

Approximately 1750 words

FROM OMAHA BEACH TO THE ELBE

THE DIARY OF A SOLDIER

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history the unsung ~~heroes of wars have been the in-~~fantrymen. They are unsung because there are just too many of them. An act on the battlefield that would bring recognition in the form of The Distinguished Service Cross, if performed five miles behind the lines, is considered merely routine in the infantry.

Other branches are more romantic. In the Civil War the cavalry was the corps-de-elite of the army. The infantry of the time had a question, "Whoever saw a dead cavalryman?" The air force has taken the place of the cavalry and it's effectiveness is now as greatly overrated. The restriction against air bombardment north of the Yalu river is used as an alibi for our losing the Korean war, in spite of the fact that air bombardment failed to stop production in either England or Germany during World War II, and was completely ineffective south of the Yalu river in the Korean war. Failure of air cover is charged with the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Any combat experienced infantry leader knows you couldn't successfully land a force the size of a reenforced infantry battalion on a hostile shore, when you had no reserve or ready reenforcements, no build-up of supply, and were outnumbered a hundred to one by an enemy; regardless of whether you had air cover or not.

At the present time our government is still trying to learn the hard way that infantrymen, particularly infantrymen trained in dispersion and concealment, cannot be defeated with air planes. The effectiveness of air craft in ground fighting was negligible in World War II, and in Korea. We probably will have to lose a few hundred more Americans in Viet Nam before we admit that fact.



The assumption is made by many people that an infantryman is just a serial number, that infantrymen are all alike, that they will advance and fight when ordered, and that all they are supposed to do is to obey orders. All of these assumptions are wrong, particularly the last one. The opportunities of the battlefield are endless, but they cannot be seen from five miles behind the front.

The following record of combat is as accurate as after-action reports, and the memory of the writer, will permit. It's purpose is to bring to the attention of the reader the fact that all heroism is not limited to air corps pilots, to P. T. Boat commanders, or even to the marines. A few thousand are lost among the infantry.

The following is the combat record of the 329th Infantry Regiment of the 83rd Division.

FROM OMAHA BEACH TO THE ELBE  
THE DIARY OF A SOLDIER

1924

I am an infantry G.I., one of the hundred of thousands who were not smart enough to get into the Air Force or Navy when World War II started, and ended up by being drafted into the infantry - the garbage collectors of the national defense. I had been an electrician in civil life so they assigned me to communications and I drew the job of being the radio operator for the regimental commander of the 329th Infantry of the 83rd Infantry Division.

Our regiment, like most war-time outfits, was built on a skeleton of half a dozen regular army officers and about fifty enlisted men, the remaining 160 officers being from the National Guard or Reserve, and the rest of the 3500 G.I.s being draftees. The regiment is organized into three battalions of approximately 900 men each, and has headquarters, communication, supply, first aid, and anti-tank units. Each battalion is further subdivided into three rifle companies, of about 200 men each, has a heavy weapons company, (machineguns and mortars), and has its own headquarters, communications, supply, first aid, and anti-tank units.

We came overseas in April of 1944 and are now in England preparing for the invasion of Europe.

I decided to keep this diary because I had read my grandfathers letters to his wife during the Civil War. They were very interesting to me so I thought my war experiences might interest my children or grandchildren. Since I am The Old Man's, (the regimental commander's) radio operator I have plenty of spare time when The Old Man

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is in the command post or in conference. I will also get to see much of the action because I go with The Old Man wherever he goes so that he can keep in touch by radio with his battalions and with higher headquarters. I got this pad of paper from The Red Cross. It is just the right size to go into the waterproof case with my radio. I plan to jot down from time to time what has happened or what is happening.

We don't know where we are going from here, nor when, but evidently something is going to happen very soon. Everything is very hush-hush.

NORMANDY

June 23, 1944.

We landed today on Omaha Beach. Fortunately we were able to make a dry landing from a LCI, (Landing Craft Infantry). When the sea is rough an assault landing is dangerous. A man loaded down with weapons and ammunition doesn't have much of a chance if a wave passes over his head. As we moved inland from the beach we could see two lines of white tape climbing up the bluff that frowned down on the beach. These two lines marked the part of the hill that had been cleared of mines by the engineers in the first wave of our assaulting troops. We started up, staying carefully between the lines. As we reached the top we heard an explosion near the beach and looked back. Someone had gone outside the mine-cleared path and tripped a land mine. Three men were killed and eight wounded in one platoon of "B" Company. An inauspicious start. We have moved into assembly areas near the town of Bricqueville and are dug in.

June 28, 1944

We moved through the town of Carentan today, and relieved a regiment of the 101st Air Borne Division, which had taken part in the initial assault landing. We are in reserve but are close enough to the front to be within the range of enemy artillery. Our command post is a slit trench about twelve feet long dug into the side of a hedgerow. We are fairly safe here. Any enemy artillery shells that clear the top of the hedgerow go so far back that when ~~they~~ explode the fragments don't reach us.

July 1, 1944.

We had our first contact with the enemy today. We received word that one of our sentries had shot an approaching German soldier



and The Old Man and I went over to investigate. When we got there the German was writhing around on the ground in his last death agonies. He had no weapon and was undoubtedly a deserter trying to reach our lines. I saw the self-satisfied look on the face of the sentry who had shot him, and felt like smacking the look off his face.

July 2, 1944.

Our regiment has been augmented by the addition of the 322nd Field Artillery Battalion, Company "A" of the 308th Engineer Battalion, Company "A" of the 308th Medical Battalion, a medium tank company, and a tank destroyer company. With our regiment the whole becomes the 329th Regimental Combat Team - a small army of about five thousand men.

July 4, 1944.

The big attack to break out of the Normandy Beachhead began today. The other two regiments in our division were in the attack and we were in reserve. I don't know why they selected our independence day for they attack as the Germans were probably unusually alert on that day. The attack was stopped cold all along the line, as much by the hedgerows as by the German fire. Our Second Battalion participated in the attack by assaulting a position on the flank of the main attack. The position was strongly organized, on high ground with log bunkers, and our battalion had to cross a grassy swamp to reach it. The Old Man and I went over to see the jump off. It was suicide. The German machinegunners firing through gaps in the logs laid a deadly curtain of fire across the entire swamp. By the time our men reached mid-field half of them were down. The others kept

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going but only a few reached the German position where they were stopped finally. I thought the two assault companies of the battalion were all gone, but some of them dropped into the high grass and straggled back after dark. The count showed losses of of a third of the battalion - about three hundred men - a tragic introduction to combat.

July 5, 1944

We made our initial attack as a regiment today, driving south along the left side of the Carentan-Pierers highway. The attack was led by our Third Battalion, and succeeded in breaking thru the German's first line of defense. The battalion drove twenty five hundred yards through the hedgerows and reached the regimental objective at 17.45 (5.45 p.m.) At that time it was stopped more by threats to its flanks and rear than resistance in front. The First Battalion was put in behind it to keep it from being surrounded.

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The Old Man and I had gone up about mid-morning to watch the attack. When we got there, hand-to-hand fighting was going on. I could see one of our tanks with Captain McCarthy (The Battalion S-3) standing beside the turret on top of the tank with a forty five in his hand. The Old Man asked Lt. Colonel Sanders, (the battalion commander) what McCarthy was doing on the tank, that he was likely to be shot off, and that he couldn't do anything with a pistol anyway. Sanders replied that McCarthy was up there to keep the driver of the tank moving it forward. Sanders had been wounded in the arm, and had an extemporized sling on it, but was still vigorously directing the attack. An unarmored engineer bulldozer was cutting paths for our tanks through the hedgerows. The operator was paying no apparent attention to the German bullets that intermittently struck the bull-



dozer and went whining off into space. After watching the capture of one hedgerow we went back to the C. P.

Why the high command selected a place like Normandy for an offensive operation is as unexplainable to us as most high command decisions. It would be impossible to find better terrain for defense than this is. The farmers of the area have built up hedgerows, in lieu of fences, to inclose their cow pastures. The hedgerows are walls of earth, too high for a tank to climb over and too strong for it to crash through. Trees and bushes growing out of the hedgerows give perfect camouflage. The average pasture is less than a hundred yards wide, and one hedgerow succeeds another interminably. The German machinegunners lie behind these hedgerows and mow down our infantry when they cross the pastures. There seems to be no way to get to them except by hand-to-hand infantry combat.

July 6, 1944

Last night we got a call from Sanders that his battalion was running low on ammunition, and was threatened with being surrounded and cut off. Our ammunition officer loaded a platoon of five tanks with small arms ammunition and The Old Man ordered them to go up to Sander's position. The tank lieutenant said it was too dark to go up that evening, so The Old Man told him to go up in the morning at first light. At first light I called on the radio to see if the tanks had started and the lieutenant in command said he didn't know the way. The Old Man and I went over to the tanks position and The Old Man offered to ride in the first tank. The lieutenant said there wasn't room. The Old Man then asked the lieutenant if he would follow if we led him in the jeep.

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The lieutenant agreed to this, and we started off. About halfway up, German snipers started shooting at us from over near the Carentan-Pierers highway. We left the jeep and continued on foot. We got there just in time. The ammunition was distributed before the next enemy counter-attack.

Sanders had been wounded again so The Old Man ordered him to be evacuated, over his strenuous objection. Major Yanishewsky took over command of the battalion.

We left the Third Battalion and went back to the First Battalion. We found the battalion commander sitting under a tree with his head in his hands in a state of complete funk. He didn't even know us and was apparently oblivious to everything that was going on around him. The Old Man ordered him sent to the rear and told the second-in-command to take command of the battalion. After ordering the First Battalion to pass through the Third and continue the attack, we went back to the C.P. On the way we nearly got picked up by a German patrol. We thought it was one of our patrols and started to join it. We identified the helmets in time to take cover.

July 7, 1944.

*attack*  
The First Battalion completed passing through the Third and started an attack but didn't get very far. Captain Hartgraves of Company "A", Captain Shelton of Company "B", and Captain Crowder of Company "C" have all been killed. Major Howard, who took over the battalion has been wounded. Captain Carr, the adjutant, is now acting as battalion commander. In the Third Battalion, Major Yanishewsky, who replaced Sanders, has been killed. Major Speedie has been put in command of the Third Battalion. We have reached about the limit of our combat effectiveness.

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July 8, 1944.

We were relieved today by the 22nd Regiment of the 4th Division, and put in reserve. This was not much of a relief because the Germans have plenty of artillery and mortar ammunition and they saturated our foxholes all day. Nobody knows what war is like until he has been in a wet foxhole, with rain dribbling down his neck, waiting for a mortar shell or an artillery shell to come in on him, and not caring very much whether it does or not.

At dusk we received twenty officers and three hundred and sixty five enlisted men as replacements. They will receive a tough introduction to war. The Old Man was briefing the officers in an orchard by the C.P. when our artillery opened up on the enemy positions. As the shells roared over our heads the new officers all hit the dirt. Poor recruits. They couldn't even tell from which direction the shells were coming. And poor soldiers who they would command. Afterward I heard The Old Man tell the Personnel Officer not to requisition any more officers or noncommissioned officers but only privates - that he would fill all the future vacancies by battlefield promotion.

July 9-13, 1944.

We are back in the line with the mission of capturing the village of Sainteny. We plug along capturing a few hedgerows each day. We are getting a lot of cases of combat fatigue, particularly among the replacements. Their introduction to combat here is just too rough for them. The Old Man stops all those ~~that are going to the rear~~ who we meet on the roads, and asks them why they are going. He got an honest answer yesterday from a tall, skinny boy who was striding with purposeful strides toward the rear. When questioned the boy answered, "Its gettin pretty hot up there".

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The Division Psychologist has been around talking to the companies. This seems to increase rather than decrease the number of cases of combat fatigue. I heard The Old Man ask the Division Commander to keep the Psychologist out of our area. Every day a few men shoot themselves in the left foot - always the left. That seems to be a tough way to get out of here but its better than not getting out at all.

Lieutenant-Colonel Bowen, the commander of the Second Battalion, has been shot through the chest by a sniper. We visited the aid station when he was brought in. The bullet went into his chest and just missed his backbone going out. It left a hole the size of a man's thumb. He was still alive and conscious. He said to the Old Man, "I'm sorry Colonel, I didn't do very well by you".

July 14, 1944

Our daily advance can be measured in hedgerows. The higher command says that we are chewing up a number of German divisions, but we are paying a heavy price. We have lost all of our original commanders except The Old Man. The regiment on our right has lost two colonels - Colonel Barndollar shot by a sniper and Colonel Bender killed by an artillery shell. The regiment on our left has had two or three regimental commanders relieved because they couldn't get their men to go forward and be killed. The Old Man very nearly got relieved. I heard him say to the Commanding General, "I don't know how you feel about this but I feel like a murderer." The General was going to relieve him but was talked out of it by our regimental surgeon, Major Mauldin.

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Our Regimental Executive is out with combat fatigue. He was a professional officer with over twenty years of service, but fear seems to be no respecter of age nor rank. Under a terrific shelling he was found by the surgeon trying to dig the bottom out of his foxhole with his fingernails. Nothing will reveal whether or not a man has the stability to undergo infantry combat. The only test is combat itself. Our Operations Officer Was a college graduate, a football hero, and a graduate of the short course at The Command and General Staff College. The first time he got caught in an artillery concentration he was slightly wounded and became hysterical. He kept saying we were surrounded and were all going to be killed.

July 15, 1944.

We saw our Air Force in attack formation for the first time today. I expect the weather has been too bad for them to fly before today, or they have been busy elsewhere. We had reached the outskirts of Sainteny and were preparing for the final assault when we got orders from our Division Headquarters to drop back fifteen hundred yards so our Air Force could bomb the village. We dropped back and the Germans dropped back right along with us. The Air Force destroyed Sainteny and we are where we were three days ago - A mile from Sainteny.

I think our Intelligence Officer will be the next to go out with combat fatigue. He keeps going but his face has that grey overcast ~~characteristics of men who are mortally~~ afraid.

July 18, 1944

We never took Sainteny. Some other outfit made the final attack and we were diverted to "Orchard 15". The hardest battles in a war are often fought over some obscure objective that doesn't even have a name. "Orchard 15" was such an objective. It dominated the only road crossing in the area and was strongly fortified. Our artillery plastered it for two days and we made three assaults before our Third Battalion finally captured it.

July 20, 1944.

We have received some lieutenant-colonel replacements, without asking for them, but they didn't last long. One of them was smoking a pipe when he reported to The Old Man. The Old Man briefed him and told him to go up and take command of the Third Battalion. We went up to the Third Battalion that evening and found the lieutenant-colonel sitting on a tree stump smoking his pipe. When The Old Man asked about the situation he said Major Speedie was handling it very satisfactorily. We went up again next morning and found the new commander sitting on the same stump, still smoking his pipe. The Third Battalion had jumped off in attack that morning and the new commander said Major Speedie was handling it. The Old Man wasn't pleased. He told the lieutenant-colonel to report back to Division Headquarters - that he was relieved of command.

Another of the lieutenant-colonels was put in command of the Second Battalion to replace Bowen. He couldn't get the battalion to move against "Orchard 15" and was relieved.

The third one was put into the Regimental Executive job, but lasted only two days. We were in a French barnyard, the Executive



The Old Man, the Regimental Communications Officer, and I, when a German artillery concentration started coming in. The Executive jumped behind a wall that inclosed the barnyard. A shell hit the wall knocking it over on him and breaking his leg. That finished him for the duration. The Communications Officer jumped into the open door of the barn. A shell came into the barn, exploded, and filled The Communications Officer's fundam~~en~~ent with fragments. The Old Man and I jumped into a low building, I think a pig house, which wasn't hit.

July 22, 1944

We are in a defensive position while higher headquarters is cooking up some new operation. Being on the defensive means we are not advancing but are still under harassing artillery fire.

I will never forget Normandy, and if I live I never want to see it again. All the trees, except the funereal poplars along the farm roads, have had the tops shot off them. Why the poplars escape I don't know. The French farmers were unable to evacuate their cattle and the cows have been killed off, one by one. They are all dead now, their bellies swollen to twice normal size, the stomach gas causing them to roll over onto their backs, with legs sticking straight up like two by fours. At one place there was a farmhouse in the hollow between our position and the German's position. Before all the cows were killed an old woman used to come out of the farmhouse, morning and night, and milk the cows that were still alive.

Occasionally we ~~hear~~ hear the crying of a soldier for first aid, but most of them bear their wounds stoically. Many are saved by the first aid men who brave the falling shells to administer blood

transfusions. We can't do much about the dead. They are left to lie until the shelling stops, looking, as they lie there, like pitiful small bundles of old clothes. The Old Man and I came across one group of seven, a few days ago, lying touching each other, the apparent result of a single burst of fire. When we are attacking nobody can stop even to give first aid to a wounded soldier - the wounded have to wait for the medicos. Our chaplains have been carrying some of the more seriously wounded out piggy back.

July 24, 1944.

A new outfit is on our right flank and they are pretty jittery. The Germans have raided them the last two nights, and the company that adjoins our right flank has taken off for the rear each time. Our "G" Company, which is in reserve, has had to plug the hole each time. Today the company commander of "G" Company sent word up to the new outfit that he was putting a platoon immediately behind them with orders to shoot anybody that came to the rear during the night. I expect that they will stay tonight.

Although we have captured "Orchard 15" the cross road it dominated is still dangerous. The Germans have it zeroed in and fire a concentration of eighty-eights on it every few minutes on the off chance of catching somebody. They nearly caught us today. Whitey Giffin, our driver, always approaches it carefully before crossing. Today we had just started across when the first shells of a concentration started coming in. Giffin slammed on the brakes and he and I dived out one side and The Old Man out the other into the ditches along the road. A shell hit on The Old Man's side



and I saw his helmet roll out to the middle of the road. I thought they had got him but when the concentration stopped he got up and picked up his helmet. He said, "Good thing I didn't have my chin strap<sup>a</sup> down or that blast would have broken my neck."

We stayed there for a few minutes watching the crossing. While we watched a first aid jeep came along and started across. It was in the middle when a shell landed squarely on it. Three of the men were killed outright. The fourth staggered back toward us his face a mass of blood. He was crying bitterly.

July 25, 1944.

We broke out of the hedgerows of Normandy today. First there was a terrific air bombardment, then a fresh outfit swept over the right flank of the Germans in front of us, and then we advanced. The air bombardment was the most awe inspiring sight I ever expect to see. Planes came over, flight after flight, seemingly by the thousands. The whole area in front of us was ablaze and the explosions were like one continuous roll of thunder. The Germans must have had some intelligence of the attack, for when we advanced we found few Germans either dead or alive. We didn't go far. We were out into the open now and our armored divisions took up the chase.

We lost our fourth Regimental Executive Officer here. Lt-Lt-Colonel Hering and Captain Callahan were out on reconnaissance. Callahan tripped a land mine which exploded killing Hering. The Old Man says he is going to keep his next Ex in the rear area where he wont get hurt. The Old Man's striker, Luby, was killed by an eighty-eight two days ago. Giffin, the driver, and I are taking on his duties.

July 27, 1944.

For the first time since June 28th we are out of range of the enemy artillery and have a chance to take a bath and change our clothes. We don't have any bathing or washing facilities but a steel helmet full of water is an effective substitute. Almost everybody is washing clothes.

July 28, 1944.

The personnel officer has been totaling up our losses for the campaign. In killed, wounded, and combat fatigue, we lost about a hundred and forty out of a hundred and sixty officers, and just under two thousand out of ~~thirty~~ fifty five hundred men. Bad as that sounds I hear that some of our neighbors lost more. I also heard that in the big air bombardment before the breakout more American soldiers than Germans were killed by our air bombs.

Although all of our casualties are bad enough, some are more of a personal loss than others. I had a friend from my home town named Harold Mickey who was a Pfc and a scout in "F" Company. Scouts are especially trained men who precede the rest of the platoon when it is attacking. They have very dangerous positions because they are the first to come under enemy fire. The worst part of Harold Mickey's death was that although he was wounded by enemy fire he was killed by one of his own buddies. He was leading an attack when it was stopped by enemy fire. Mickey was wounded and left for dead in no-man's land. During the night he regained consciousness and stumbled back toward our lines. A sentry saw him coming and thinking he was a German, when he didn't answer the challenge, fired on him. The fire knocked him down but didn't kill



him. He arose and started forward again. This time the sentry threw a grenade that killed him. Next morning it was found that the original wound had caused some impairment in his speech so that he couldn't answer the challenge.

Another particularly bad loss was that of Second Lieutenant John Somers. When he first joined the regiment he looked like a boy of about fourteen, although his records claimed he was eighteen. It might be supposed that such a baby would have trouble handling a platoon of soldiers but he put that fear to rest by out-shooting and out-marching the best in the platoon. He usually ended a march carrying the pack of some soldier who couldn't make it otherwise. He was out in front leading a bayonet attack when he was killed by a German machinegun.

One of our most serious leadership losses was in the case of Major Terry Yanishewsky. He assumed command of the Third Battalion when Sanders, the battalion commander, was evacuated for wounds. Yanishewsky might have stayed safely in his battalion command post behind the lines but instead he was out in front with the assault companies and was killed by a sniper. Besides being a brave and competent officer Yanishewsky was a great entertainer and could always raise the morale with a song or story.

One of the tragedies of war is that the best and bravest are usually killed.

July 30, 1944.

Giffin, our jeep driver, The Old Man, and I, all received Silver Stars for taking ammunition up to the Third Battalion when it was nearly surrounded on July 5th. The Old Man had recommended that Lt. Colonel Sanders, the battalion commander at the time be awarded The Distinguished Service Cross. The recommendation came back disapproved with the indorsement, "He was only doing his duty as an infantryman". All he did was to break the German's first line of defense in Normandy, and lead his battalion through a mile of defended hedgerows. The Old Man said that if that didn't warrant The Distinguished Service Cross he couldn't imagine any action that would.

Directions have come down from Division Headquarters to put in recommendations for combat decorations for the Normandy campaign but nobody seems to be particularly interested. They are all washing their clothes. Writing up one of these complicated citations may be alright for a man that is sitting in an office but it doesn't go along with foxholes. You can't just say, "He single-handedly attacked ~~an enemy tank with a bazooka~~," or that "He got out in front and led a charge when the attack was faltering". The citation requires detailed description and the testimony of witnesses. The witnesses are probably dead or in a hospital somewhere



St. MALO

August 3, 1944.

We moved seventy five miles today, from Normandy to Pontorson in Brittany. After the horrors of the hedgerows the beautiful countryside, and the French girls riding bicycles on the streets of the French towns, were soothing sights for battle-inflamed eyes. We had almost forgotten that such sights existed.

August 4, 1944.

Our Division has been given the mission of clearing the St. Malo peninsula of its estimated fifteen thousand defenders, including capturing the port and citadel of St. Malo. We moved into assembly areas near the village of Dolet and are preparing to attack our first objective - the town of Chateauneuf.

August 5, 1944.

This is a different kind of warfare from that in Normandy. We can do some maneuvering instead of just driving straight ahead, our tanks can accompany the assaulting troops, and our artillery has something to shoot at. By a coordinated attack of the three battalions our troops overran the strongly defended fortress north of Chateauneuf and are now approaching the city of St. Malo.

August 6, 1944.

Our advance is being held up by positions on St. Joseph's Hill, just outside of the city. The position is not in our zone of action but can fire flanking fire into our zone. We are working with our neighboring regiment to reduce it. Our Second Battalion is in trouble again. Both the battalion commander and the second-in-command have been wounded. The Old Man sent for

Captain McCarthy, of the Third Battalion, to take command of the Second. McCarthy didn't last long. He is the same McCarthy who was riding a tank in the first attack in Normandy. The Old Man briefed him and advised him not to go up to the front lines until the situation cleared. An hour later we received a message that McCarthy had been killed going up to the front lines. He was a man who evidently didn't know the meaning of fear. Captain Granville Sharp, who was wounded in Normandy, came back from the hospital just at this time, and he was put in command of the battalion.

August 9, 1944.

It has taken us three days to get into the city of St. Malo. The Germans had some pill boxes at the edge of the city which had to be captured before we could attack the city itself. The city is divided into three parts; St. Servan, St. Malo proper, and Parame. Our regimental objective is St. Servan. After overcoming strong resistance at the edge of the town, our Third and First Battalions have entered and are advancing by limited objective (street by street) attacks. We are advancing faster than the other regiments. The Old Man called in Lieutenant Reeder, our education and recreation officer, and told him to be on the lookout for a cache of liquor in the town. Reeder left and in about an hour we received word that he had been captured by the Germans. Several hours later we saw an American flag waving in the street and The Old Man stopped the attack. Two hundred Germans came marching up the street as prisoners with Reeder at their head. He had convinced them that their position was hopeless and they had decided to surrender. We moved up to the water front and looked out upon our next objective - The Citadel of St. Malo.



August 10, 1944.

The Citadel of St. Malo is an old Vauban type fortress sitting on a peninsula, which is almost an island, being connected with the mainland only by a causeway. It is the main seaward defense of the harbor of St. Malo, but has been modernized by the building of a line of concrete and steel pill-boxes to protect it from landward attack.

The Old Man had our Chaplain, who speaks German, call the German commander on the telephone and ask him if he didn't want to surrender. The answer was, "Although the Americans may stand on the banks of the river Rhine it is incompatible with the honor of a German soldier to surrender his garrison." So that was that. We will have to take it the hard way. The commander is a Colonel Von Aulock. The natives call him, "The mad colonel of St. Malo." The port of St. Malo is useless unless the citadel is reduced. We moved our anti-tank guns up under the cover of darkness and entrenched them behind the sea wall.

August 11, 1944.

Our anti-tank guns have silenced all the pill boxes in front of the fort. To do this they had to get a hit on the gun ports in the pill-boxes. This required fine shooting but eventually all the pill-boxes were silenced. We then asked the Air Force to try to crack open the main fort for us. They came over high and only one of their bombs hit the fort. It did no apparent damage. We then tried an assault. Two companies dashed across the causeway and up to the fort. No fire came from the fort but we could see our men running around the fort trying to find a way to get into it. The Germans have another fort on the island of Cezembre farther out in the bay. When we attacked they had this fort shell



The Citadel. Our attacking troops have been recalled to the mainland.

August 13, 1944.

The attack on The Citadel has settled down to a siege. The problem is to crack open the main fort. We try everything; heavy artillery, air attacks, napalm. Nothing seems to have any effect upon those six foot walls.

While this siege is going on the Second Battalion is given the mission of capturing Fort de-la-Varde. This fort is on a small peninsula about three miles northeast of St. Malo. To improve the morale of his troops Captain Sharpe brought up a sound truck and had it play martial aires. His troops assaulted the fort with Indian war whoops accompanied by the strains of, "The Stars and Stripes Forever". These assorted noises must have been effective because the fort surrendered at the first assault. The Second Battalion took 197 prisoners out of it.

August 15, 1944.

Major Bagley, our operations officer, has been studying The Citadel through field glasses, and has discovered a faint path in the grass lawn leading to the fort. There must be some kind of an opening at the end of that path. Our artillery officer moved a six inch rifle up to the sea wall during the night and dug it in behind the sea wall. He has started shooting at the fort's wall at the end of the path. After the first few shots a camouflage net fell down revealing a door. The gun crew are pounding away at the door - an awfully small target for a six inch gun. Occasionally a port in the fortress will open, and the gun crew will be showered with machinegun bullets. The range is only about five hundred yards but the crew is careful to stay behind the sea wall.



One or two, who became careless, have been hit.

August 16, 1944.

The First and Third Battalions are training especially organized assault teams to penetrate the fortress when it is cracked open. The engineers are furnishing demolitions and demolition teams.

The Second Battalion, following its successful reduction of Fort de-la-Varde, is given the mission of capturing Grande Bey, a fort on the mainland supplementing The Citadel. Grande Bey looked like a tough job as it was just off shore and the causeway leading to it was covered with water except at low tide. Much to our surprize the battalion smoked the fort, then ran across the causeway and captured it by tossing in a few grenades. They took 150 prisoners. The Second Battalion looks like a different outfit since Sharpe took command.

August 17, 1944.

~~Today was the day~~ planned for the assault on The Citadel It was planned for 1500 (3.00 p.m.) First there was to be an air bombardment with napalm (jellied gasoline), then the assault teams were to dash across the causeway and enter the fort by the aperture the artillery has made which is now several feet square.

The German's must have had information about the pending assault because at 1440 white flags appeared all over the walls of the fort. The assault teams, not realizing that they could be incinerated by their own napalm, dashed acrossed the causeway and up to the fortress. Our planes were on the way and I tried frantically to get ~~the assault teams on the radio so they could be~~ ordered back. Major Bagley's operator tried to get the squadron

leader of the assault planes on his radio to stop the bombing. Neither worked. The first flight of planes came over and dropped their bombs. Fortunately they missed and the bombs fell into the bay. Some quick-witted soldiers then spread their ~~cerise~~ recognition panels on the grass of the fort and the succeeding flights veered off. It was a near thing.

Major Bagley finally got the air attack leader on the radio and sent him to bomb the island of Cezebre. We went down to see the prisoners come out of The Citadel. There were 595 of them, the first being the Mad Colonel. He was all dressed up and looked like the Hollywood version of a Prussian junker.

We moved into what was formerly the French barracks at St. Malo, the citizens came out of their cellars to welcome us, we found an adequate supply of liquor, and all got pleasantly crocked.



SURRENDER ON THE LOIRE

August 19, 1944.

We have moved from St. Malo across France to Angers on the Loire river in southern France. Our mission is to protect General Patton's right flank during his drive on Paris. We are on the north side of the Loire river, and the Germans are on the south side. We relieved a regiment that has seen no combat. Their colonel is a rigid disciplinarian. He has put all the whore houses "Off Limits" and has kept his men under close control.

August 20, 1944.

There isn't much activity here. Last night a German patrol crossed the river and occupied the Angers water works, and this morning Company "E" chased them back across the river. I expect that they were just trying us out..

The Old Man has had the regimental surgeon inspect the towns whore houses, and has had them all reopened, when the report was satisfactory. We are allowed freedom of movement when not on duty and are making the best of it. The town is full of pretty girls. Not many of them speak English but we make out all right. This city is the bottling place for Contreau liqueur. There is an old castle near our C. P. that is full of it, and we are in possession. Most of us get to sleep in beds for the first time since we landed. Our C. P. is in an old chateau on the outskirts of the city. It's owner is an old Baron with one arm. The chateau is a regular museum and The Old Man has issued strict orders that none of us will go above the first floor, where we have our C.P. The Baron and his wife usually eat supper with The Old Man and his staff. The Baroness is a tiny woman who speaks no English. She has a servant who sits



behind her chair and waits on her.

September 5, 1944.

Nothing much has happened for the last two weeks. Frenchmen from the F.F.I. (Free French Infantry) come across the river every night and tell us where the Germans are billeted. There is a highway along the river and every morning we send our dual-purpose fifty caliber machineguns along this highway to shoot up the German billets. The F.F.I reports that the Germans are pulling out toward the east. Today The Old Man called in Lieutenant Magill, commander of The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, and told him to go across the river and find out what the Germans are doing. Magill rafted his eight jeeps and twenty four men across the river during the night and has disappeared.

September 7, 1944.

Lieutenant Magill came into the C.P. at about 0300 last night, woke up The Old Man and told him that there was a German General with 20,000 troops at Issudun who wants to surrender to the Americans. Magill and his twenty four men had gone eighty miles through enemy territory before locating the Germans. The German General wants us to put a battalion of troops across the river and give him a token battle so he can surrender with the honors of war. He has been trying to march his column of 20,000 men from the Mediterranean port area to the Rhine river. Caught between our Seventh Army and our Third Army, harrassed by our air force, and under almost constant attack by the F.F.I., he has decided to give up.

The Old Man puts the problem up to Division Headquarters. They say they have no battalion available, but will take it up with Ninth Army Headquarters. Ninth Army offers an armored battalion but there



is no way to get them across the river without building a bridge. While this is being discussed Magill has gone back to Issudun.

September 8, 1944.

Magill has persuaded General Elser to surrender without a battle, and arrangements are being made to march his 20,000 troops up to the Loire river.

September 9, 1944.

We are having a lot of trouble with war correspondents. They have heard about the pending surrender and have descended on us like vultures. The Old Man won't let any of them cross the river and they are fit to be tied. Hal Boyle was here at the start and he got across so the rest of them are promising dire retribution. They probably will get their revenge by not giving us any publicity, now or later. I noticed that in dispatches Magill's I&R Platoon was reported as being from the 83rd Division instead of from the 329th Infantry.

September 10, 1944.

The pending surrender has brought up several problems. First is the F.F.I. The march up to the river is about eighty miles, and the F.F.I. like to hide in the underbrush along the roads and bush-whack the marchers. To prevent this The Old Man has allowed the Germans to keep their arms and ammunition, and has put an American lieutenant in a jeep with an American flag at the head of each column. The Germans are marching up to the Loire in three columns, with 6,000 to 7,000 men in each column.

When a British lieutenant-colonel, who was on duty with the F.F.I. heard that we were going to allow the Germans to keep their

arms and ammunition during the march, he was horrified. He asked The Old Man how many troops he had to consummate the surrender. When The Old Man said, "About two thousand", the Britisher said, "Two Thousand to disarm twenty thousand armed men - the most fantastic thing I ever heard of." The Old Man doesn't seem to be worried but he does have machineguns and artillery set up on our side of the river in case the Germans change their minds.

September 15, 1944.

With the arrival of the German prisoners we have the problem of their horses. There are several hundred of them. The Germans have no forage and neither do we. This problem has been solved by locating enough ex-cowboys in our outfit to herd the horses. They are being grazed on Frenchmen's farms and the Frenchmen compensated by giving each as many horses as he wants. We don't care - we have lots of horses.

September 18, 1944.

The surrender was consummated without complications. The Germans were required to unload their wagons and their weapons on the south side of the river to prevent booby traps and then were marched across on foot bridges. They were put into stockades that had been prepared for them during the march. As the last of their troops crossed the river a German Major, accompanied by two soldiers carrying a big chest, came up and reported to The Old Man. He spoke perfect English and said to The Old Man, "I am the paymaster for this column. This chest contains about fifty thousand francs. I would like to turn it over to you." The Old Man replied, "I am busy right now - turn it over to my supply officer over there" - pointing to Major Kohler. He started toward Major



Kohler. I felt like saying, "I'll give it my seat in the jeep".

September 20, 1944.

A military police outfit has relieved us of responsibility for the prisoners. This brings our POW total up to 23,270.

General Patton has cleared Paris and our sector has been extended to reach from Blois to Auxterre. There is nothing happening here so we probably will move before long. I haven't seen or heard anything more about the pay chest.

LUXEMBOURG

September 24, 1944.

We moved three hundred miles last night from the Loire river to Luxembourg. The march was uneventful except that one march serial of the First Battalion got on a race track and went around twice before we intercepted it. We have to travel without lights and it isn't always too easy to find our way in the dark. We have moved into assembly areas with our C.P. in a schoolhouse in the village of Jungalister, Luxembourg.

September 25, 1944.

We are about two miles from the Sauer and Moselle rivers, and the Siegfried Line, (the German defense bastion) , is just on the other side of the rivers. We are relieving another outfit who say the Germans have outposts on our side of the rivers, principally at Echternack, Gravenmacher, and Wasserbillig, and that they do active patrolling on our side of the rivers. Our mission is to protect General Patton's right flank. We are responsible for a sector about twenty five miles wide.

October 1, 1944.

We haven't done much the last week except to organize for the defense of our sector. We started a campaign today to drive the Germans back across the river. The First Battalion is preparing to attack Gravenmacher, the Second, Wasserbillig, and the Third, Echternach. The Germans will probably put up a strong defense for these towns because they are the outposts of the Siegfried Line.

October 7, 1944.

We completed the capture of the towns along the rivers after a week of fighting. The toughest was Echternack. It had a garrison



of two companies and they offered strong resistance. In the early stages of the attack they had the support of the big guns in the Siegfried Line but these guns could not depress enough to help them in the close fighting.

We lost two of our veteran officers in this campaign. Captain Markowitz, the company commander of Company "K", and Captain Lozier, the operations officer of the Third Battalion were out on reconnaissance, tripped a land mine, and both were killed. Markowitz had been a buck sergeant when we invaded Normandy and had risen to captain by battlefield promotions. Lozier had gone from second lieutenant to captain. Both are serious losses to the Third Battalion.

October 31, 1944.

The Germans have made no effort to recross the rivers, so everything has been pretty quiet. We have received a lot of replacements and are up to our authorized strength again. The Old Man has begun a retraining program in rear of our position, taking one battalion at a time. This is real training - much better than any we had in the 'states. The battalions attack dummy positions using tanks, overhead artillery fire, and unrestricted fire by the machineguns and rifles. We couldn't get by with this in the 'states because of the danger to the participants but it is certainly realistic. We haven't had any casualties from our own fire but some of the big guns in the Siegfried Line, hearing the firing, have sent over a few shells and two or three men have been wounded by them.

November 10, 1944.

Our artillery is playing a sort of cat and mouse game with the German railroad trains that run along the east bank of the Moselle river. There is a section of this railroad that can be



seen from our side of the river. The artillery keeps an observer there and when he sees a train he calls back and they give it a going over with their 155's. We don't know how effective the fire is but several times cars have been set on fire.

We have the situation reversed in our visits to our river outposts. The observers in the fortifications of the Siegfried Line can see a short stretch of the road that runs from Jungalister to Echternach and they keep a big gun zeroed in on that stretch. Whenever they see us on the road somebody pulls the lanyard of the big gun. Giffin has been able to beat this by revving up the jeep to about sixty five and crossing the space before they can act. Unknown to us another jeep followed us one day and got three casualties from a shell intended for us.

November 15, 1944.

Everything is quiet here which is all right with us. The high command evidently has no intention of advancing in this area. We are just below the trajectory of the German V-2 missiles and we can see them passing over on their way to England. They appear to be traveling slowly enough so they could be knocked down by anti-aircraft fire but their speed is probably deceptive.

Thanksgiving 1944.

We had the regular Thanksgiving dinner today from turkey to mince pie, with a little addition in the form of native wine. The people of Luxembourg are very hospitable and its a pretty uncouth soldier who doesn't have a girl friend. The Red Cross doughnut trucks have been around. They would like to go up to the front lines but are afraid they might lose their doughnut truck from enemy shelling. They have gone up a few times at night. The U.S.O. is putting one show in Luxembourg city but that is too far back



is putting on shows in Luxembourg City but that is too far back  
for many of us to go.

## THE HURTGEN FOREST

December 9, 1944.

Our quiet period is over. We were relieved today by the 12th Infantry regiment of the 4th Division, and ordered to the Hurtgen Forest in Germany, one of the toughest sectors of the front. The companies of the 12th, who have been in the Hurtgen, are down to about half strength so they must have been having a hard time.

December 10, 1944.

We crossed the German border today and relieved the 8th Infantry regiment in the Hurtgen Forest. The situation looks ominous. The 8th, with only half of their men left, were in dugouts on the snow-covered slopes of the forest. The snow is blackened from shell bursts, and the tops of most of the trees have been shattered by artillery fire. The roads are rivers of mud. Our troops are in muddy shelters on the forward slopes of the forested hills. The Germans, lower down on the slopes toward the Roer river, are quiet. Our C.P. is in a dugout with mud in the bottom and logs bracing the sides. After Luxembourg it is hard to take.

December 12, 1944.

We started an attack today with the idea of getting out of the woods and reaching the towns along the Roer river, which we can see through the trees. Our training in Luxembourg began to pay off. Using a combination of assault fire and maneuver, our troops overran the German strong points on the wooded slopes, one after another, and now have reached nearly the east edge of the forest. The fighting for these strong points has been vicious



and at close range. The casualties have been heavy on both sides. Our troops are dug in for the night under heavy shelling from the vicinity of Duren, across the Roer river. We have to do our moving here on foot. Jeeps belly in the deep mud and snow whenever we try to use them. Weather conditions may stop everything else but it never stops the infantry.

December 13, 1944.

The first town east of the forest is Gurzenich. It is a long narrow village, most of its houses being along the road that extends from the Roer river to the Hurtgen forest. There is some open ground between the forest and the town. The Second Battalion made a rapid advance today across this open ground, and has gained a foothold in the town of Gurzenich. The First Battalion is still fighting to clear the lower slopes in their zone of action. We have moved the C.P. into a farmhouse at Hof Hardt. It is certainly a relief to get out of the mud and snow.

December 14, 1944.

Our engineers have swept our supply route from our rear area to the forward edge of the forest, and our tanks are coming down. We had several vehicles blown up before the road was swept. The engineers, who do the mine clearing, don't get as many casualties doing this mine sweeping as would be expected, but one mine sweeper had his foot blown off today. When we went into the first aid station he was smoking a cigarette, laughing and chattering. Whether this was from drugs or his relief that he wasn't killed, I don't know. The stump of his leg didn't look pretty.

December 14, 1944.

The little town of Birgil is about five hundred yards from the edge of the forest. The Third Battalion was given the mission of capturing it. Lt. Colonel Speedie lined up "I" and "K" Companies in the edge of the forest, and they started forward using assault fire, (advance a few steps, fire, advance a few more steps, fire etc). In twenty minutes the companies were in the town. Strangely "L" Company, that remained in reserve in the forest, suffered more casualties than either of the assault companies.

The Second Battalion is working its way through Gurzenich in a house to house attack. The Germans are in the cellars and have to be rooted out. They are fighting for every house. Later the Germans launched counter attacks against our troops both in Gurzenich and in Birgil, but they were all repelled.

December 15, 1944.

The Second Battalion has cleared the town of Gurzenich almost to the bank of the Roer river. The Third Battalion is consolidating its position in Birgil.

December 16, 1944.

We nearly lost the town of Birgil today. The Germans attacked it vigorously all morning using assault guns, (self-propelled artillery) and infantry. The attacks were repulsed after hard fighting, using anti-tank guns and bazookas on the assault guns and rifles, machineguns, and grenades on the accompanying infantry. One of our finest examples of heroism was displayed in this attack by Sergeant Ralph Neppel of Company "H". His machinegun squad was attacked by a section of assault guns, and all the men in the squad except Neppel were killed. Neppel was blown back from his position and both legs shot almost off. Crawling back to his machinegun on



his elbows, he righted the machinegun and with a burst of fire mowed down the infantry that were accompanying the guns. They had passed, evidently thinking he was dead. Shorn of their infantry protection, which was necessary against bazookas, the guns wheeled around and went back across the Roer river. Neppel, for no explainable reason, survived. The only enemy now left on our side of the Roer river is a group of about two hundred that are entrenched in the triangle formed by the town of Gurzenich and the Roer river, and a smaller group in Rolsdorf, a village on the Roer about a mile to the southeast.

December 17, 1944.

Today the First Battalion was ordered to pass through the Second Battalion in Gurzenich, turn right when they reached the river, and attack the German trenches from the rear. This maneuver worked perfectly. The tanks, with "B" Company riding their hulls, charged down the main street of Gurzenich, turned right when they reached the river bank, and headed for the trenches. When the Germans saw the tanks coming up behind them they came out with their hands up. We captured about two hundred in this operation. Rolsdorf surrendered when the tanks started for them and we now have control of the Roer river and are out of the snow and mud again.

December 18, 1944.

We sent a patrol across the Roer river today into the city of Duren. It reported no enemy. We have orders against crossing the Roer because the Germans control dams upstream and can flood the area.

We heard today that the German General Von Rundstedt has launched a major attack through Luxembourg in the area where we

were before we moved into the Hurtgen. If we had stayed another week we probably wouldn't be here today. The heavy attacks we received on the sixteenth may have been part of this drive.



THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

December 23, 1944.

We were relieved today by the 414th Regiment of the 104th Division, and moved to the vicinity of the German city of Aachen. The city is practically destroyed, showing the effects of our air bombing and artillery fire. We are now in Ninth Army reserve.

Christmas, 1944.

We have been lucky in being out of enemy contact both Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day so we could eat sitting at a table. At best eating out of a mess kit while in a foxhole is bad. When it is raining it is hardly worth trying. At noon The Old Man was called to Division Headquarters for orders and we are preparing to move. The German drive has broken through the American lines in Luxembourg, and seems to be heading for Liege in Belgium. The newspapers are all excited and think that we are about to suffer a major defeat. We are not excited. Our lines along the border were thin and the Germans could break through anywhere by massing their troops at one point. After they broke through, however, they still have us on both flanks, and the farther they go the more vulnerable they will be to flank attack.

December 26, 1944.

We moved sixty five miles last night and went into assembly areas in the vicinity of the Belgium town of Havelange.

December 27, 1944.

We are moving to the support of the Second Armored Division which is fighting the point of the German drive in the vicinity of the town of Humain, Belgium.

Speedie's Third Battalion has relieved elements of the Second Armored Division around Humain, and Cook's First Battalion has relieved other parts of it near Rochefort, Belgium. The German drive for Liege seems to be definitely stopped as this was the spearhead of their advance.

December 28, 1944.

Company "B" of the First Battalion led off this morning in an attack toward the town of Rochefort, which is reported to be occupied by German tanks. The L'Homme river almost surrounds the town and there is only one bridge. Our first report on the operation was that "B" Company had gotten into Rochefort. It had taken advantage of the fact that only the bridge was being guarded, and had waded across the icy river and entered the town. From the noise a terrific fight is going on in the town. The Germans are thoroughly alert now and we can't get any more troops across the river. It looks as though we are going to lose "B" Company.

December 29, 1944.

The furious firing that went on all day yesterday has diminished, but some firing is still going on. This indicates that part of "B" Company has not been captured.. The remainder of the First Battalion has tried all day without success to find a way to get to the support of "B" Company. Crossing the river now would be suicidal. Our artillery put a huge smoke screen of 300 shells on the town, hoping that "B" Company could withdraw under the cover of the smoke. Nothing happened. We can't get "B" Company on their radio. It must have gotten wet crossing the river or the operator is a prisoner.



December 30, 1944.

At daylight this morning we could see civilians in the streets of Rochefort, and in a short time "B" Company came marching out, practically intact. They had surprised the Germans when they waded the river, but as soon as the Germans found out that they were in the town all Hell broke loose. "B" Company took refuge in the stone buildings, particularly the railroad station. When the tanks fired into the first floors, our men moved up to the second and third floors. The Germans couldn't elevate their tank guns enough to reach them and "B" Company's men repelled all attempts to get up the stairways. The Germans tried for two days and then gave up and evacuated the town. When The Old Man asked the company commander why he didn't come out under the smoke screen, Captain Hill replied, "Colonel do you remember telling us in a meeting that if any of us ever gave up an objective without your permission that you would relieve us of command?"

December 31, 1944.

The German drive has been definitely stopped and they are retreating toward the Rhine river. A British Brigade came to relieve us today, and although The Old Man told the Brigadier that the Germans were all gone the Brigadier insisted that he must make a reconnaissance. This took him all day and we were not relieved until 1600 (4.00 p.m.) At that time the Brigadier invited The Old Man to come to his trailer for a cup of tea. The British know how to fight a war. The Old Man excused himself on the grounds that he had a rendezvous farther east.

January 3, 1945.

We relieved the 504th Regiment of the 82nd Air Borne Division today in the Ardennes Forest. Their men had been dropped in the early part of the battle of the bulge to help stop General Von Rundstedt's drive. We are fighting the weather more than the Germans. The temperature is near zero and the snow knee deep. There are almost no houses and we have to bivouac in the snow. We furnished transportation to help the 82nd get out of the line, and they gave us a good supply of mortar ammunition. The Germans are retreating toward the east.

January 8, 1945.

We started a new drive today with the mission of cutting the the retreating German column in two at the Langlir river. Our first objective is Petite Langlir, a village of half a dozen houses on the bank of the river. We are in the Ardennes Forest with it's steep and heavily wooded hillsides, it's narrow roads, and deep snow. The advance is slow because of the snow and because our tanks slide off the icy roads and have to be pulled on again by a recovery vehicle. The Germans have evidently left only a relatively small force to guard the river crossing while they retreat to the east.

January 10, 1945.

The German tanks still hold the crossing. So far we haven't found any way to reach them, and have lost three tanks and a tank destroyer trying to get to them. The river is too deep to wade. "F" Company cut off one of their strong points and captured about forty prisoners. Two bazooka teams from "I" Company stalked one of the



German Tiger tanks last night. They got on each side of it and both fired their bazookas. The rockets bounced harmlessly off the sloping sides of the tank. The tank then turned it's turret on one team and killed them with a single shot from it's turret gun. It then swiveled the turret around and destroyed the other team.

January 11, 1945.

Our Second Battalion, reconnoitering down the river today, found a foot bridge across the river, crossed and advanced toward the enemy's flank. Seeing that they were about to get cut off, the Germans retired and the crossing is in the hands of our neighboring regiment. Our troops have been bivouacing in the snow and we are getting more casualties from frozen feet than from enemy fire.

January 13, 1945.

We have spent the last two days mopping up the area around Petite Langlir and Langlir. The Germans are fighting a delaying action. "E" Company captured fifty Germans and a tank that were cut off and couldn't get away.

January 14, 1945.

We started pursuing the retreating Germans today but the snow is too deep to make much progress. They appear to have avoided being cut in two in the Langlir area. We captured a village called Honelez just before dark, and are out of the snow for the first time since we left Rochefort.

January 15, 1945.

There is another and larger village in our zone called Bovigny, and one in the zone of the regiment on our right called Courtil. Last night The Old Man gave the First and Third Battalions an order for a coordinated attack on Bovigny and told them that the first

battalion that got into Bovigny could have it for shelter. They jumped off at daylight and at about ten oclock we received calls that they were both in Bovigny. While The Old Man was pondering this the Third Battalion called and asked if they could have Courtil if they captured it. It was not in our zone of action but The Old Man called Division Headquarters and asked for a change in the boundary. The Third Battalion captured the village and everybody was happy except the neighboring regiment that had to spend another night in the snow.

January 20, 1945.

Our Third Armored Division, that has been working with us, has made contact with a Division coming up from General Patton's Third Army and the battle of the bulge is over except for some mopping up. The mass of the Germans have gotten back across the Rhine thanks to the snow and to the weather being too bad for our Air Force to operate.

January 22, 1945.

We were relieved today and put in reserve in the town of Tohogue, Belgium. We are billeted in the houses of the town and it is wonderful. The rear area soldier needs U.S.O. shows, Red Cross canteens, and post exchanges to keep him happy. All the front-line infantryman asks is a warm and dry place to sleep and some hot food.

January 31, 1945.

We have received five hundred and seventy replacements for our casualties in the Hurtgen Forest and the battle of the bulge. Not nearly as bad as Normandy but not good. Two of our companies "B" and "I" have now lost six successive commanders, in each case



three killed and three wounded. This doesn't seem to effect the aggressiveness of the two companies. They are, if different, more aggressive than the other companies. Since Normandy all our losses above the grade of Private have been filled by battlefield promotion of subordinates who have proved their mettle under fire. We had our first bona-fide case of combat fatigue during this campaign. A lieutenant who had been doing an excellent job as company commander, after the captain was wounded, was reported by Lieutenant-Colonel Speedie as being on the verge of cracking up. The Old Man told Speedie to keep him in command until the campaign was over and then relieve him. That was a mistake. A day later he went berserk and it took three men to control him.

February 2, 1945.

The Old Man asked permission to allow our most battle-scarred soldiers to go into Paris on leave of absence. The reply came back that we could send only three per-cent because Paris is so filled with rear area personnel that there is no room for more. The Old Man expressed himself rather vigorously about allowing rear area installations to be set up in Paris but that did no good.

February 15, 1945.

~~Lieutenant-Colonel Speedie~~ rejoined us during this period. He has been in the hospital being patched up after his third wound. When he is absent Major White commands the battalion. We met Speedie on the road when we were coming back from a visit to his battalion. The Old Man said, "I thought you were supposed to be in the hospital." Speedie replied, "I am. I'm AWOL and I expect you to get me out of it". The Old Man asked, "Why didn't you stay and get a little rest; things aren't too active now?" Speedie re-

plied, "I was afraid that you would give my battalion to somebody else". The Old Man said, "OK - I'll take care of it".

February 16, 1945.



## THE RHINE

March 1, 1945.

We did nothing during the month of February except to move from place to place in reserve while the Roer river was crossed and preliminary movements started toward the Rhine river. Today we moved out of Gusten with the mission of capturing Neuss, a city of about fifty thousand people on the west bank of the Rhine opposite Dusseldorf. The First Battalion led the advance, the other two battalions following. It is raining as it always seems

to be when we are attacking. Cook's battalion encountered stiff resistance in the villages of Tits and Loveling and did not reach the outskirts of Neuss until dark. Speedie's Third Battalion was put in on the flank and we started a night attack through the town using limited objective attacks, every fifth street being a check line for coordination. Part of the resistance in Neuss is ~~these~~ Volkstrumers, somewhat like a Home Guard, wearing arm bands for identification. Our men don't discriminate - they just shoot anybody that is carrying a weapon.

Night operations give the attacker a great advantage if the troops are seasoned enough to use them. Green troops are too frightened at night to do anything and are likely to shoot each other. With veteran troops the city can be divided into sectors using streets for coordination. The defenders can only cower and wait for the foe who they know is coming but who they can't see.

March 2, 1945

We have reached the east edge of the city of Neuss. There is a wide plain between the city and the Rhine river, honeycombed with trenches containing the Germans that are guarding the bridge to Dusseldorf.

to Dusseldorf. Our artillery is softening up the trenches.

The Third Battalion has been given the mission of capturing the bridge, the Second Battalion alerted to cross the bridge if it is captured. "I" and "K" Companies started forward but were stopped by fire from the trenches. Speedie lined up "L" Company at the edge of the town with a platoon of four tanks dispersed along the line. Just as the attack was ready to start an enemy shell killed the lieutenant in command of the tanks. Without a break his sergeant took over and the attack started forward using assault fire. Speedie, The Old Man, and I watched from the edge of the town. Bullets from "L" Company's weapons and the tanks machineguns kicking up the dirt along the parapets of the trenches caused the defenders to keep their heads down. The line moved steadily forward, not a man of ours went down. "I" and "K" Companies joined the advance. They overran the trenches and the Germans boiled out in rear of them with their hands in the air. There was an explosion and a big chunk was blown out of the bridge. The middle span is still standing but the east span, which is out of sight, may be down.. The Second Battalion was at the approaches of the bridge but The Old Man didn'tt issue the order. He was apparently afraid to expose them on the other side with a bridge of questionable strength behind them. The First and Third Battalions have taken up positions along the levee of the Rhine. The Old Man had the ThirdBattalion check the German trenches to see how many had been killed by our four hour artillery concentration. They reported finding only one. This supports the old military adage that you can't shoot a man out of a hole in the ground. We took about four hundred



prisoners in this operation

March 3, 1945.

Last night the Germans finished the job of blowing the bridge and this campaign is evidently over. The 331st Infantry claim that they had a patrol reach the Rhine before our two battalions got there and are given commendation by the higher command for being the first unit in the American army to reach the Rhine. Their battalions are moving up on our flank.

As we moved the C.P. into Neuss this morning we could see four eighty-eight m.m. cannon set in concrete emplacements that would allow the guns to sweep the flat approaches to Neuss. Their crews must have abandoned them when we by-passed them in the dark last night. They could have caused us plenty of trouble if we had made a daylight attack.

The Rhine river operation provided a good example of the Presbyterian theory that you die when your time comes. The Old Man and I went up to visit the Third ~~Battalion~~ C.P., which was in the cellar of a house in Neuss. Everybody in the C.P. seemed very glum in spite of the fact that they had just completed a very successful attack in capturing the German bridgehead. When The Old Man asked why they were so glum, Speedie pointed to a small ventilation window in the wall and said, "Do you see that grating?" About twenty minutes ago one single German shell came over and struck it. Our S-2 just happened to be standing by it and the shell killed him." The grating was only about eighteen inches wide and six inches in height. The chances were perhaps one in a million.



March 4, 1945.

Major Kohler, our supply officer, came into the C.P. this morning and told The Old Man that there was a schnapps distillery in Neuss. He asked if he could issue some to the troops. The Old Man told him to let them have all they wanted. This evening Major Mauldin, the regimental surgeon, came in and asked The Old Man if he had issued such an order. On receiving an affirmative reply he said, "Well Colonel, for your information, we have had more casualties from personal fights since you issued that order than we had taking this city!"

March 5, 1945.

A squad from our I&R Platoon crossed the Rhine to Dusseldorf last night in an assault boat. They had no trouble but reported that the Germans were entrenched about a hundred and fifty yards from the river. For a while we were harrassed by some artillery fire from Dusseldorf. Captain Gust, our anti-tank officer found a way to stop that. We had overrun the defenses in Neuss so rapidly that they had not had an opportunity to fire some big rockets that they had emplaced along the levee of the Rhine. Major Gust turned them around and started dropping some of them in Dusseldorf. When one of them hit a building ~~the building would disintegrate.~~ After a day or two of this duel the Germans decided to call it off.

March 6, 1945.

Most of the population of Neuss is still in the city but they give us no trouble. The C.I.C. has discovered about two hundred German soldiers among them which we have sent back as P.O.W.s



March 12, 1945.

An outfit south of us has captured a bridge across the Rhine at Remagen. They took better advantage of their opportunity than we did. Our C. O. is over fifty years old and he looks pretty tired after ~~he~~ has gone without sleep for a night or two. That probably had something to do with his failure to take advantage of his opportunity to sieze the Dusseldorf bridge.

March 13, 1945.

For the first time we have seen a U.S.O. show. When we were in Luxembourg some U.S.O. shows were put on in Luxembourg City but that was too far behind the lines for many of us to go. A few days ago Lily Pons came to Munchen-Gladback, which is a short distance from here, and put on a concert. She sang some old American folk songs to what was probably the most appreciative audience in her career.

March 25, 1945.

A number of our men who were wounded in earlier campaigns have been going AWOL from hospitals and replacement centers and rejoining their companies. The Old Man has received a number of letters directing him to take disciplinary action against these AWOLs. He has a standard indorsement that our administrative section puts on all these letters. It is, "Disciplinary action has been taken".

## THE FINAL DRIVE

March 30, 1945.

We have been in reserve while the leading elements of the NINTH ARMY have been crossing the Rhine. We are restless and wonder why we are not in the fighting. We have just been following along and last night crossed the Rhine on an army bridge and moved east stopping at Beckum, along the Lippe Canal, a hundred and ten kilometers east of the Rhine.

April 3, 1945.

We saw our first action in this campaign today. We received a call from Division Headquarters that one of the Ninth Army's armored divisions was being held up at a town called Neuhaus, and directing us to go to their assistance. The Old Man started Cook's First Battalion toward Neuhaus and prepared to follow with the rest of the regiment. Before the remainder of the regiment got under way The Old Man received this laconic message from Cook, "We have taken Neuhaus. No casualties." They captured a hundred and eighty prisoners.

The Third Battalion was then sent to Sennalager to prepare for an advance. Sennalager is famous for cognac. The Third Battalion, as part of its preparation, liberated a five hundred gallon water cart, filled it, and marked it, "Third Battalion Cognac". The cart makes the Third Battalion's transportation easy to identify. It could always be identified by this cart.

April 4, 1945.

We started the big drive across Germany today with the Weser River as our first objective. A unit of the Second Armored Division is on our left. Together we are the spearhead of the Ninth Army. The Second Armored is headed for Magdeburg, and we are headed for



Barby. Both towns are on the Elbe River. Resistance was not ~~bad~~ bad until we reached the high ground protecting the towns of ~~Horn~~ Horn and Veldrom. The Germans are fighting a delaying action with tanks and infantry and put up strong resistance here but are being systematically outflanked by our battalions. We have advanced about sixteen kilometers.

April 5, 1945.

We are advancing on a front of about six miles. Two battalions are in assault and one in reserve. The battalions are alternated in reserve and get a little rest at that time but not much. The battalions have been furnished with marked maps, with important objectives given numbers, so that we can talk about them in the clear over the radio. We are moving too fast to use field telephones. Our command post consists of two jeeps, one containing Major Bagley, the operations officer, with his radio operator, and the other The Old Man and me.

We have been having some casualties from die-hard Germans who hide out until our attacking troops pass, and then take pot shots at our messengers and supply personnel. We had our Division Liaison Officer killed that way today. The Old Man sent a squad of the I&R Platoon to search the place from which the shots came. Lieutenant Magill came back in about an hour with three Germans he had found in the place. He reported that he found no weapons. The Old Man asked him, "What did you bring them in for?" Magill was silent for a moment and then said, "Well Colonel, I guess it was just my mistake."

The Old Man has issued orders that any Germans offering resistance to the attacking troops will be taken as ~~prisoners-of-war~~. Any who allow the attacking troops to pass and then fire on communications personnel will not be taken as POWs but will be shot down where they are found when they try to surrender. This should tame down the bush-whackers when the word gets along. The grapevine is fast here.

April 6, 1945.

We are becoming infamous with newspaper correspondents, who have dubbed us, "The Rag Tag Circus". This is because we pick up every vehicle ~~in the towns~~ that we go through and use these vehicles to help transport the troops between fights. By putting thirty five men ~~on a tank~~, ten or more on a jeep and trailer, using any trucks we can get from the higher command, and the civilian vehicles, we are making as fast progress as the armored outfit on our left ~~that~~ is fully motorized. Our columns don't look very military. Today one of our officers looked closely at a Volkswagon in the column and found that it contained two German officers.

April 7, 1945.

We had expected a big battle for the Weser River, (of Pied Piper fame), but we captured it by a strategem. Major George White, who is commanding the Third Battalion while Speedie is in the hospital with his fourth wound, saw that the Second Armored outfit, with whom we have been racing, had beaten us to the Weser and had put a bridge across it. Moving his battalion up into the zone of the Second Armored he crossed on their bridge while they were not using it, then moved in behind the German defenders of the crossing in our area and cleaned them out. We crossed the Weser without trouble.



April 8, 1945.

We overran a German underground factory today. It was at Gruneplan, and was manned by displaced persons from a concentration camp nearby. Our first knowledge of it was when large numbers of men dressed in what looked like pajamas started boiling out of the ground. They were almost hysterical with joy. The Germans had gone underground to avoid allied air bombardment. They had complete underground machine shops which had been operating at full speed until we overran them.

The enormous steel manufacturing complex of the Ruhr is just across the Lippe Canal on our right. Most of the buildings have been destroyed by our air attacks, the only things left standing are the chimneys, looking like the charred boles of trees after a forest fire.

Some time ago we received an order that there would be no fraternizing with the German people. We hardly expect anything intelligent to come out of higher headquarters but it is hardly to be expected that they would be that naive. We usually finish each days operations in German towns. Our soldiers move into the most convenient buildings, usually houses. The German men are all away in their army and the women are in the houses. Our soldiers share their rations with the women and the women share their beds with the soldiers. This seems to be a satisfactory arrangement all around. We have had only one complaint. This was an alleged mass rape of a woman who posed with her husband for pornographic pictures. Dr. Mauldin investigated the charge and after he brought back some of the pictures The Old Man decided not to do anything about it.

April 9, 1945.

Our next objective is the city of Halberstadt. There are a number of intervening towns. When we capture a town or city we have their Bergermeister call the Bergermeister of the next town on the telephone and tell him that we are coming, and that if he doesn't want his town to be shot up to have sheets displayed in the second story windows, and any soldiers who are in the town standing at the edge of the town ready to surrender. We capture lots of towns and cities that way. The Old Man and I nearly got shot up on one of these surrenders today. We saw a town across the Lippe Canal with sheets in the second story windows, and The Old Man sent a squad of the I&R Platoon to investigate. The squad had reached about midway of the bridge across the canal when a machine pistol opened up on it and on us from a house a hundred yards away. Bullets scattered all around us but strangely nobody was hit. The German pistol makes a fearful noise but like most such weapons it is good only for short range fire. The Old Man was really irritated. He had me call for a tank and when it arrived he pointed out the house from which the firing had come and told the tankers to let them have it. The house was a large one and full of people. Those that were able came running out as fast as they could. It didn't take long for the tank to reduce the house to rubble.

April 10, 1945.

We are moving along the edge of the Harz Mountains, a well known resort area. The First Battalion is following the edge of the forest, the Second Battalion along a parallel road about three miles to the left. Intelligence reported that there are supposed



to be sixty five thousand German troops in the Harz Mountains whose mission is to man a final defense bastion for Hitler. Using our Anti-tank Company to cover the roads leading out of the forest, we are continuing east leaving the Germans for somebody else to clean out. We lost Major Kohler, our supply officer, on one of these roads out of the mountains. According to report he saw an empty truck on the road a short distance into the forest, and wanting to augment our transportation, he went up to the truck. It was a plant. A German patrol grabbed him and marched him away before he could be rescued. Kohler is one of the three field officers that survived the Normandy invasion. Only the surgeon, Major Mauldin, and The Old Man are now left.

Cook's First Battalion has taken Goslar and Oker, and is heading for Bad Harzburg. Our hardest resistance here is from the Hitler Jugend. They are just boys, ten to fifteen years old, but they won't surrender, and since they can shoot like men they have to be shot like men. We advanced thirty nine kilometers today.

April 11, 1945.

Our First Battalion took Bad Harzburg today. The Second Battalion was held up for a while at the outskirts of Halberstadt. The German's method of defense is to put all their troops at a road block at the entrance of the town. Our answer to that is to use our tanks to immobilize the defenders at the road block while our riflemen move around the flank and enter the unprotected sides of the town or city. We expected strong resistance from Halberstadt as it was a fairly large city, but White's Third Battalion entered it from the north while Sharp's Second Battalion engaged the road block. In a few hours it was all over.

Halberstadt has a large camera manufacturing plant. I wanted to liberate myself a camera but we went through so fast that I didn't have time to go to the plant. At the end of the day's operations I went back to get one but the Signal Corps had reached Halberstadt by that time and they had a guard on the plant. One of the few advantages of being a combat infantryman is that he gets the first chance at the looting. It is usually not very productive because the people who leave their houses generally take with them everything of value. The infantryman can carry with him only small things but if he has transportation he might carry off a red comforter to augment his sleeping bag. The main official objection to looting is that it diverts the attention of the infantryman from his major mission, or as someone said, "Two lootin and one shootin".

Some soldiers have the small boy's destructive instincts. In one town we came across a soldier methodically breaking the plate glass windows in all the stores by striking them with the butt of his rifle. In another a group had found a cache of sporting weapons, (shotguns and small caliber rifles) and were laying them out on the street so a tank could run over them.

We went through some towns so fast that we didn't have time to search the houses. Our Third ~~B~~Battalion Supply Officer, Lieutenant Harpin, was bringing up the rations one evening when he saw in one of the small towns he passed through, a German soldier duck behind a house. Deciding to be a hero he got out of his jeep and drew his forty five. His driver followed suit, drawing his M-1 from it's scabbard. The driver, in fumbling with the M-1 accidentally discharged it into the air and fifty two German soldiers came out from behind the



houses and surrendered. Harpin formed them into a column and told them to march back up the road and someone would take care of them. He then proceeded to the town where his battalion was located. His battalion had just captured the town and was busy looting. As Harpin passed along the sidewalk, looking for the battalion C.P., a soldier on the second floor of a house tossed a radio out of the window. The radio struck Harpin on the head and shoulders and knocked him unconscious. When he came to in the battalion aid station his first comment was, "Its a hell of a war. I capture fifty two Germans with a forty five pistol and then get knocked out by one of my own men with a radio".

We left Cook's First Battalion to mop up in ~~Halberstadt~~ and moved to Gronigen and Wegeleben. We are approaching the Elbe river after a nine days continuous advance in which we moved two hundred and sixty five kilometers, overran a hundred and seventy two towns and cities, and picked up twelve thousand eight hundred and forty five prisoners, most of them disabled. Near Durenburg we heard that the Germans were trying to evacuate seven hundred British and American POW's, by troop train. We had our Air Force bomb the tracks ahead of the train and liberated the POWs. The German civilians are offering no resistance. In some towns that we pass through they even stand on the sidewalks and cheer as we go by. I expect they prefer us to the Russians.

April 12, 1945.

We started today thinking that we might reach the Elbe before dark, but the German resistance has stiffened. They have a well organized defense position which covers Barby and the bridge across the Elbe. We lost a number of men and several tanks trying to press



the attack.  
~~the attack.~~

THE ELBE RIVER BRIDGEHEAD

A

April 13, 1945.

During the night the Germans retired to the east bank of the river and blew the bridge. We moved into Barby this morning. We hear that The Second Armored Division, which reached the Elbe at Magdeburg a day ahead of us, has put a bridgehead across the river but had to withdraw it under assault gun attack. At ten o'clock The Old Man, with Cook of the First Battalion, and Dodge, the Division Engineer went down to the river bank. We could see no activity on the other side. The Old Man asked Dodge where the assault boats were. Dodge replied, "Up the road about two miles". The Old Man asked Cook how he felt about crossing. Cook replied, "I don't like it but if you say so I'll cross". The Old Man said, "I think this is the best time, before they can get organized". He told Dodge to bring up the assault boats. At 13.30, (1.30 p.m.) the First Battalion was loaded into the assault boats and crossed the Elbe without having a shot fired.

When the First Battalion had all gotten across the river Dodge made rafts out of the assault boats by using five boats with heavy planks across them for each raft, and we ferried all the anti-tank guns in the regiment across the river. This was a precautionary measure against the German assault gun attacks. The rafts were then disassembled and the boats used to ferry the other two battalions across. By dark we had a firm bridgehead around Walternienburg and the Ninth Army Engineers had started building a bridge.

The Germans had been slow to react to our crossing. They probably had not expected it so soon, as river crossings usually require considerable organizing. Our battalions had time enough to organize their positions and emplace their anti-tank guns. Just before dark



the Germans launched the first of a series of attacks against us. They came in confidently with their assault guns. Our anti-tank guns knocked out most of their assault guns and our infantry stopped their infantry. They launched three more attacks before midnight but all were stopped with serious losses. We held the first successful bridgehead across the Elbe River.

April 14, 1945.

The Ninth Army engineers finished the treadway bridge across The Elbe this morning and we are pouring everything across. The German air force tried to destroy the bridge both by floating mines and by air bombing. Neither was successful. The Old Man and I were watching the construction when one plane made an attack. It circled and headed down the river toward the bridge site. Half of the engineers dived into the water and half of them flattened themselves on the muddy bank. The water looked cold and the bank sticky. While we hesitated an anti-aircraft shell hit the plane and it turned east with it's tail on fire.

The 331st Infantry has put a battalion across on our flank and the Second Armored Division is preparing to put tanks across on the treadway bridge.

April 15, 1945.

We advanced our bridgehead five kilometers today against strong resistance. Our battalions are now in the villages of Nutha and Gutergluck, and our C.P. has been moved up to Walternienburg.

April 16, 1945.

This morning the enemy launched an attack against our positions in Nutha and Gutergluck. The Old Man and I were with the Third Battalion in Gutergluck when the attack came. It was a

slaughter reminiscent of Normandy in reverse. A force of about two hundred men with a dozen assault guns moved out of cover several hundred yards away and headed for our lines using assault fire. They didn't have a chance. When they first appeared our anti-tank guns and artillery took them under fire, followed by our machineguns and rifles. It was as brave an attempt as the Charge of the Light Brigade, or Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. In spite of their losses those still on their feet kept coming. Finally they were all killed. Not an assault gun nor a man reached our lines. It was a magnificent example of heroism but doomed to failure from the start. We were just too strong.

April 17, 1945.

The attack yesterday must have been the Germans last effort. There have been no attacks anywhere today. Their gallant dead still lie dotting the field where they fell. I expect they don't have anybody left to bury them. We have organized our perimeter for semi-permanent defense.

April 18, 1945.

The Ninth Army commander, General Simpson, visited our command post in Walternienburg today. He was very complimentary about our drive across Germany and the establishment of the bridge-head but said nothing about any further advance. We are less than sixty miles from Berlin and there appears to be nothing to stop us from going there. There must be some high level agreement about us not going beyond the Elbe River.

April 28, 1945.

We have just been sitting for the last ten days. The Germans have not been doing anything and neither have we. Today we re-



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ceived orders to capture the city of Zerbst, which is about five miles away on the highway toward Berlin. We were softening up the city with artillery fire when a car came out under a flag of truce bearing the Bergermeister. He asked The Old Man to stop the firing because they hadn't had time to bury their dead from the last air attack. The Old Man asked him if he wanted to surrender the city. He replied that only the military commander could do that but that he would take an envoy to the military commander. The Old Man turned to Captain Shroeder, who was standing near and who spoke German and said, "Shroeder, you go back in with this fellow and see if the commander wants to surrender". There was a queer look on Shroeder's face but he went. In half an hour he came back and said, "The commander says he has direct orders from Hitler not to surrender the town but if we advance he will not fire on us." The Old Man turned to the Bergermeister and said, "We will give you thirty minutes to get back into the town, then we will advance without further firing. If any fire comes out of the town it will get the works". Sharp's Second Battalion marched on the town and took it without firing a shot. We picked up about nine hundred POW's in Zerbst.

April 29, 1945.

It looks like this war is about over. The Old Man thinks we made a mistake by not going into Berlin while we could. It would have been easy any time after the sixteenth and is only about fifty miles from our lines. We have sent a detachment back to Wegeleben to establish camps for POW's and displaced persons.



April 30, 1945.

Our Division Cavalry made contact with the Russians today at the town of Appellendorf.

May 1, 1945

A German Colonel approached our area today under a flag of truce. He said he was in command of a POW camp at Altengrabow, twenty five miles to the northeast, and that he had nineteen hundred allied POW's that he would like to turn over to us because he had nothing to feed them. Trucks were sent up from the Ninth Army and Lt. Colonel Sharpe took charge of evacuating them POWs to our lines.

May 4, 1945.

We turned our sector over to the Russians today and moved to Wolfenbuttel, a retrograde movement of about fifty miles. We are to take up army of occupation duties here. Since our landing on Omaha Beach in Normandy we have been in contact with the enemy two hundred and thirty three days, have captured about two hundred towns and cities, have taken over forty thousand POWs, and have suffered approximately five thousand casualties, eight hundred and fifty of whom were killed.

May 9, 1945.

V. E. Day - an anticlimax as far as we are concerned. We are at least able to sleep at night now, and to get fed regularly.

Grafenwohr, Germany  
August 1, 1945.

I had stopped keeping this diary on V.E. Day thinking that the war was over for us. I was too optimistic. It seems that our Division (the 83rd) was one of the two Reserve Divisions that was selected to go to the Pacific and help General McArthur deliver the coup-de-grace to Japan. We can't understand why the powers-that-be selected us when there were any number of Divisions that came to Europe about the time of the battle of the bulge, which was near Christmas time, while we have been in action since the previous June. The actions of the high command are usually unexplainable to us anyway.

We have moved to the German training area at Grafenwohr and are doing the kind of refresher training that we did in Luxembourg. The veterans are not approaching this training with much enthusiasm. Some of them say our Division Insignia - OHIO - means Over the hill in October.

Grafenwohr, Germany  
August 14, 1945.

We were making a practice attack today with two battalions abreast. We were with one battalion when we heard a great outbreak of yelling and cheering coming from the other battalion. I got their operator on the radio and asked what the noise was about. He told me that he had accidentally picked up a message that the Japanese had surrendered and the war was over. We are preparing to move back to Vilshofen, near Passau on the Danube river, for occupation duty.



September 30, 1945.

We have settled down to occupation duty. This involves primarily the administration of POW and DP camps. The POWs are no problem. They still retain the German discipline and are anxious to please. Their surroundings are always kept neat and clean and it is a pleasure to visit them. When the weather started getting cold a delegation of them approached The Old Man and asked permission to go to their homes on pass to get winter clothing. The Old Man allowed a few of them to go, and as they all came back he eventually allowed them all to go. None of them failed to return.

The Old Man and I have decided that we were fighting on the wrong side in this war. The German people can't be defeated. They bounce back after every defeat. As soon as the war was ended, in May, we saw the German women and children out in the fields planting crops using whatever equipment they could find. I even saw a little German girl, ten or twelve years old, out in the rain plowing a field, using a cow to draw the plow.

The displaced persons are more of a problem. They have been collected into camps mostly by nationality. There seems to be some strange urge in time of war that causes people to leave the comparative safety of their homes and start walking the highways where they are in a great deal more danger. They have few, if any, possessions, and no means for caring for themselves. They are furnished at present with a ration of eleven hundred and fifty calories a day. For heating they each get about a double handful of lignite a day. It is particularly hard on the old people.

October 1, 1945

One of our most serious problems is captured German pistols. For a while hardly a day went by that some soldier didn't accidentally shoot himself or one of his squad mates with one of these pistols. The Old Man is having them all collected and stored. They will be issued out again when the soldier is ordered home. They probably will cause a lot of trouble, eventually, back in the United States.

Linz, Austria.

We had our final review today before the breakup of the Division for return to the 'States. General Patton was the reviewing officer and he was very complimentary. His reputation has permeated down into the ranks and all the soldiers were at their best. It is the first time we have been in mass formation since the landing on Omaha Beach but the ranks looked very straight and military.



Camp Lucky Strike

9 This will be my final entry. We are here at Camp Lucky Strike waiting for water transportation to the 'States. The priority of return is based upon length<sup>9</sup> of service in Europe and the number of decorations each man has been awarded. Most of our men have high priority on length of service but are out-ranked for return because of the decorations. This has caused considerable ill-feeling. Our men, who fought at the front for almost a year, at best have a Silver Star or a Bronze Star. They have to stand aside for some rear-area heroes who have never been under fire, or some Johnny-come-latelys who came in during the battle of the bulge, when practically all the fighting was over, but are hung all over with medals. We have decided that getting a medal is more of a matter of how good a romanticist the writer of the citation is rather than what the hero did. Our officers never had time to write up citations in the way they were required or if they did have the time the witnesses were usually dead or in a hospital somewhere and couldn't be reached. Most of our men have discarded all their medals except The Combat Infantryman's Badge.

Personally I am satisfied, since I came through without the loss of my eyes or one of my limbs, and am in reasonably good physical condition. Having had snipers shoot at me, my helmet blown off by a shell explosion, our jeep blown up by a land mine, and having passed unscathed through numerous artillery and mortar concentrations, the fact that I am still here is reward enough for me.



Of this I am sure - There is nothing good about war. Any humane instincts that a man has are only a handicap to success in combat. All the dangers and discomforts of war are borne by not to exceed five percent of those in uniform, and the combat personnel receive less in the way of rewards than those who spend the war sleeping in beds and eating at tables.

Combat conditions have one virtue. The imminent danger of death eliminates most petty personal characteristics, and men are closer to each other than at any other time in their lives. When the officer and the private are sleeping side by side on the floor of a cellar, saluting and protocol are hardly appropriate. Not that this undermines authority. When his life is in danger the soldier wants strong leadership. Instead of shooting some tough officer or sergeant in the back for fancied wrongs of the past he looks to them to tell him what to do, and the tougher the leaders are the better the soldier likes it.

From my viewpoint two tragic mistakes were made in the war. One was to land infantry in Normandy where they had to fight against the suicidal handicap of the hedgerows. The other was to allow us to sit for ten days in the Elbe river bridgehead when we could have very easily captured Berlin.