack was received, the Roer still flooded a considerable area on both banks. The

current was swift and full of floating snags and debris. Our role in the general plan was to force a crossing at Selgersdorf, push on through and take Daubenrath, clear the Homback Forest, then swing north and go like hell. Our task was extremely difficult, for the crossing site in our sector was very unsatisfactory. As the attack progressed we would have to protect the now exposed flank of the entire Ninth Army. On the other hand, we were well prepared and had all the artillery support we could use. One artillery observer made the comment that, if necessary, he could control the fire of one gun for every yard of our front. Artillery fire was so carefully planned and timed that a constant rolling screen of fire would precede our advance.

At 0245 on the 23rd, following a tremendous artillery barrage, the First Battalion moved down to the river carrying storm and rubber assault boats. Supporting Engineers followed the assault waves to the banks and began building a bridge under fire. The enemy occupied Selgersdorf and were dug in around the outskirts. Approaches to the town were flat and partially covered with water. The enemy had a dense mine field under the water and covered it with machine gun and mortar fire. The swift water, mortar fire, and floating trees overturned three boats in the first waves, but failed to slow down the attack. Lieutenant King of Company A led his men rapidly across and deployed them for the assault on the town. As he awaited his Company Commander's order to begin the assault, the preparatory artillery barrage began falling ahead of his platoon. The barrage pounded the enemy positions immediately in front of him and started to roll on. At this time word came forward that the Company Commander's boat had capsized







*Roer River Offensive*

coming across the river and contact had been lost with the remainder of the Company.

Realizing that the success of the attack depended upon keeping up with the artillery as it moved forward, he assumed command of the portions of Company A already across and led them on the double through the enemy outposts, by-passing and neutralizing them as they advanced. Enemy machine guns laid down their final protective lines of fire and mortars smothered the area. With his platoon temporarily halted, Lieutenant King moved forward alone and located the gun positions and a flanking route. In a matter of minutes he courageously led his troops through the enemy fire into town. Within 40 minutes, his platoon, with the aid of "artificial moonlight," had taken the Company's objective, 80 prisoners, five machine guns, and five heavy mortars.

Company B had moved in on the enemy so rapidly that they caught the Germans still crouching in their holes. Bayonets dug the bewildered troops out, and left them standing unarmed to be picked up by the support elements. The assault group refused to stop to even gather prisoners. When

machine gun and mortar positions were overrun, the guns were hurriedly turned around and used on the fleeing enemy. Even B Company's wounded were brought back laughing. One man explained, "You should see those bastards go; I never had so much fun in all my damned life." This was indeed the spirit of the entire Regiment. We had the enemy on the run and intended to keep him running.

When Selgersdorf fell, troops of the First Battalion were to drive north to take Altenburg.

In the early days the men had complained bitterly when friendly artillery landed close by. As they became more experienced they soon found that the closer they remained to our falling artillery the better off they were. They wanted to move right in with the artillery, sometimes even exposing themselves to it. They found that the artillery pinned the enemy down in his hole, as his fire did us. A soldier's personal aim in battle is to keep alive! if the artillery passed on, the enemy rose up and manned his weapons—the idea was to catch him before he could recover.

Meanwhile the Second Battalion had moved up and crossed the river at 1330 to continue the attack. Lieutenant Yarrow had moved across with the First Battalion to establish a forward OP for the Second Battalion.

Accompanied by two enlisted men, Sergeant Page and Private First Class Edelman made their way into the enemy portions of the town. After two close-range fire-fights, they found that they were the only friendly troops in that part of town. Moving from house to house to avoid the heavy artillery and mortar fire falling in the streets, they ran into an enemy mortar position. The enemy, even more surprised than they were to find that they had penetrated so deep into enemy territory, ran into the cellar of a nearby house. The three men slipped into the house and ran down the cellar steps. With persuasion, 16 prisoners were taken. When the grounds were searched, they found four mortars and 1,500 rounds of ammunition. This position had been one of the many which was making the town difficult to reduce.

The First Battalion mopped up the town and the Second Battalion passed through them in their advance on Daubenrath. Company F advanced across the open fields to within 800 yards of Daubenrath. Suddenly the leading platoon was hit by machine gun fire, losing two men. The enemy had skillfully concealed the gun under a haystack 300 yards away.



Sergeant Hayles, the platoon sergeant, began crawling through the fire toward the gun. He was able to get within 150 yards before the intensity of the fire stopped him. Without hesitation he fired two rifle grenades into the haystack and set it afire. Before the four enemy machine gunners could run 100 yards, he killed three of them, and wounded and captured the fourth.

After leading his platoon 200 yards closer to the town, they were again pinned down by machine gun and sniper fire. When he located the enemy positions, he skillfully maneuvered his men through a creek which ran toward the town. Sergeant Conley, a mortar observer, picked up a BAR dropped by a casualty and moved up with the point. Under cover of the smoke from the haystack and Sergeant Conley's supporting fire, the platoon stormed the nest, killed the gunners, and took the remainder prisoners. With this foothold secure, the Second Battalion moved in and took the town.

Fanatical SS troops continued to die during the day in foolish small-scale counterattacks. The enemy's conduct reminded us of stories we had read of ancient battles. Two armies would draw up on the field; one side would send out its hero to joust all comers until he was defeated, then another champion would come forth to take his place. All day the enemy threw single squads at us, only to be destroyed and replaced by another. The only thing they could have gained was to die for a lost cause which they worshipped, unless they intended to kill off our Quartermaster burial details by overwork. The enemy was evidently well supplied with heavy mortar ammunition, for he continued to plaster the landscape indiscriminately. Any movement above ground, even for personal relief, proved a dangerous pastime.

During the day Capt. Buford (Patty) Toler, Company C Commander, was killed while leading an attack on a machine gun nest which was holding up his Company.

At 1900 the Third Battalion crossed the river and prepared to pass through the First and Second Battalions. The Battalion left the line of departure at 2300 and advanced on hombach. The enemy outposts observed the movement and began their prepared artillery and heavy mortar concentrations. Private First Class Keaton, a squad leader, found himself and his squad smothered with heavy sustained fire. Although he himself was wounded, he reorganized his men and started them forward out of the fire. He was

unable to continue and remained in the shelled area to bandage the wounds of four more seriously wounded men. Company I pushed rapidly through the darkness and fire, trying to get into town before they were torn to pieces. Progress was rapid and costly until they came within 200 yards of the town. Here enemy fire became so devastating that all movement was stopped.

Captain Rehkopf, Company Commander, was also pinned down with his leading elements. He realized that speed was the only thing that could save his Company from destruction. His radio operator had been killed at his side and two men in front of him. Captain Rehkopf seized the radio from his dead operator and crawled forward to the head of his Company. His exertion had reopened an old wound, and he was losing blood rapidly. Despite the fact that he was silhouetted against the flames of a burning haystack, he rose to his feet and moved toward the town. His men, seeing him disappear through the darkness and bursting shells, jumped to their feet and followed. The first houses were cleared and the leading platoon advanced, clearing the street house by house. The enemy was firing across a courtyard and through the arch at anything that moved.

Sergeant Sopenski armed himself with hand grenades and ran to the side of the arch. Peering cautiously around the arch, he spotted the enemy dug-in next to a house. As he jumped into the arch-way he was struck by the enemy fire. Despite the wound, he hurled two smoke grenades into the position, and advanced firing. The enemy, partially blinded, sprayed the entire courtyard with rifle fire. The sergeant pulled himself forward into the enemy position, killed one man and took the remaining four prisoner. Private First Class Gatta commandeered six riflemen to reduce a road block on the flank. After pinning the enemy down with rifle fire, they assaulted the road block and took eight prisoners.

The Company I penetration had allowed Company L to advance into town, to aid in its capture. At one point an enemy group held up the advance. Privates First Class Peters and Blum, machine gunners, were ordered to hold the front while the riflemen flanked the position. As they set their gun up in the street, they detected the approach of a large number of men. The group was challenged and they replied with bazooka fire and the SS "Cry." The enemy group proved to be a platoon. When the enemy discovered that only two men were holding up, an assault was launched,





*The advance on Hombach*

covered by bazooka, grenades, and automatic fire. The two men held fast and their fire so depleted the enemy ranks that they retreated in disorder. The enemy withdrew to the cover of the buildings down the street. They reorganized and came charging down the street again. Although outnumbered 20-to-1 the two machine gunners refused to withdraw, and when the fight was over 25 dead Germans lay in the street.

Before daylight the town was clear and the Battalion had organized the surrounding high ground. Daylight on the morning of the 24th found the Third Battalion on the high ground around Hombach, the Second Battalion in Daubenth and holding ground 2,000 yards to the southeast, and the First Battalion in Selgersdorf and Altenburg. A vehicular bridge had been completed during the night, 50 hours ahead of schedule. Ammunition and supplies, which had been hand-carried previously, came over in large quantities, accompanied by our supporting tanks, TD's, and even a battalion of artillery. The build-up continued throughout the night and morning, while we consolidated our positions and received the first sleep in two days. By 1600 sufficient tanks had arrived to give us a fighting chance and the attack was resumed. The First Battalion attacked northeast through the Hombach Forest to cut the main highway which ran from Julich to the Rhine. Simultaneously Company C and Company F of the Second pushed north to objectives along the main road. That night all three battalions were either on, or fighting in, their objectives. The Third Battalion captured 20 of the 120MM mortars which had been giving us trouble. Contact was made with the 117th on our right and the 29th Division on our left. Our rapid move-



*Over age in grade*

ment had flanked the enemy's defenses, and as our drive continued north toward Rodingen, he was forced to retreat across his own supply line.

On the 25th the First Battalion continued to consolidate its position near Steinstrass while the Second and Third Battalions continued the attack north on Pufferlich, Hollen, and Rodingen. Both battalions pushed rapidly over the flat, open terrain against strong opposition. Their intermediate objectives were taken, along with nearly 200 prisoners. The towns of Hollen and Rodingen, the final objectives, sat side by side to the north. Both battalions, advancing together, continued to push into the steadily mounting resistance until they reached a point approximately 500 yards south of the towns. The Second Battalion on the right was able to continue the advance under cover of artillery fire until they reached a point 400 yards from the town of Hollen. The assault platoons of Company G ran into a strong outpost line, assaulted it, and temporarily occupied their positions for cover against the hail of machine gun fire which had opened up.

Private Rochadl, a rifleman, crawled forward into a slight draw 350 yards from the town. As he moved up the draw, an enemy machine gun opened up and he received a wound in his face. He bandaged himself and then realized that the enemy gunner had waited until he came well down into the draw before firing. It was a fire trap which his comrades would soon enter. When he saw the men of his platoon advance toward the draw he exposed himself to signal them. The men saw his signals and moved around, but the enemy gunner had already started firing, and one bullet hit Private Rochald in the shoulder, entering from the back.



The platoon medico, who was 50 yards away, saw him fall the second time and started to run toward him, but Rochadl waved him away, for he knew that he would only become a victim of the trap. He laid there and, as the last squad approached the draw, again he rose up in face of the enemy fire and directed the men away. This time a bullet hit him in the left arm.

Enemy tanks in the town took up the fight and the advance developed into a brutal fire-fight. Company G had made several attempts to charge and overrun the town, but the fire of tanks and machine guns was so severe that it was impossible to take the town without extremely heavy casualties. Enemy tanks continued to move about in the town to evade our artillery fire. It was soon realized that the only way the town could be taken was to destroy the tanks.

Pvt. Raymond Butts volunteered to take a crack at them if his platoon would cover his movement into town with fire. Private Butts crawled the 150 yards to the first houses successfully and began slipping from building to building. He was now moving through enemy territory and troops. As he continued, he spotted a building which was tall enough to permit observation down into the city streets; he climbed to the second floor, knocked out a window, and began his vigil, waiting for the enemy tanks to show themselves. Our artillery fire continued to fall on his building and in the streets outside. At 1730 he heard two Mark V tanks rolling down the street towards him. Evidently the enemy thought that we had entered the town in strength. The lead German tank crew increased their speed as they came into sight and sprayed the buildings with machine gun and cannon fire.

Meanwhile, the Third Battalion, with Companies I and K leading, punched their way to within 200 yards of the outskirts of Rodingen. The enemy opened up with final protective fire of such intensity that the companies were suffering heavily. Sergeant Jerome, a squad leader of Company I, saw that his men, some in combat for the first time, were freezing to the ground. The attacking elements had been stopped. He ran forward, pulling his men from the ground and leading them out of the impact area. The enemy machine guns took up the fire and a burst caught Sergeant Jerome and knocked him to the ground. Determined to bring his men safely into town to the cover of the buildings, he rose to his feet. Seriously wounded, Sergeant Jerome directed the fire and advance of his entire squad. As he pulled himself

forward another burst of machine fire struck him and he died instantly. Private First Class Barker, a BAR man of the same platoon, immediately took up a firing position on a slight rise. From this position he could see both machine guns. Fully exposed to the enemy fire, he fired alternate bursts into both guns in their fight for fire supremacy. His accurate fire successfully neutralized the fire of both guns. After firing 15 magazines to cover his platoon's entry into the first houses, he ran to catch up. Just as he gained the first house he was struck by a burst of fire from one of the guns which he had temporarily neutralized and was killed.

With a foothold established, the balance of Company I fought their way into town. Private First Class Weinstein, lead scout, advanced into the gap to be caught in the fire of the two guns. One round penetrated his helmet, cut through his wool knit cap and passed out the other side. In spite of the fire he emptied a clip at the nearest gun and fired a smoke grenade at the left gun. Under cover of the smoke and the joint fire of his platoon, they made their way into town. The enemy had committed two of its tanks to break up the troops concentrating in the outskirts and to plug up the gap.

Pfc. Frederick Long of Company L spotted one of the tanks moving up the street toward him. He immediately warned his comrades and took cover in the nearest doorway. Although he was armed only with a BAR, he was determined that the tank would not pass. When the huge vehicle

*A support platoon awaits the signal to move up in the battle of the Rhineland.*







was but 15 yards away, Private First Class Long stepped into the street and opened fire on the tank commander who was riding unbuttoned in the turret. His first burst killed the tank commander, who toppled over the side onto the street. The tank opened fire and withdrew back up the street. Company I with the aid of Company L now began the fight to enlarge and secure the foothold.

It was now 1730. Our artillery broke up a counterattack of five tanks and 150 infantry northeast of Rodingen, and Private Butts watched the two enemy tanks approach his position in Hollen. The first tank advanced to a position 80 yards from Private Butts and fired a round into his building. The shell barely missed him, and exploded in the lower floor. Even though his position was disclosed, he held his fire. The lead tank, encouraged by the inactivity, charged forward and came to a halt 30 yards away. Private Butts leaned out the window and fired a shot at the lead tank with his bazooka. A grazing hit failed to knock out the tank. The crew of the second tank spotted Butts when he fired, and advanced with its cannon and machine gun blazing. Both tank crews now opened up, spraying the room with machine gun fire and shrapnel. Private Butts clung to the floor and loaded his bazooka the second time. He held his fire until the second drew abreast and ahead of the lead tank. He stood up in the window, took careful aim, and scored a direct hit on the second tank, killing its entire crew. Thoroughly demoralized, the crew of the first tank hastily withdrew before he could fire again.

With the tank fire eliminated, Sgt. John Nolan placed the fire of two of his squads on the enemy machine gun near the gully and skillfully led his men into town. Butts' battle

with the tanks and the entry of one platoon into the town disorganized the enemy defense. Sergeant Nolan spotted 33 Germans concentrating near a building 50 yards away. He could see that they were disorganized and evidently were preparing to withdraw as soon as they could assemble. Without hesitation, he charged up the street calling for his men to follow him. The men opened up and the entire enemy group surrendered. The house-to-house fighting continued throughout the night with lessening intensity. Before daylight the town was in our hands.

By 2000 the Third Battalion had cleared Rodingen, with the exception of the west end. Company K with tanks attached, forced the enemy out, and by 0200 on the 26th, the town was ours. Throughout the night the enemy continued to send truckloads of troops into the town to reenforce the garrison which they thought still existed. At midnight of the 25th an incomplete estimate of enemy losses in the three-day battle stood as follows: Lost—51 heavy mortars, 113 machine guns and automatic weapons, seven tanks, two 150-mm. artillery pieces, five light artillery pieces, four anti-aircraft guns, two AT guns, nine light armored vehicles, seven heavy trucks, and dead all over the place. Our casualties for the three-day period were 26 killed, 188 wounded, and five missing.





Our successful river crossing had been so perfect that it undoubtedly will be studied in our Army Staff Schools in the future. To compare this attack to the others along the river made it even more conspicuous. We were the first to get an entire battalion across, first to consolidate our bridgehead, first to build a bridge, first to build up armor and, at times, were even ordered by higher command to hold up our advance so that other sectors could develop.

On the 26th the Regiment organized its objectives, received a few hours' rest, and prepared to continue the attack on the 27th. At 1130 on the following day the First and Second Battalions jumped off on their attack on Konigshoven, three miles to the north. Both battalions met heavy resistance from enemy armor, but failed to stop the infantry. Although Companies G and C were hit the hardest, they continued to advance. By the end of the day we were in the outskirts of the town.

The enemy had reenforced its garrison that night, and the battle raged at close quarters into the next day. It was evident that the enemy was determined to hold the town and prevent our crossing the Erft Canal. Enemy groups, even when surrounded, continued to fight until they were killed. He had committed more armor and artillery than he had for

*The Regimental service train moves up under fire*



some time. Suffering heavy casualties, we slowly drove the main enemy body into the northern outskirts of town. The battle continued during the daylight hours of the 28th with increasing intensity. The enemy was finally driven from the town itself and the remnants of their force withdrew to the high ground 400 yards out of town.

### MARCH

Rhine Crossing—Lippe Canal and River—Spellen—Friedrichsfeld—Hunxe—Gartrop—Gahlen.

The action developed rapidly in the following days. The units on our flanks came up, and fresh armor and infantry poured through to exploit our gains. Our drive to the north had cut the enemy defenses of the Rhineland in two, and the enemy troops to the west were forced to withdraw. Armored task forces fanned out and drove to the Rhine in short order. We rested while friendly troops continued to sweep past us. By the third we found ourselves occupying a rear area where the Regiment was assembled, and prepared for a move back into Holland for training and rehabilitation. The Regiment moved on the sixth to an assembly near Susteren, Holland. We began our training with a certain amount of satisfaction. We had just completed an extremely successful operation and realized that one more big show would end the war whether Germany surrendered or not.

The Rhine crossing presented a stupendous tactical and logistical problem. The Rhine is wide, deep, and swift, although it cannot be compared to our Ohio, Missouri, or Mississippi. The preparation for this crossing was not unlike that of a beachhead invasion. Naval and amphibious units were necessary to transport the troops across the mile-wide expanse of water. Assault, build-up, follow-up, and ar-





*Paris*

mored task forces were needed, so that once the bridgehead was secure, the infantry could break a hole and let the armor race through. This blow was to be the last: one of gigantic scale, with power enough to drive through, overcome all opposition, and win the war.

We were glad to be back in Holland. Now, with war past their country, their hospitality was even greater. Officers and enlisted men were invited to dances held in our honor. They shared their small ration of beer with us and made us welcome. Trips to Paris and London for both officers and men were arranged. Old friendships were re-

*The remains of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign*



*Eiffel Tower*

newed in England, and hair-raising tales were brought back from "Pig Alley."

The Navy had assembled a number of their LCT's, LCVP's, and CDL's on the Maas River. By the 19th, all battalions had rotated in the training for the forthcoming operation. Daylight and night-time loading had been repeated until vehicles and men were able to load and unload in record time. Rumors were heard that a unit in another location had assumed our identity. It was obvious that our present location and training would have notified the enemy of our part in the Rhine crossing. His intelligence could plot our movements closely and would be able to determine the locale of the Ninth Army's attack. Several men even reported that they had seen numerous vehicles in the Gladbach area carrying our Regiment's number, 30-119-1.

The Regiment moved up toward the Rhine on the night of the 19th. Driving without lights and with great secrecy, we bivouacked in the woods near Issum. All movement was stopped and the area was heavily camouflaged. Our present location was unknown to the enemy and we intended to keep it so. The 21st, 22nd, and 23rd were spent in planning, reconnaissance, and briefing of the men for the attack.

The plan was simple. The Second Battalion would force a crossing, seize and hold a bridgehead; the Third Battalion would cross to expand it; and the First Battalion would follow and continue the attack. The British on our left were to cross a Brigade of Marine Commandos just above Wesel, three miles north, while our paratroops were to be dropped inland to cut enemy communications. Companies G and E led the attack in storm and assault boats at 0200 on the 24th. Within 40 minutes the entire Battalion was across and fighting on the bank. We had achieved a





*Dutch hospitality*

tactical surprise, for our rapidly advancing troops overran artillery observation posts and troops moving into position. The enemy had selected key terrain features and had built mutually supporting positions which contained from 25 to 30 men each. Our speed of crossing and aggressive advance inland so swamped the enemy that strongpoint after strongpoint fell. Prisoners were disarmed and ordered to march back to the river. By 0340 the Second Battalion was on its objectives inland.

The Third Battalion began crossing at 0348 and was completely across in 42 minutes. At 0530 they launched their attack to take Spellen and enlarge the bridgehead. Single men of both Battalions captured large groups of the enemy. Frequently one man was seen to march 30 or more prisoners to the roads leading to the rear, shove a toe in the rear-most extremities and command them to get going. Artillery pieces and flak guns fired point blank into our advancing troops, only to be overrun and destroyed.

The First Battalion crossed just before daylight and launched their attack at 0745. With the coming of daylight the enemy overcame his shock, and our forces began to hit stubborn defensive positions. Enemy reserves had been committed, and resistance stiffened. Our air force was very active, strafing and bombing just ahead of our troops. One of the missions of the First Battalion (with Company E attached) was to secure an underpass of the railroad which runs parallel to the river. This underpass was important. It was our daily means of getting tanks beyond the railroad to support the offensive. Freidrichsfeld, just beyond the railroad, was the Battalion's final objective. As long as the enemy held the railroad underpass, we were denied the town, and our attack would be halted. The enemy fully understood its importance and had based his local defenses on that as-



*Col. Herlong's unofficial staff*

sumption. His defensive positions around this pass included four 88-mm. dual purpose guns, two AT guns, and one 150-mm. howitzer. Each gun was supported by infantry and numerous machine guns.

Air strikes and artillery fire failed to reduce the position, and at 1500 the bazooka men had eliminated the howitzer and taken its positions, but were held up again. To relieve the pressure here, the Third Battalion was committed to flank the enemy position and to move into the First Battalion's objective, while they contained the enemy force. The

*He met "Kilroy"*







*A U. S. Army alligator, part of an 119th Infantry column crossing the Rhine, lands on the eastern bank of the river, south of the Wesel, Germany.*

maneuver was successful. With the aid of the Third Battalion and tanks, the underpass was cleared. Meanwhile the Second Battalion was mopping up its area and sending back a stream of prisoners. Company G was sent at 1700 to clear a large island formed by the Lippe Canal and River. They fought throughout the night to clear the southern end of the island, and by morning were in position to cover the crossing of the remainder of the Battalion.

The First and Third Battalions continued the attack at 2115 on Gartrop and the high ground 2,000 yards east of Friedrichsfeld. At midnight good progress was being made and 514 prisoners were tallied for the day. The capture of Spellen and Friedrichsfeld had secured a wide bridgehead, and troops began to build up behind us on the river. The Third Battalion had its objective by 0100. The First Battalion ran into considerable resistance and after fighting throughout the night and morning, secured the town. At noon the enemy concentrated for a large-scale counterattack in the woods just outside of town.

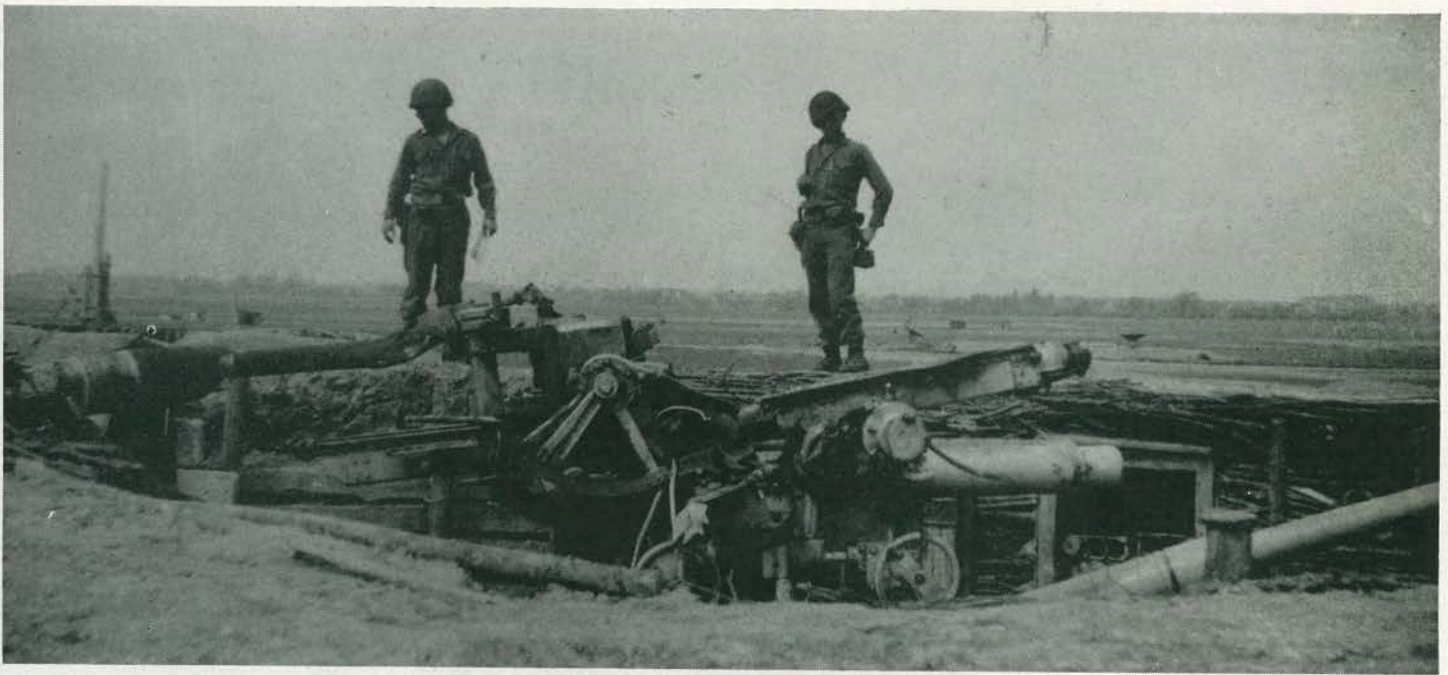
Lieutenant Helms broke up the attack with artillery fire, in the face of direct fire from a 170-mm. gun. At daylight the Third Battalion discovered that the 117th on our right had by-passed a battery of 88's in the darkness, which now began to shell our area. Company I was sent on a wide flanking movement which brought them up behind the enemy. They assaulted the position and took 128 prisoners,

11 88-mm. dual-purpose guns, two radar sets, three searchlights, 11 20-mm. guns, and some assorted flak guns of odd caliber.

At 1700 the Third Battalion relieved the Second and moved to protect the Division's right flank. The First Battalion advanced and took Hunxe through minefields and moderate-to-heavy resistance. By 2130 they had contacted the 117th, and it began to look as though our Division had made a major breakthrough. The Regiment continued to move east with the support of tanks until 0300. Few men had had any sleep since the night of the 23rd, and a short rest was welcomed. At 0900 on the 26th the attack was resumed, with the exception of the Second Battalion, which remained to hold contact with the 35th Division on our right. At 1800 this Battalion was ordered to move up and prepared to pass through the First and Third Battalions and continue the attack to the east.

Before the plan was put into effect, the orders were changed and they were assigned the mission of establishing a bridgehead across the Lippe River north of Gahlen. The First and Third Battalions had overcome resistance near Heisterhappf, but were stopped cold at Gahlen. The town was held by a large infantry force supported by tanks, artillery, and 88's planted to fire point-blank. Three of our tanks were knocked out in rapid succession. The bitter battle continued all afternoon and evening with little relief, and





*A. A. positions are overrun by our rapidly advancing troops*

with artillery on both sides taking a heavy toll. By midnight the First Battalion had forced its way into the western end of the town and the Third Battalion into the southern end. At 0300 both battalions gained about four blocks of the town and were still meeting extremely heavy automatic and direct fire from the tanks moving about in the streets. Two platoons of Company L were cut off when several buildings were set on fire by the enemy's 20-mm. guns. The fight continued through the morning, with both battalions making very slow progress in the house-to-house battle. By 1335 the Third Battalion had broken through the town and had cut the main road leading to the east. The First Battalion continued the battle in the town and wiped out the last remnants at 1600.

With the fall of Gahlen, the breakthrough in our sector was well established. The Second Battalion attacked east the next day and met no opposition. Contact was made with the Eighth Armored Division, who was having an easy time cruising east. The Regiment remained in an assembly area around Gahlen on the 29th, 30th, and 31st, resting and re-equipping. During the five-day battle, 1,199 prisoners were taken, 82 artillery and flak guns captured, and large numbers of machine guns, mortars, and rifles were destroyed. So far in the war, our Regiment had sent over 15,000 "Sons of Hitler" to the Prisoner of War cages. Prisoners were taken in such quantity after that, that little accurate check was possible. However, 4,202 additional prisoners were offi-

cially credited to us besides several thousand which we pushed off on other units, just to get rid of them. Some of us remembered a favorite axiom of one of our old commanders, "American infantry, well-trained and well-led, can go any place—even to the storming of the gates of hell."

#### APRIL

Pivitscheid — Oerlinghausen — Ubbedissen — Weser River Crossing—Hamelen—Hildeshiem—Immendorf—Wofenbuttel—Diesdorf—Magdeburg.

With the Rhine crossed the flat central plains of Germany lay open for our taking. Organized resistance along the Rhine had been crushed. The drive that followed trapped their armies in the west, where they were chewed up at our leisure. The Ninth Army began to roll. Armored columns were driving boldly into the heart of Germany, attempting to exploit to the fullest the disorganization caused by the initial penetration. The Russians were putting strong pressure to bear on Berlin from the east and Hitler found his candle burning on both ends. Our air force was having a field day tearing up the frantic enemy attempts to assemble troops to stop our drive. Hitler's vaunted legions, who a short year before had challenged us to cross the channel and meet them, were fleeing in terror. Germany was breathing her dying breaths; final victory was at last within our grasp.

It seemed impossible to believe that an army as strong as theirs, could disintegrate in such a short time. Then we be-





**WHEN THE RACING COLUMN HITS ENEMY RE**





**SISTANCE, THE INFANTRY DISMOUNT AND FIGHT**





*Another "rat race"*

gan to recall the months of bitter fighting, the terrible losses their army suffered at Mortain, the Siegfried Line, the Bulge, and along the Roer. Then we recalled our own, the thousands of men, the equipment, strength, and suffering which littered our path from the beachhead. Nations clawing at each other's throats draining their life blood because of a few men.

A mustached moron dreamed of Lebensraum; a big-chinned monkey spoke of a "Roman Empire," and a little four-eyed yellow rat intended to dim the light of our solar sun with the "Rising Sun." In dying Germany we saw, in reality, that which few people can actually visualize: the utter folly of a civilization which breeds such men. We fight wars to end wars, wars to free enslaved countries, wars for freedom. We all understand that rot must be cut from the world as it is from an apple. Such wars are just and necessary.

Men spoke freely of their desire to eliminate the German race for all time. Others spoke more sanely of a world government, with teeth enough to back up the peace. Our bull sessions offered many plans but they were all agreed on one thing, that if it were within their power, this was the last—the final war of our lifetime.

Movement orders on the first cut the bull sessions short, and by 1300 we had moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Drensteinfurt. The drive to the east was progressing satisfactorily, but the assaulting troops were slowing down because of fatigue. We were to be united with the Second

Armored Division, pass through friendly forward elements, and go like hell. Rumors set our final objective as the north-western part of Berlin. We had fought often with the Second Armored; they liked us, and we had the same respect for them. They called us "the best damn infantry on leather" and we reciprocated by calling them "the best damn tankers on treads."

At midnight the Regiment was broken into battalions and attached to different armored task forces. By daylight we had closed into the Second Armored assembly area near Neuenkirchen.

Neuenkirchen is a historic town dating back 2,000 years. Near this city the Roman Legions, under Varus, were almost destroyed by a concentration of German tribes. Rome had stretched her empire to the Elbe, and, in her waning years, rebellion and defeats like this ended in the fall of the Empire. The Hermanns Denkmal (monument) is there and, considering the German and Nazi obsession of making and repeating history, some sort of defense was to be expected where they had made their most heroic defense against the incursions of civilization.

The Third Battalion was attached to Combat Command R, the Second to Task Force B of Combat Command A, and the remainder of the Regiment, including the First Battalion and the Second Battalion of the 66th Armored Regiment, formed Task Force R of Combat Command B. Because of this division, and the importance of their separate actions which took place in widely separated areas, the actions of each task force will be related separately.

When orders were received for the attack late on the second we were disappointed to learn that our objective was not Berlin, but the Elbe River. One soldier complained bitterly, "We do all the blocking and someone else gets to carry the ball." The press had made a similar comment after our drive across France into Belgium. They stated that "We were always the bridesmaid, but never the bride."

We had been the work-horse of two armies, and were doomed to end the war in the same role. We were ready and willing, however, for we were in position to deal a knock-out blow. The only geographical barriers between us and the Elbe were several minor rivers and the high ridge-line of the Teutonberger Wald. This north-south ridge with its steep wooded foothills, made a formidable natural obstacle. The ridge was covered with a heavy growth of pine and its



sides indented with deep gullies and ravines. The road network of the plains on either side of the Wald was funneled through narrow, twisting passes. The major passes in our area were between the towns of Augustdorf and Pivitscheid, through the town of Orlinghausen, and another farther north near Ubbedessin.

These passes had been selected as the route of advance for the Ninth Army. The rapid seizure of these passes was vital to the success of the entire operation. The Second Battalion was given the mission of securing the pass at Augustdorf, the First Battalion, the pass at Orlinghausen, and the Third at Ubbedessin. Infantry troops of another division had attempted to take the passes, but had encountered heavy resistance and had failed. The Second Battalion and Company A of the 66th Armored, which formed part of Task Force B of Combat Command A, relieved the troops at Augustdorf and prepared to launch their attack.

The Battalion had been riding trucks for two days and nights and was badly in need of sleep. However, at 2345, April 2, in a cold, driving rain, the Battalion jumped off from Augustdorf with two companies abreast, E on the right and F on the left. Company G remained in Augustdorf to protect the armor, and as Battalion reserve. The light tank company part of their Task Force also remained in Augustdorf, but was alerted for immediate commitment when the pass fell. The nature of the terrain prohibited their use in the early stages of the attack.

Exceeding pre-engagement estimates, the German forces were later found to be the equivalent of two infantry battalions, commanded by SS officers, and containing a large number of SS men among the enlisted ranks. Two companies were dug in directly astride the pass, and on the reverse slope of the ridge, one company was dug in 1,500 yards north of the pass and two companies 2,000 yards south of the pass. An outpost line of automatic weapons on the west side of the ridge covered the entire position. No artillery support was available to the enemy, although they were equipped with light and heavy mortars and panzerfausts. In Pivitscheid, just east of the pass, was held an infantry reserve and two Mark IV tanks.

The element of surprise was lost as the Battalion pushed into the outpost line. Two enemy machine gun nests were wiped out and the remainder pushed back into the main line of resistance at the crest of the ridge. As the assaulting

forces moved slowly up the steep slope, control became a superhuman task. The thick growth of pines and steady rain created almost total darkness, necessitating combat groups to hold hands to maintain contact.

Both companies reached the crest of the ridge at approximately 0300, April 3, and vigorously assaulted the main positions defending the pass. The enemy proved to be young and fanatical troops, well supplied with automatic weapons. They were in cleverly camouflaged two and three-man emplacements. Few prisoners were taken, and the individual positions had to be reduced with short-range fire or grenades. The Battalion fought its way over the crest and into the reverse slope defenses. Flanking fire began coming in from both flanks as the widespread defenses north and south of the pass fired into the flanks of the attack. Both attacking companies echeloned their support platoons toward their open flanks to prevent infiltration, and pushed on. At 0530 the enemy struck back in a vigorous counterattack preceded by a heavy mortar concentration. Two infantry companies hit the Battalion frontally, attempting to drive it from the ridge and out of the pass. Small arms fire was delivered at the same time from the enemy positions on the Battalion's flanks.

The enemy attack was delivered by fresh troops, and the weight of them, catching the Battalion in poor defensive positions, caused it to pull back to the crest of the ridge. Orders came down to dig in and *hold*. The Light Tank Company was ordered into the fight and moved four of its tanks straight down the road through the pass into the front lines.

The tankers of the Second Armored had never lacked courage, and we welcomed their presence in our misery. They sprayed the woods beyond the crest of the ridge as

#### *Infantry and Armor confer*







*Snipers harassed, but failed to slow down, our drive*

best they could from these poor positions. The Battalion's machine guns were rapidly thrown into action on the flanks to neutralize the flanking fire that was threatening to make the position untenable. The frontal attack was beaten off after two hours of steady pressure of the fresh troops trying to push the Battalion off the crest of the ridge. Because of the thick undergrowth, the fighting was at extremely close range. Three tank commanders were shot by snipers who had crept close up to the road from which they were firing.

At 1100 the enemy again counterattacked. A frontal assault was mounted initially. Then a company was swung around Company E's right flank, driving into the Battalion's rear from the south. One platoon of Company E took the brunt of this attack. They held, although greatly outnumbered. The action developed into hand-to-hand fighting. Part of the enemy force fought its way into the rear of the platoon and was stopped only after the platoon leader had been killed, and the platoon sergeant and ten others were casualties. When the assault was finally stopped, the lines were only a few yards apart. It was now clear that the Battalion had stopped fighting to clear the pass, but was struggling for its very existence. The assault companies' strength

was sapped by the drawn-out struggle on the rugged terrain and the chilling rain which fell incessantly. The enemy possessed nearly double numerical superiority, was comparatively fresh, and still held close-in positions on both flanks of the Battalion.

The Battalion reserve, Company G, was ordered forward to tie in closely with the right rear of Company E to prevent further infiltration on the open right flank. All companies were ordered to reorganize and prepare to repel further counterattacks. The Battalion Commander went forward to a vantage point on the crest in Company E's line to study the enemy's positions and to plan how to extricate his unit from its dangerous position. He decided to adopt the bold plan of action of passing the comparatively fresh Company G through Company E in a narrow frontal assault to take a key road junction and house group in the rear of the enemy's reverse slope defense; to hold open the corridor thus created with elements of the two companies then on line; and to push the light tanks rapidly through this gap to the plain beyond where they could bring fire on the enemy positions north and south of the pass. At 1630 on the third all was in readiness, and the Battalion resumed the attack. Company G drove vigorously forward and overwhelmed the resistance in a narrow sector in Company E's front. They swarmed through the woods on the reverse slope and moved out into the open toward Pivitscheid and the strategic road junction employing walking fire, for which we were more or less noted.

Two Mark IV tanks and one 75MM AT gun opened up, temporarily slowing the assault, but the speed and ferocity of the attack was such that 15 Germans were killed or wounded at the AT gun position and the gun was captured. Support squads flanked both tanks and knocked them out with bazooka fire. Two counterattacks formed immediately. One group, of platoon size, moved down the slope from the south and attacked Company G's vulnerable rear. The Company Weapons Platoon engaged this group with carbines and pistols and managed to pin it to the ground before it hit the platoon's rear. The other threat was coming from the town itself. The infantry reserve held by the Germans was being committed in an effort to stop this new threat. Company G had seized the road junction and the first houses of the town and had joined in a fierce small arms fight with these fresh troops.



In the meanwhile, the Light Tank Company had been ordered forward to Company G's aid. They pushed rapidly down the road around two heavy road blocks, which had been covered by the now knocked out tanks, and into the edge of town where Company G was fighting.

They deployed rapidly and, together with the infantry, pushed farther into the town. Prisoners began pouring back toward the Pass as the German rear installations and mortar positions were overrun. Companies E and F had been keeping steady pressure on the flank positions in the pass and now went over to the attack. The Germans, with their line of communications cut, and harassed by fire coming from the Light Tank Company, fell back from the Pass, trying to keep under cover of the thick trees on the ridgeline. From this point on, the enemy position began disintegrating and the entire Battalion surged forward. With the enemy virtually surrounded, the fighting developed into small isolated actions, as the Germans split up in an effort to escape annihilation. These groups were rapidly picked up as the two companies advanced down the reverse slope.

Long columns of German infantry could be seen north and south of the Pass, moving down from the ridge, abandoning their positions. These troops could not be affected by the Battalion other than by long-range fire, and the majority made good their escape. The mopping up in the woods and in the town of Pivitschid was completed by 1830. This action cost the enemy 239 prisoners, 79 known dead, two tanks, one half-track, one 75MM AT gun, and numerous light and heavy mortars and automatic weapons abandoned or destroyed.

The remainder of the Armored Task Force waiting in Augustdorf was uncoiled, passed through the Pass, and deployed on the plains around Pivitscheid. The following morning the infantry once more mounted tanks, and the full momentum of the American drive to the Elbe resumed. At 0800 on the fourth, the Second Battalion, mounted on tanks, TDs, scout cars and jeeps, moved east.

Simultaneously on the second, the First Battalion and Task Force R had relieved the 377th Infantry near Orlinghausen. The town itself lay right in the pass; one narrow road which passed through the Wald was its principal street. The buildings and houses were built on the slope on either side with only small alleys, useless for vehicles, running up the steep slopes. The enemy occupying the slopes could look



*Aboard tanks, Infantrymen of the 119th Regiment bypass resistance and continue the attack.*

down into the main road, which was the Battalion's only possible route of advance. They were heavily supplied with panzerfaust which, in the absence of artillery, they fired into the streets and houses. The backbone of the enemy troops were fanatical Nazi Officer Candidates, who were the cream of the now staggering German Army. By 1900 Company B had gained a few houses in the town, and the enemy immediately launched a counterattack from both flanks and the front. Our thin column was outnumbered and in position to be wiped out. The enemy, under cover of the trees and houses, were able to get to within 15 yards of our troops. Machine guns which fired between the houses denied a route of withdrawal or one of support. The small band held out for two hours until the cover of darkness allowed relief to push up to free them. The enemy, on the slopes 100 yards behind the houses, continued to throw panzerfausts down on the Battalion as it attempted to build strength enough to push the advance. Company A made a little progress until their flanks and rear were hit by an attack of approximately two-company strength.

The cellar-to-cellar and house-to-house fighting had spread



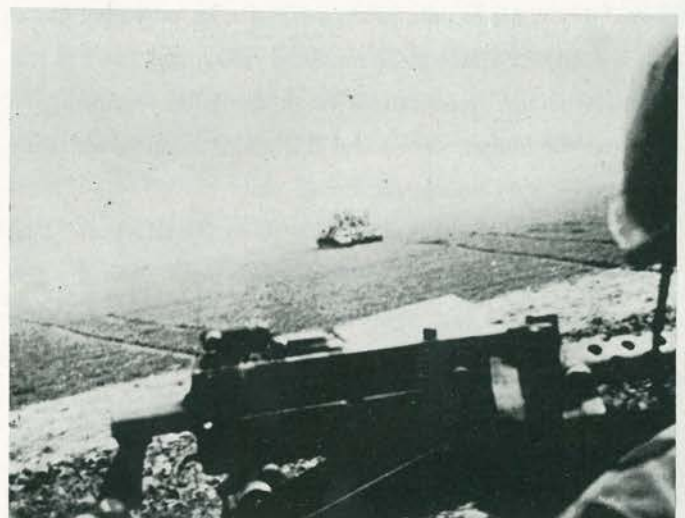


out their leading platoons. The enemy, moving in behind them in strength, retook some of the houses and threatened to cut off two platoons. The Commander of Company A fought his way up to the two platoons and directed their battle for survival. The enemy forced his way into the cellars and, under cover of the panzerfaust which he fired up the stairs and down the halls, closed in on our troops. Machine guns, set up on either end of the halls, fought each other. Any movement brought grenades and fire, sometimes with both enemy and friendly troops firing into their own ranks. Fists, bayonets, and knives were used freely, as the troops silently slipped from room to room through the darkness. Men colliding in the darkness fired first and asked questions later. With the first glow of dawn the enemy was forced back and our position was regained. By this time the entire Battalion had been committed, including Headquarters Company. The enemy force, which had originally been estimated to be a reenforced Battalion, continued to receive reenforcement and was estimated to be nearly a Regiment when the town was finally taken.

At 0600, April 3, Company C began a flanking attack from the outskirts of the town in an attempt to capture the enemy positions on the slopes. By 1000 Company C was making very slow, but steady, progress. Tanks were sent up the main road into town to force the action. The enemy, however, slipped down from the slopes or, firing from the slopes, knocked out the tanks as fast as they appeared. The enemy continued to drive into the Battalion's flanks and

neutralized our forward movement. In an attempt to break the enemy's flank positions, the anti-tank gunners and ammunition bearers who were unable to use their guns effectively, armed themselves and formed a rifle platoon. At 1500 the platoon began its attack on the right flank slope. Alternately firing and advancing their squads, they moved through the enemy fire. They continued closing in on the enemy until they had built up a line of fire 25 yards from their positions. Gaining temporary fire superiority they jumped to their feet and charged the position. Their vicious charge overran two machine guns and took the 28 enemy survivors prisoners. This success and the advance of Company C permitted A and B Companies to push vigorously through the Pass. The Pass and town were completely in our hands at 1700. In the battle for the Pass, 351 prisoners had been taken. The Armor poured through and prepared to resume the attack on the fourth.

Meanwhile, on the Second of April, the Third Battalion, as part of Combat Command R, swung north to sever and secure the mountain pass which controlled the Autobahn, just south of the key communications center of Beilefeld. The attack met the same type of troops and defense which had stopped the First and Second Battalions farther south. A large portion of the troops in the entire area came from Detmold, 18 kilometers southeast. Detmold was one of the largest military schools in the country; it was an installation similar to our Fort Benning but not on so large a scale. The enemy troops that opposed us were the Officer Candidates, ordnance, school, and tank troops who had been stationed there. They were exceptionally well-trained and equipped, with the exception of artillery. The enemy's attempt to stop







*Lieutenant Colonel McCown examines prisoners captured during the Weser River Crossing*

the advance by harassing our flanks failed in this case. Under cover of darkness, Captain Mann led one of the assaulting companies in a wide flanking movement, which came in behind on the reverse slope of the enemy road blocks and positions. Forces converging from both sides soon reduced the enemy force and the attack pushed down into Ubbedissen. By 2150 the town was ours and the armor moved through. On the fourth the Second Battalion moved south of Pivitscheid mopping up, and the First Battalion also swung south toward the Second Battalion to clear that area. A morning was spent cleaning out this area to secure our supply lines. The three battalions took Mackenbruch and was relieved by the 117th, while the Second and First Battalions turned east and drove toward the Weser River. By midnight the head of the column had reached the Weser at the town of Ohr, just south of Hamlin (of Pied Piper fame).

Plans were made for Task Force B to cross the Weser, making use of any available boats and equipment. These plans were changed, but, before the Second Battalion could be notified, they had already crossed Company F and seized the town of Tundern. The remainder of the Battalion crossed, followed by the First Battalion, while a bridge was being built. The bridgehead was extended under fire to the

high ground south and east of Hamelin. Meanwhile, the remainder of TFB swung north and seized a highway and a railway bridge intact on the southern edge of Hamelin. The Third Battalion had moved down from Lemgo and had assembled at Hummarbruch.

On the morning of the sixth the Second Battalion was ordered to attack and secure a line on the outskirts of Hamelin. The Second Platoon of Company F had advanced to a point 55 yards from a factory at the edge of town, when the enemy opened up with intense machine gun and automatic fire. The enemy occupied positions to the front and on both flanks. Enemy fire, coming from three directions, was so devastating that the platoon was pinned down in the open field.

Lieutenant Beaudoin, platoon leader, saw that his platoon was in grave danger of being annihilated and that the entire Company was in danger of being flanked and surrounded. He ordered four of his men to take up a position to the front of the platoon and fire on the enemy located in the factory. He then ordered three men on the platoon's left and right flanks to sustain fire at their respective flanks. He then crawled among his men, pointing out the best





*German civilians display Hitler's secret weapon*

places to dig in and collecting ammunition in order to supply the men who were firing. By rotating his men in the firing line they were all able to dig in. Lieutenant Beaudoin dug in at the platoon's most advanced point. During the fire fight that followed, he killed six of the enemy. The battle continued to rage, and by 0900 the enemy had suffered a loss of 43 dead and 73 wounded.

Despite the deadly, well-aimed fire of this small force, their position was rapidly becoming precarious. The enemy had brought up strong reinforcements to the platoon's direct front and were preparing to counterattack. This attack would have constituted a serious threat to all of Company F. Furthermore, the platoon was now running low on ammunition. Only a well-directed and continuous stream of fire could stop the numerically superior enemy from engulfing them. Three times men were sent back to obtain ammunition and to notify the Company Commander of the impending attack. All three were killed by snipers from the enemy position 90 yards away. The platoon also lost five men who rose up in their holes to cover the messengers' escape, by fire. The position of the platoon seemed hopeless.

Lieutenant Beaudoin decided to make a last attempt to save his platoon. He called his second-in-command and left instructions with him in case he himself should not return. He directed another man to crawl towards the First Platoon 700 yards away while he drew the enemy fire. Then with utter disregard for his life and with the almost certain knowl-

edge that he would not return alive, he proceeded to crawl and creep toward the enemy, 90 yards to the right flank. The enemy was distracted by this threat and the messenger escaped. Eight rounds of bazooka were fired at him and two exploded within 10 feet, bouncing him upon the ground. The enemy infantry sprayed the area with rapid fire as he continued to move forward. Two of their bullets pierced his left sleeve, yet he went boldly on. He fired his carbine to keep them from drawing an accurate bead on his crawling figure. Finally, after reaching a point 10 yards from the enemy, he threw caution to the winds and charged.

Three of the enemy rose from their holes to shoot him down. He shot and killed two at a range of four yards and killed, with the butt of his carbine, the third who was now rushing him with his bayonet. As Lieutenant Beaudoin leaped through the air into the enemy's dug-out he was brought down by enemy machine gun fire from the factory. Due to his sacrifice, the messenger got through and brought back a platoon of tanks which blasted the enemy from their positions.

The Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded posthumously for this action.

Later that day the attack again turned east. The Third Battalion had crossed the Weser and took Elze at 1600. With the Weser crossed, all three Battalions drove east. All coordinated resistance seemed broken. In the days that followed, it was dismount and fight, and get on and ride some more. Some towns resisted bitterly while others fell with hardly a shot. The usual procedure was to advance into a town, and if any shots were fired, the tanks in the column behind quickly pulled out into the level fields and encircled the town. If resistance continued, the tanks and infantry moved in from all sides. The "Volksturm" in most cases fired at the lead vehicle but, when the fire was returned, ran home to change into civilian clothes.





In one case the Third Battalion moved into the town so rapidly that the "Volksturm" were caught with their pants on. As they were gathered up for a spanking before we turned them loose, a crusty old man emerged from his house. He was dressed in a faded, moth-eaten uniform of some by-gone war. On his belt was strapped a huge sword that almost pulled him over. While the local "heroes" were being marched by, he straightened to a position of attention and spat at the ground in front of them. He was heard to exclaim, "It took *men* in my day to be a soldier—my belly is sick with your strutting around, telling the women how brave you are—how you will throw back the invading fools—you see the muzzle of a cannon and you run like children—watch me, women, and see how a soldier can die." The old man then pulled his sword with great difficulty and tottered toward the nearest guard. One of our German-speaking soldiers gently pulled the sword from his hand and led him, crying, back into his house. When the soldier turned to go, the old man wiped his eyes and said, "An old man am I. If youth I had, I would wish to fight you, Honorable Enemy."

Town after town fell before our advancing columns. Afferde, Gr. Forste, Hildesheim, Harsum, Reppner, Osterlinde, Immensdorf, Levenstedt, and Wolfenbittel were taken one after the other. The First Battalion ran into serious opposition in Lesse. The enemy had concentrated heavy flak batteries around the factories, for protection against aircraft. Our advance was stopped until artillery was moved into firing position and counter-battery fire was able to silence some of the guns. These defenses were the first of the defenses which covered the Herman Goering Works in Immensdorf. The Battalion was forced to deploy and fight their way ahead. The stiff fight continued on past Lesse, up the road three miles to Reppner. The enemy had bolstered his ground defense around the 88s with young "Hitler Youth," armed with panzerfausts. The Goering Works was one of the largest factories in Germany. Thousands of Allied slaves, including Prisoners of War, were used in its operation.

On the 11th the assault to take the plant itself began. The enemy flak guns put up a good scrap, but failed to stop our infantry long. The thousands of freed slaves began to riot and mangle the local Nazis with considerable pleasure. The factory itself contained huge warehouses of food which they attempted to loot. The First Battalion was obliged to remain in the town to preserve order, while the Second Bat-



*Lieutenant General Vieth, in command of German forces in Braunschweig, Germany, shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Leland S. Hobbs, CG, 30th Division, U. S. Ninth Army. Surrender terms were discussed, but no agreement reached. Each officer returned to his camp and the fighting continued.*

talion continued to drive east to capture Wolfenbutte. On the 14th they were relieved by the Eighth Armored Division which had caught up with them, and they moved east toward Schonebeck. On the way, their orders were changed because of the enemy troop concentrations near Magdeburg and the heavy fighting which the Third Battalion had run into.

The Third Battalion had run into a "bear's nest" on the morning of the 13th when they joined CCB at Westerhusen just south of Madgeburg. They were told that they would cross the Elbe River and be in reserve at the bridgehead on the east bank. The Battalion was very tired, and under strength from casualties and the loss of two platoons which were protecting the Second Armored Division's CP. At 6500 the Battalion began its crossing of the river in ducks, under vicious artillery concentrations from the enemy, the Battalion moved quickly into its assembly area in a small patch of woods a short distance from the river. The enemy artillery fire continued to rain on the area throughout the day. Observed enemy fire was placed repeatedly on the bridge site where an engineer unit was attempting to construct a bridge to enable tanks to cross and to reenforce the bridgehead. The continuous enemy fire on the bridge forced the abandonment of a crossing at that point.

At 2030, the Third Battalion received orders to move south along the east bank of the Elbe, followed by the Third





*The Second Armored Division of the U. S. Ninth Army moves through the suburbs to Magdeburg.*

Battalion, 41st Armored Infantry in column, in that order. The Battalion was to secure a new crossing site for the construction of a bridge, clear all opposition on the route of march, seize and hold the town of Elbenau. The armored infantry was to fill the gap between our Third Battalion in Elbenau and another friendly battalion to the north. Insufficient time was available to the Third Battalion for proper planning, orientation, issuing of orders, and planning artillery fire, but the Battalion moved on schedule at the head of the force moving south. Company Commanders were given the orders and were able briefly to inform their platoon leaders of the mission, and gave more detailed and specific instructions from memory of their map study as they marched.

Enemy resistance was hit and a few prisoners were taken. The Battalion CO, at the head of the troops, was forced to stop several times during the advance, and, under improvised shelter, to check the route and to prepare artillery fire for the advance. No suitable small-scale maps were available, and numerous obstacles such as ponds and several small canals had to be skirted after a visual reconnaissance. Approximately 1,500 yards from Elbenau, the Battalion assumed an attack formation with Companies I and L abreast. Company K followed L to clear the edge of the woods between Grunewalde and Elbenau and then take a position in support on the south of Elbenau. The heavy weapons of Company M were sited near the base of the bridgehead to cover the Battalion right and left rear, from a position approximately 1,500 yards south of Elbenau, and to remain in this position until the bridgehead was sufficiently secure against enemy counterattacks. Although greatly exhausted



*Friendly tank destroyers support our infantry's attack on Magdeburg.*

from their prolonged commitment, the Battalion moved aggressively forward against moderate resistance and began to clear the enemy from the town.

While the Battalion was fighting in the town, an enemy force estimated to be two battalions of infantry and one battalion of armor, launched a savage three-pronged attack on the town. One enemy infantry column of more than 100 men armed with a large number of automatic weapons attacked the left flank. Company I, utilizing every man and weapon, succeeded in forcing the enemy back. The enemy force then swung farther to the left and came in on Company I's rear. The defenses of the Company immediately shifted to cope with the new threat. Meanwhile, a second enemy force of infantry and armor drove against the sector between Companies I and L. A desperate struggle followed, with each man clinging tenaciously to his position; even mortar observers and bazooka men held their forward positions.

Mortar fire was placed on the enemy only 100 yards in front of the friendly positions, as our men endeavored to prevent encirclement. With no anti-tank weapons with sufficient range to stop the enemy tanks, the sector was finally penetrated by the enemy force, and Company I was ordered to fall back to the Company K positions. They formed a line in the north edge of the woods at the south edge of town. One platoon, which was prevented from gaining the Company K positions by the fire of tanks, fought its way back to reinforce the positions of the Company M heavy weapons. Another column of enemy armor, in which at least 27 tanks, self-propelled guns, and half-tracks towing guns were counted, enveloped Company L on the right.



This Company stubbornly engaged the enemy, but the armored vehicles had stopped just out of bazooka range and poured in a hail of cannon and machine gun fire. Meanwhile, one machine gun platoon of Company M, which had been deployed to cover a large open area in the vicinity of Grunewalde, was driven back toward the river by the overwhelming onslaught in that sector. Unable to obtain support and hopelessly cut off, the gallant platoon continued to engage the enemy in the hopeless struggle for their positions. They did, however, succeed in drawing off from the main attack a sufficient number of enemy troops to enable the remainder of Company M to prepare a defense. The overwhelming numbers of the enemy assaulted the platoon, and the personnel were taken prisoners.

The Battalion CO realized that, without anti-tank weapons, a serious loss would be incurred if the situation continued as it was. He therefore ordered Company K to establish a line in the northern edge of the woods just out of the southern edge of town. They were to be prepared to reenter the town as soon as supporting tanks, which had been promised, arrived, or to fight an orderly withdrawal if necessary. The line was accordingly built up in the woods where enemy tanks could not be effectively employed against our troops. From the positions established in the woods, artillery fire was thrown into the town, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Men volunteered to go forward into enemy territory to direct fire. Radio operators climbed to the attics and top floors of houses to achieve the best radio reception. One volunteer who had moved forward into town called to the Battalion CO, who was coordinating all the artillery fire, and ordered a barrage on his own position to halt an enemy tank thrust which was forming.

The enemy force which had captured the Company M machine gun platoon continued its attack against the base of the bridgehead in an attempt to cut off the entire operation and sever all lines of communication and supply. The rest of Company M—one machine gun platoon and the mortar platoon—were deployed to meet the assault. Only a minimum number of men were left on the crew-served weapons, while the remainder, including Company M Headquarters personnel and the Company I platoon and stragglers from the armored infantry, built up a defensive line. As the aggressive enemy force moved toward the improvised line, orders were issued for the personnel to hold their fire until the command was given. Heavy volumes of artillery and mortar fire and direct fire from at least two enemy tanks began softening up the friendly position. Fully understanding the consequences of an enemy penetration through their position, they absorbed the fire and waited.

When the main body of the assault force was in an open field 150 yards away, the machine guns and riflemen opened fire. Their rapid bursts inflicted a heavy toll on the enemy and pinned the remainder, more than 200, to the ground. Mortar observers who remained in their observation posts on the second floor of a house, although it had been struck three times by direct fire from the enemy tanks, then directed and adjusted a devastating series of mortar barrages onto the pinned-down troops. Their excellent coordination and fearless deportment caused additional casualties to the enemy. The enemy troops, completely demoralized and disorganized, hastily fled in disorder. They reorganized and again attempted to attack, only to be met by the same deadly fire. After another reorganization and third disastrous attempt to break through, the enemy force, badly depleted by the high casualties (over 60) which they had sustained, fled from the field, abandoning equipment, wounded, and weapons in their flight.

The Battalion CO had requested support for the outnumbered troops at his position, but none was available. At noon, after a sustained shelling of our positions by enemy artillery and tanks, the enemy threatened to encircle the Battalion from the right. The Battalion was immediately ordered to begin a gradual withdrawal to the town of Grunewalde, which was held by the First Battalion of the 41st Armored Infantry, for the purpose of reorganizing, and gaining support for a counterattack back into Elbenau. Enemy troops were then observed occupying the area to the left of the Battalion, which should have been held by the Third Battalion, 41st Armored Infantry. A report was received that the positions of that Battalion had been overrun, and that there remained only 15 survivors.

Company L was completely surrounded in the town and had moved into the cellars. Believing capture to be inevitable, all items of intelligence value in the Company were destroyed, as were the radios, and the radio of an attached artillery observer. The deadly, smothering barrage of artillery which rocked the town was directed by volunteers from Company K. This fire was so effective that the enemy troops and armor took cover themselves, and Company L's presence remained undetected.

The batteries of the artillery radio with the Battalion CO finally began to fail, and the forward elements were without artillery support. Meanwhile, the small groups of Headquarters and supply personnel who had established the Battalion rear CP on the west bank of the river observed a force of enemy infantry (company strength) surge forward from a patch of woods behind the abandoned bridge site and dash across the open toward the river. It appeared that they were attempting to cross the river on the wrecked bridging equip-





*A tank and infantry race through the streets of Magdeburg, mopping up*

ment. Every available man took up positions along the river bank and opened fire on the swiftly advancing enemy. A mortar which Company M had been forced to leave behind because of the lack of men to man it, was set up by an improvised Headquarters crew and put into action. In the intense struggle that followed, the enemy force suffered serious losses and was forced to withdraw.

When the Commanding Officer of CCB arrived in Grunewalde and viewed the situation, he ordered the bridgehead abandoned and a withdrawal to defensive positions on the

west bank of the Elbe. Company L was assumed to have been either captured or annihilated in the town of Elbenau. The return crossing was effected despite volumes of enemy artillery which were directed at our troops. In the early afternoon Company L discovered that the enemy was still unaware of their presence in the town. Three volunteers were sent to scout the town and locate a route of withdrawal. The attached artillery observer who, when capture seemed imminent, had broken the crystals, twisted off the frequency knob, and run a screw driver through his set several times,



managed to repair the radio and contacted a friendly artillery liaison plane. His request for a smoke barrage on the town, to conceal the withdrawal and escape of the Company, was complied with. Three scouts led the entire Company undetected through the enemy-held town, capturing a startled enemy officer on the way.

They succeeded in crossing the open area and were entering a woods which led toward the river, when an enemy tank moving through the smoke began to fire at them. Friendly fighter planes which were over the area flew directly over the Company, and under the threat of air attack, the enemy tank withdrew. Covered by friendly planes, Company L reached the river after having remained behind the enemy lines 11 hours. When the Battalion had been ordered to withdraw from Elbenau, the men pleaded with their commanders to be given the opportunity to assault the town to attempt to rescue their comrades who had been cut off. Their miraculous appearance at the river bank was received with rejoicing. The Battalion returned to Regimental control and assembled in the vicinity of Gr. Rodensleben.

During the same day, the Second Battalion had crossed the Elbe farther south, while TFR had remained in a defensive line was of Magdeburg in the vicinity of Hohendodeleben. Company E, with the exception of one platoon which tied in with Company F, moved into an assembly area in Guterluck while troops of the 17th Armored Engineers defended the town. On the morning of the 16th of April, Company E received word that the defensive positions held by the Engineers to the northeast of the town had been overrun by a strong German counterattack. At 0800 the attack hit the right flank, with one prong striking the rear of the Company. With the Company solidly engaged with the enemy to the front, only the CP group was left to meet this attack. One officer and three men picked up their weapons and met the enemy. They took positions in the second story of a building and brought fire down on 40 enemy infantry advancing up the street. The aggressive enemy force continued to advance, laying down heavy fire as they drove nearer to the small group. One man stood exposed in the window and shot down four of the enemy. The sheer weight and force of the enemy drive had carried them to within 200 yards of these four men.

When the accurate small arms fire slowed the enemy's advance, they brought up a self-propelled gun. A friendly tank located in the yard below was abandoned by its crew because they considered the stand useless and hopeless. Although faced with 10-to-1 odds, the men remained to protect their Company's rear. Sergeant Vannice ran back through the enemy fire to obtain a bazooka. Returning with it and an arm full of rockets, he took his position back in the win-

dow. He opened fire at the SP gun and missed. His fire drew the attention of the gun crew and they immediately fired four rounds of HE back at him. Although his exposure at the window continued to bring fire, he again took aim and fired another rocket. This time he knocked out the gun and killed two of the enemy who had been following it. The gun commander quickly emerged and was instantly killed by Sergeant Vannice. In the hours of close-range fighting that followed, both the officer, Lieutenant Holycross, and Sergeant Vannice were wounded, but neither man left his post until the last enemy before them had been either killed or wounded. Sergeant Vannice, exhausted from the loss of blood, then fainted at his post.

Meanwhile, the major portion of the Company was fighting the same type of battle. The enemy, by the sheer weight of his armor, pushed into the town. Our forces, although outnumbered, fought a gallant battle, outwitting and outfighting the Jerries at every turn. The enemy found every effort stopped. He swung from the north and came in from the east. When that failed, he swung in from the south and tried coming in behind the Company. His every drive was met by a small group of men who seemed to materialize from nowhere. The enemy recklessly shoved self-propelled guns up the streets, only to have four of them knocked out by crafty bazooka men. Contact was made with the 83rd Division on their right, and they promised that support would be on its way soon. This support arrived after the enemy attack had been stopped, but in time to help clean up the enemy resistance in the east side of town. This lone Company had thoroughly defeated a vastly superior enemy force. The enemy dead alone (99) was almost equal to the Company's fighting strength. To add to the German losses, 125 prisoners were mopped up. This battle crushed the last major enemy offensive action which we were to see during the war.

Late that day, the Second Battalion returned to Regimental control and assembled in the vicinity of Schnarlslagen. At midnight the night of the 16th, the Regiment, minus the First Battalion, returned to 30th Division control. The next day the Regiment, minus the First Battalion, and a battalion of the 66th Armored Regiment (tanks) attacked east to take Diesdorf, a suburb of Magdeburg. Little serious resistance was met until the troops had taken Diesdorf and were continuing east. Dug-in 88's gave stiff resistance for several hours until they were knocked out by mortar fire. Contact was made with the 117th in the western edge of Magdeburg at 1600. The First Battalion, as part of a task force, was also in the outskirts, having a rough time of it.

Other units of the Second Armored had not been so successful, and the Regiment was ordered to dig in for the night.





*Tedious occupational duties*

The Regiment jumped off at 0630 the next morning only to be later pinched out by the advance of the 117th across our front. The First Battalion continued its fight in the town.

The 19th passed with the Regiment holding its position. On the 20th we relieved the Second Armored Division and, with the return of the First Battalion, occupied wide defensive positions in the town and along the river to the south. The remaining days of the month and of the war passed quietly. We soon became involved in the complexity of military government and occupation while we waited for the Russians to join us. Thousands of enemy troops in the territory between the two armies continued to flee west toward the Elbe. Their main object in life now was to escape the Russians and to be captured by us. They tried a variety of tricks and even offered wholesale surrender. Our Division already had taken thousands more than could be properly processed, and we were forced to refuse their offer. Our outposts on the river turned them back to await the well-known Russian hospitality.

## MAY

Schonebeck—Welsleben—Swhwaneberg—Occupational Duties—Contact with the Rusisans—V-E Day.

May first found the Regiment actually enjoying the war. With the exception of motorized patrols and guard, duty was light. Food and drink were more or less plentiful, though of dubious quality. We realized for the first time that Spring was about us and that nature and life had continued in spite of the war. Peace rumors flitted about in abundance, and we wondered how it would feel to live in a world of peace again. PEACE—a word lost from our vocabularies and minds—had a strange, almost forgotten meaning.

The Russians reported substantial gains in Berlin itself. Peace feelers extended to the British in the north appeared promising, while the Italian front was folding up rapidly. Our sector had stagnated; the silence and inactivity rasped



*Contact*

on our nerves. After months of tenseness and fatigue, the let-down was staggering. Many of us found ourselves aged beyond our years—old mentally, in body, in spirit. We could only look forward to months more of combat with Japan, or at the best, in occupation in Germany. To an American neither prospect was pleasant.

The few survivors of our original Regiment, who had lived on borrowed time so long, accepted fate as inevitable, while the newer members griped. We all knew that an infantryman's end is only a matter of time. In any case, we had learned to appreciate and to thank God for our existence. Every minute, every hour had become sacred—a gift to be extended miserly and enjoyed to the fullest.

Our positions were gradually extended south until we occupied the area in the vicinity of Schonebeck. Occupation difficulties were aggravated by the lack of civilian transportation and municipal utilities. Thousands of civilians were on the move—our road blocks were swamped with women and crying children.

The third brought news that the Russians were only 92 miles away. Excitement ran high on both sides of the river. The Germans were in panic. They attempted to swim and boat across, and in our excitement, we almost let them do it. Observers reported that Russian columns could be seen on the fourth. At 0630 May fifth, G Company made contact with an advance Russian element. The First Battalion contacted another column near Grunewalde at 1530.

Two great armies joined; to us it was the symbol of the end. Infantrymen of two nations had fought their way across 2,000 miles of swamps, rivers, mountains, and plains to greet each other warmly and then stand and look at one another foolishly. A few drinks and common interests soon overcame the hesitancy, and warm friendships were born. We found the Russians direct and aggressive. They knew what they wanted and only considered the cost after their





ends had been achieved. The common soldier was a likeable chap, rough and crude by nature. He had a fine sense of humor, though it sometimes had a sadistic twist. After seeing the Russian soldier, it was easier to understand how their country could absorb such terrible defeats and losses, and still survive.

They marveled at the quantity of our equipment, and we at their lack of it. It was hard to believe that they had done so much with so little. This junction sealed, beyond doubt, the door of doom of Naziism. As General Patton's advance closed the Southern Redoubt, this junction split Germany through the heart.

Enemy resistance in the entire country disintegrated and crumbled to dust. Companies, regiments, and divisions laid down their arms and surrendered.

On the sixth, semiofficial channels reported that hostilities would cease at 0001 that night. Late that afternoon this report was officially cancelled. At 0900 on the seventh, the official order was received. Hostilities would officially cease at 0001 on the morning of the eighth. Surprising as it may seem, the news created very little excitement. After our junction with the Russians, the official end served only as an anticlimax to that which we already knew. The German civil population celebrated jubilantly while we watched and tried to figure out why a country should celebrate defeat. We had a few drinks, lost interest, called it off, and let just another day pass. That night men retired early, to lie for hours in their blankets—mulling over the past and dreaming of the future. There was little happiness, one way or the other.

Two more months of occupation and we were on our way home to train and equip for the Pacific. Fortune smiled on

us again, for Japan surrendered and our task came to an end. The Regiment returned to this country to be deactivated at its original station—Ft. Jackson, S. C.—in December, 1945.

We have a record to be proud of—five campaigns behind us with honor and glory enough for three regiments. 2,864 of our officers and men wear decorations from five Allied countries. A grateful Belgian Government presented us the Belgium Fourragere. Grateful Army, Division, and Regimental Commanders have added their praise to that of foreign nations.

Our battle standard, hallowed by sacrifice, blood, and costly victory, is again in its sheath. Honored with battle streamers, it shall rest peacefully only if those of us who remain perpetuate the comradeship, righteousness, and freedom whose cost has been so dear.





# SELECTED COMMENDATIONS

## HEADQUARTERS NINTH U. S. ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

APO 339 U. S. Army

15 March 1945

330.13 GNMCS

SUBJECT : Commendation.

THROUGH: Commanding General, XIX Corps, APO 270, U. S. Army.

TO : Commanding General, 30th Infantry Division, APO 30, U. S. Army.

1. It was a distinct pleasure to me last October when I learned that the 30th Infantry Division was being assigned to the Ninth Army; a pleasure all the more keenly felt because of the fact of my previous association as one-time commander of the Division. I have been happy to share with you the pride of accomplishment that has characterized the history of your Division since the initiation of operations on the Continent.

2. The operation just concluded again furnished your Division with an opportunity to distinguish itself. I scarcely need point out that this opportunity was accepted and completely exploited by the Division, thereby adding another glowing chapter to the record.

3. Particularly gratifying to me was the surprise which was achieved in your crossing of the Roer River at an unsuitable site, and the ingenuity with which your organization overcame the difficulties of building up a bridgehead despite meager access and egress roads. Your expeditious clearing of Hambach Forest and the firm protection which you furnished for the Army right flank, materially assisted the Army to successfully execute the maneuver by which the enemy was turned out of his positions and driven to retreat across his own lines of communication.

4. It was characteristic of your Division that, with the original mission accomplished, you were ready and waiting to execute another mission—that of further securing the Army's right flank and facilitating the capture of the key strongpoint of Neuss.

5. It is with great personal pleasure that I acknowledge the splendid job performed by the 30th Infantry Division and express my commendation of the individual contribution made by every officer and man.

/t/ W. H. SIMPSON  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

1st Ind.

HQ XIX CORPS, APO 270

330.13 (A)

TO: Commanding General, 30th Infantry Division, APO 30, U. S. Army.

1. The operation to which the Army Commander's commendation is directed was, in effect, a flanking movement, swinging wide of the strongly situated Munchen-Gladbach area and driving against the Rhine, then splitting the industrial area along the west bank of the Rhine. This was accomplished by this Corps quickly and well ahead of schedule, clearing twenty-six (26) miles of the west side of the river. As such it is a classical as well as a historic achievement. The smoothness of this successful operation was vitally influenced by the thorough and rapid action of your division, by which the blow never lost its momentum, and the enemy moves to check the advance were overrun before they got underway.

2. This can easily be considered an outstanding operation of the war, and the remarks of the Army commander are therefore of high significance.

/t/ RAYMOND S. McLAIN  
Major General, U. S.  
Commanding

2nd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION,

APO 30, 25 March 1945.

330.13

(15 Mar 45)

TO: Commanding Officers, All Units, Assigned and Attached, 30th Infantry Division.

This commendation is YOURS—each of you who participated so fully and so well in this splendid achievement. It is with great pleasure and pride that I forward it to you who made it possible.

/t/ L. S. HOBBS  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

## HEADQUARTERS NINTH U. S. ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

APO 339, U. S. Army

9 April 1945

330.13 GNMCG

SUBJECT : Commendation

THROUGH: Commanding General, XIX Corps, APO 270, U. S. Army.

TO : Major General Leland S. Hobbs  
Commanding General, 30th Infantry Division,  
APO 30, U. S. Army.

1. I should feel remiss in my duty as a soldier were I to fail to make record of my admiration of the splendid manner in which your division once again distinguished itself in the Rhine crossing operation.

2. I scarcely need point out that the Rhine crossing constitutes one of the most important accomplishments since D-Day. Moreover, I feel that it will be treated in military history as an outstanding exploit of American arms representing, as it does, the last critical turning point on the road to victory in this Theater.

3. It was with a feeling of pride that I selected your division as one of the two assault units for the initial crossing. The splendid performance of the Division in accomplishing this and the subsequent task of exploitation stands without need of embellishment in the form of verbal analysis or praise. I can only state once again that I deem it a privilege to have this opportunity of congratulating you upon another magnificent achievement.

4. Once again may I ask that you transmit to your officers and men my highest commendation for a job well done and my most sincere appreciation of the contribution made by each member of your fine Division.

/t/ W. H. SIMPSON  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

1st Ind.

HQ XIX CORPS, APO 270, U. S. ARMY

330.13 (A)

TO: Commanding General, 30th Infantry Division, APO 30.

I am very pleased to note and transmit the above commendation.

/t/ RAYMOND S. McLAIN  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

2nd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION,

APO 30, 27 April 1945.

330.13

(9 Apr 45)

TO: Officers and Men, Assigned and Attached Units, 30th Infantry Division.

1. It is with the deepest satisfaction and pleasure that I add to this fine commendation from Lieutenant General W. H. Simpson, Commander of the Ninth United States Army, my congratulations to each of you. Your brilliant performance in this operation has added new laurels to the outstanding reputation of the Division.

2. This commendation will be read to all troops at the first opportunity after receipt.

/t/ L. S. HOBBS  
Major General—U. S. Army  
Commanding



# FROM REGIMENTAL FILES

## RESTRICTED

### HEADQUARTERS 2D ARMORED DIVISION

#### Office of the Division Commander

18 April 1945.  
A P O 252

SUBJECT : Commendation.

TO : Lt. Col. Carlton E. Stuart, Commanding Officer,  
Third Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment.

THRU : Commanding General, 30th Infantry Division.

1. I desire to commend you and your Battalion for your gallant and heroic action during the establishment of a bridgehead across the Elbe River, Germany, by the Second Armored Division. Having forced a crossing of the six hundred foot wide river in assault boats on the night of April 13th, you successfully executed the difficult night maneuver of slipping your bridgehead south for several miles through hostile and unfamiliar terrain to a more favorable crossing site. Then at first light, against a numerically superior enemy supported by tanks and self-propelled guns, you repelled a vicious attack designed to eradicate the bridgehead. Men, cut off from their command during this attack by enemy armor, courageously and ingeniously made their way to the river and swam back to safety.

2. Throughout the action, your esprit de corps, soldierly skill, and gallantry under fire were outstanding. The entire Division takes pride in the gallant and heroic stand made by your command.

t/ I. D. WHITE  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

1st Ind.

### HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION,

APO 30, U. S. Army, 21 April 1945

201.22

(18 Apr 45)

TO: Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion, 119th Infantry, APO 30;

THRU: Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry, APO 30.

It is with pride that I forward this letter of commendation, and I desire to add my congratulations for the skill and heroism demonstrated by you and your men during this engagement. Your actions are worthy of the high traditions and reputation of this Division.

t/ L. S. HOBBS  
Major General—U. S. Army  
Commanding

2nd Ind.

### HEADQUARTERS 119TH INFANTRY,

APO 30, U. S. Army, 9 May 1945.

201.22

(18 Apr 45)

TO: Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 119th Infantry, APO 30,  
U. S. Army.

1. Gallantry and combat efficiency as cited in this fine letter have resulted in the unconditional surrender of Germany today. The part played by you and your battalion in gaining this final objective has been consistently outstanding.

2. Please accept and convey to those under your command my sincere congratulations.

t/ R. A. BAKER  
Colonel, Infantry  
Commanding

## RESTRICTED

### HEADQUARTERS 66TH ARMORED REGIMENT

19 April 1945  
APO 252

SUBJECT : Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry Regiment, APO  
30 (Thu Chann ls)

1. The Second Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment, was a part of Task Force "B" under my command, in its advance from Augustdorf to Magdeburg, Germany, during the period 2-14 April 1945.

2. I desire to commend Lt. Col. Hal D. McCown, commanding for his splendid cooperation, aggressive leadership, and outstanding professional skill, and through him, his entire Battalion for its teamwork, aggressiveness, and all-round proficiency in combat.

3. It was a pleasure having this Battalion associated with us and it is hoped that in the future we may gain other objectives together.

(t) WILLIAM M. STOKES, JR.,  
Colonel, 66th Armored Regiment  
Commanding

1st Ind.

### HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND "A",

2d Arm'd Div, 19 April 45

JHC/hjn

TO: Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry Regiment, APO 30.

It is a pleasure to forward this commendation and to emphasize the sentiments expressed by Colonel Stokes.

(t) J. H. COLLIER  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding

2nd Ind.

### HEADQUARTERS 2D ARMORED DIVISION,

APO 252, 19 April 1945.

TO: Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry Regiment, APO 30

I have personal knowledge of the excellent work performed by Lieutenant Colonel McCown and his Battalion during the recent operation and forward this commendation with real pleasure.

(t) I. D. WHITE  
Major General, U S Army  
Commanding

## RESTRICTED

3rd Ind.

### HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION,

APO 30, U. S. Army, 25 April 1945.

201.22

(19 Apr 45)

TO: Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 119th Infantry, APO 30, U S Army; THROUGH: Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry.

It is indeed gratifying to receive this letter of commendation for the splendid work you did while your organization was attached to another division. I desire to add my personal commendation to that contained in basic communication for each officer and man of your command for an efficiently accomplished task.

L. S. HOBBS  
Major General—U. S. Army  
Commanding

4th Ind.

### HQS. 119TH INF.,

APO 30, U. S. Army, 28 April 1945.

201.22

(19 Apr 45)

TO: Lt. Col. HAL D. McCOWN, 2nd Battalion, 119th Infantry,  
U. S. Army

All members of the Regiment are honored and share my pride in forwarding this fine letter which recognizes the outstanding performance of your Battalion caring recently operations.

R. A. BAKER  
Colonel, Infantry  
Commanding



**RESTRICTED**  
**HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND "A"**  
**2d Armored Division**

A P O 252  
20 April 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO : Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry Regimental  
Combat Team.

1. The 119th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (less Third Battalion) was attached to Combat Command "A" in its advance from the Teutowberger-Wald to the Elbe River, Germany, during the period 2-17 April 1945.

2. I desire to commend Colonel Hugh D. McHugh, 2-4 April 1945, and Colonel Russell A. Baker, 4-17 April 1945, for their exemplary leadership of the Command during the periods indicated and all members of their Command of their exceptional soldierly skill. Throughout the operation, the aggressive and cooperative spirit of the Command and its leaders was of inestimable assistance in overcoming the difficulties inherent in the fluid, rapidly moving situation.

3. It was a real pleasure to have worked with this Regimental Combat Team. It is my sincere hope that we may be associated together in future operations.

t/ J. H. COLLIER  
Brigadier General U. S. Army  
Commanding

1st Ind.  
**HEADQUARTERS 2D ARMORED DIVISION,**  
**APO 252, 25 April 1945.**

(20 Apr 45)

TO: Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. (THRU CHANNELS) /djB

This commendation is forwarded with sincere pleasure as I have personal knowledge of the work of this Regimental Combat Team and its commanding officers. Their performance of duty was at all times superior and reflected great credit upon themselves and upon the Division of which they are a part.

t/ I. D. WHITE  
Major General, U S Army  
Commanding

**RESTRICTED**

2nd Ind.

**HQ XIX CORPS,**  
**APO 270, U. S. Army, 29 April 1945**

330.13 (A)

TO: CG, 30th Inf. Div., APO 30, U. S. Army.

I am pleased to note and forward the above commendation.  
t/ RAYMOND S. McLAIN  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

3rd Ind.

**HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION,**  
**APO 30, 2 May 1945.**

330.13

(20 Apr 45)

TO: Commanding Officer, 119th Infantry, APO 30.

This commendation has been read with the keenest pleasure and in forwarding it, I desire to add my own congratulations for this outstanding performance.

t/ L. S. HOBBS  
Major General, U. S. Army

4th Ind.

**HEADQUARTERS 119TH INFANTRY,**  
**APO 30, U. S. Army, 5 May 1945.**

330.13

(20 Apr 45)

TO: Commanding Officers, All Units, 119th Infantry Combat Team

1. This generous commendation, I hope, covers our last operation. Again I extend hearty congratulations to every officer and enlisted man of our combat team for his valiant efforts which made possible the successful accomplishment of this important mission.

2. The Third Battalion has been commended for its outstanding performance during this operation in a separate letter from C. G. CCA, Second Armored Division.

t/ R. A. BAKER  
Colonel, Infantry  
Commanding

**HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION**

GENERAL ORDER:

APO No. 30

NUMBER

96:

5 May 1945

**BATTLE HONORS**

Under the provisions of Section IV, Circular Number 333, War Department, 1943, and pursuant to authority granted by Commanding General, Ninth United States Army, the following Battle Honors are announced:

The First Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment, United States Army, reinforced, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy from 19 December 1944 to 21 December 1944, in Belgium. The Battalion occupied positions along a route through which a strong German armored infantry column was attempting to pass, having overrun all organized resistance which had blocked their advance. Despite numerically superior enemy forces and badly depleted personnel of their own companies, the men of the Battalion, realizing that theirs was the last line of resistance, fought heroically. During three fanatical and furious enemy counterattacks the Battalion, with two companies accounting for approximately only sixty men each, and using clerks, messengers, and drivers as riflemen, fought heroically and drove the enemy back. Non-commissioned officers and privates assumed command unhesitatingly after their leaders had been killed or wounded, and though the Battalion suffered 148 casualties during this engagement, the men never faltered. After repulsing an attack and though suffering heavy losses they immediately reorganized under paralyzing enemy fire to successfully withstand subsequent attacks by the enemy in this all out effort. All participants fought with dogged determination of giving no ground and in the face of almost continuous heavy fire, stood firm, doing their duty unhesitatingly and with unexcelled individual courage.

L. S. HOBBS  
Major General — U. S. Army  
Commanding



# THE 119TH INFANTRY

*Composed and Dedicated to the Regiment*

*by*

FRED G. KNOX

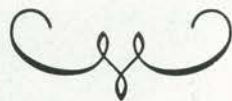
*The war lords of the Rising Sun  
Deeming the war in Europe won,  
Trusting the Western Eagle Slept,  
At our Pacific outposts left—  
Tore our unconquered flag to strips.  
And in our harbors sank our ships.*

*Then formed the lads of victory  
The Hundred Nineteenth Infantry.  
Colonel Ednie trained you for the wars.  
You saw both France and England's shores,  
Received your baptism of fire  
When Hitler's Panzers lost the Vire.*

*With Colonel Sutherland attain  
Pont Hebert, Troisgots and Mortain.  
There the SS Troops in counter meet  
And make them taste their first defeat.  
At Aachen broke that hope and sign  
Of German power, the Siegfried Line;  
Again the First Shock Troops in fierce attack  
At Stoumont you meet and drive them back.*

*On Christmas Baker took command  
Squeezed out the Bulge and led his band  
To cross the flooded Roer and Rhine.  
There with the Second Armored you combine.  
Sweep the Wesser and the Rhineland plain,  
Proving all Bosche resistance vain.  
This combination proved so rough—  
The Jerries cried enough—enough.*

*You sacrificed to keep us free  
By your unshaken bravery,  
The Nations praise and honor thee  
For courage and fidelity;  
Pattern of all our force should be  
THE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH INFANTRY.*















*Henri-Chapel Military Cemetery*

*Heavenly Father, for our most honored dead the strife is over; those whose lives and deeds once mingled with ours, and who always will live deep in our memory. May we never forget their noble sacrifice. Help us by thy strength to maintain the freedom for which they fought and died. They have not died in vain, but in the hope that thy will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven. May their deeds challenge us, their lives inspire us, and their achievements live after us. In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we pray.*

*Amen.*

CHAPLAIN R. S. STANSFIELD  
*Regimental Chaplain*



U.S. Infantry 119th Regt.  
m m



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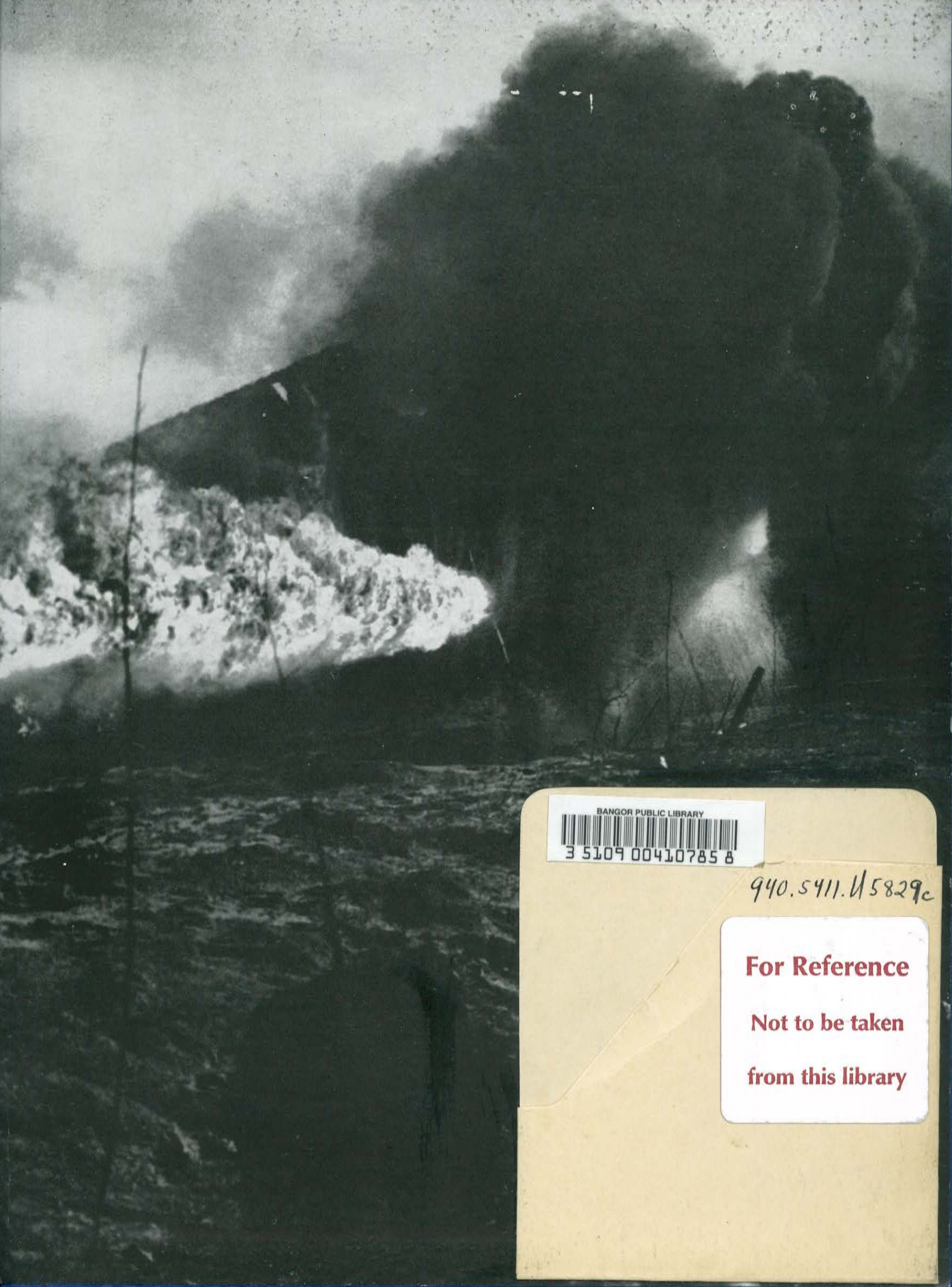
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