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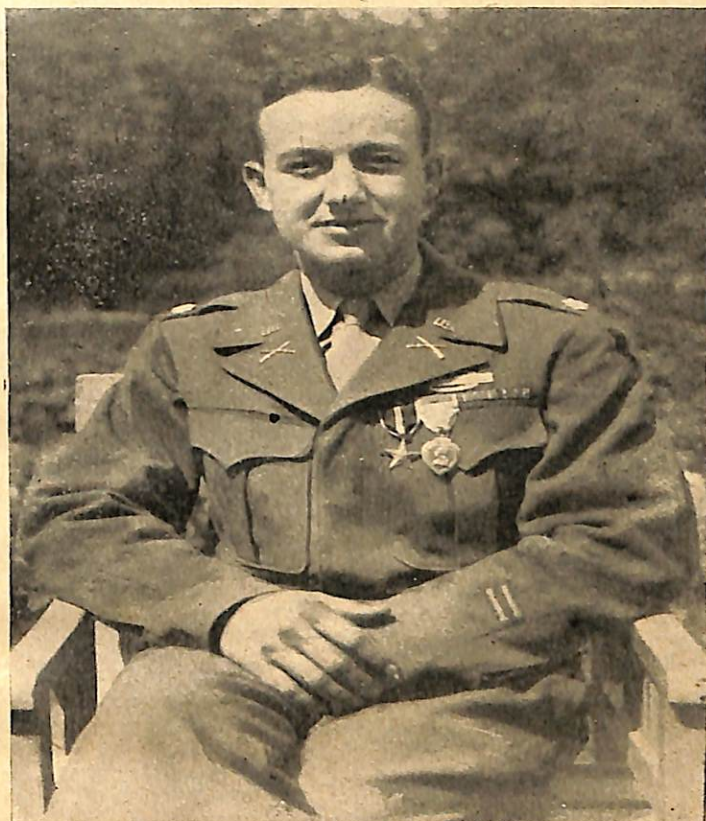


*2ND BATTALION*



*329 INFANTRY*

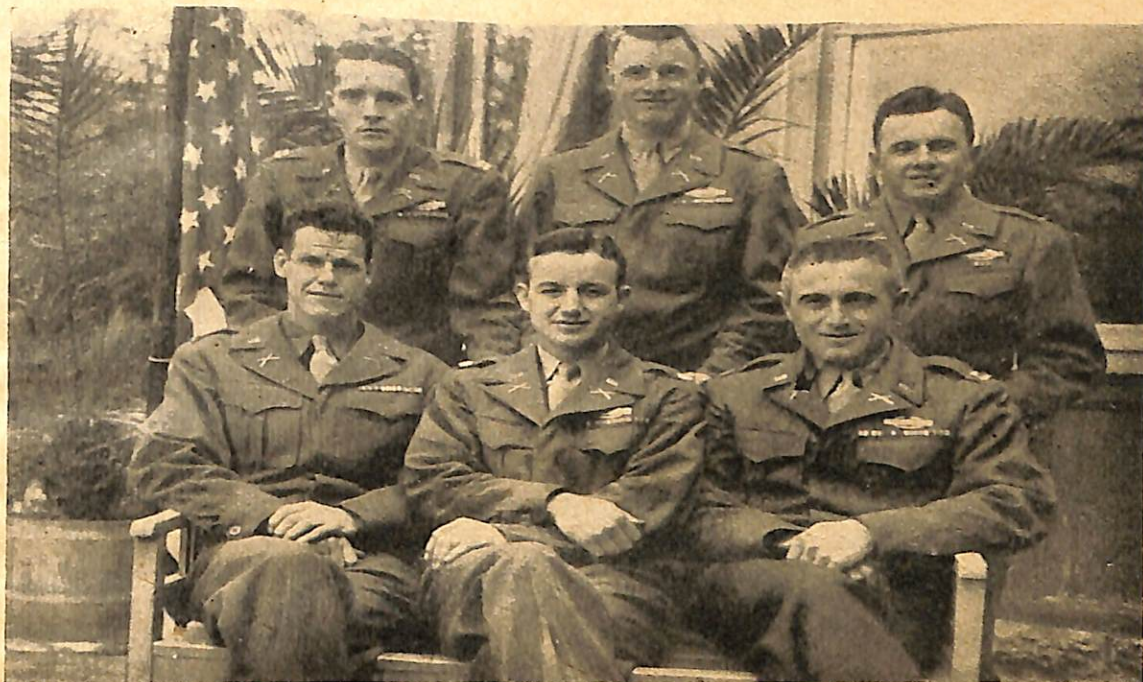




Lt. Col. Granville A. Sharpe

1 FEB 26 1947





### V-E DAY STAFF

*Seated - left to right*

Executive Officer  
 Commanding Officer  
 S-3

Major Harry G. Benion  
 Lt. Col. Granville A. Sharpe  
 Capt. Antonio J. Gaudio

*Standing - left to right*

S-1  
 S-2  
 S-4

Capt. John J. Devenney  
 1st. Lt. Samuel T. Hastings J.  
 1st. Lt. Michael Miotti



## DEDICATION

*This history is dedicated to all Members of the 2nd Battalion, past and present.*

*On the field of battle you proved that you were men worthy of the responsibility given to you by your country. Your valor, besides winning for you the high honor of the Distinguished Unit Citation, contributed directly to the defeat of our enemy and the restoration of Peace in Europe.*

*We can never forget those gallant men who gave their lives so that our way of life could survive.*



I

# *NORMANDY*



Sunken Road in Hedgerows



Attacking in Hedgerows



As we lay off the coast of France waiting for facilities for unloading and the sea to calm, we had a chance for our stomachs to settle and to develop our sea legs. The rumors were thick and as vicious as rattle snakes.

The landing operations were accomplished by each unit scrambling down the nets into landing craft and then being transported to shore. The beach line was crowded with every type of American landing craft, the most predominate being the „Duck“ which at that time appeared to be winning the war for us.

The original impression was that our "D" day troops had suffered heavily, especially in ships. There were hundreds of large boats all lined up parallel with the shore and half submerged. The answer was that we needed a breakwater and, by sinking these ships, one was provided.

As each group reached shore, they were met by their Commanding Officer and First Sergeant and were checked off the passenger lists. This was our first roll on the mainland of Europe. Each Company was formed and marched off in a colum of two's, sweating it out in more ways than one. It was a hot June day and each man was loaded down with excess



Relaxing aboard ship



equipment besides wearing woolens and fatigues. After a seven mile march along a dusty road we were ready to fight anything that got in our way.

While enroute to our assembly area several men became careless and crossed the characteristic white tape and were blown up by mines. These were our first casualties on the continent.

Our assembly area was designated as Columbiens, France, and here we bedded down for the night using old mother earth as a bed with a lower bunk beside us in the form of a fox hole. We remained in this area for several days before pushing on.

Bright and early on the morning of the 27th. we found ourselves again with our hiking shoes on headed for the vicinity of Carentan. During the march it seemed like we passed every special unit the army had, particularly units of artillery. Almost before we knew it we were crossing the Carentan Bridge. The MP on duty told us "Hurry along boys, they drop 'em in here once in a while" and that was all we needed to get us across "toute suite". As we walked through the cobblestone streets of Carentan we smelled for the first time the odor of death. This, along with the continuous roar of our artillery lined up along the road, made us realise that we were now a part of that thing called war.

That night in the assembly area we had a visit from a lone enemy plane that flew in, dropped a flare, and then continued on his way. This became an every-night occurrence so we gave him the name of "Bed Check Charlie". The ack-ack boys threw a circle of tracers into the sky in an attempt to bring him down but were unsuccessful.

We bivouaced in the assembly area for several days and were kept busy with training problems and discussions. The training dealt primarily with coordinated tank-infantry attacks and practice river crossings. Our first day of combat was drawing near and we knew it. Each day more and more artillery pieces of all sizes were moved in behind us and by the 3rd. of July we could count well over two hundred, hub to hub.

We had read in books and had seen movies of Infantry units preparing for the jump off and without fail the C O would say "This is it, men". Perhaps somebody said it this day too but we don't remember. We all knew this was it without being told. We were tense and quiet and tried to think of more pleasant days back home.

On the 4th. of July we moved to the final assembly area and received orders for our first attack and a few hours later we received our "Baptism of Fire".



Firing in hedgerows



E and F Companies were committed with the mission of attacking across a wide swamp and gaining the solid ground along a line of hedgerows. Heavy resistance was met by the attacking companies all day and they only succeeded in gaining two hedgerows. At one point they were pinned down and enemy artillery and mortar fire caused many casualties. Many of our men sank in the waist-deep mud of the swamp. German tanks were parading at will and butchered E and F Companies with point-blank fire. Each time H Company's machine guns opened up they were blown from their positions.

The information we had received as to the strength of the enemy proved to be incorrect and our attack was fatal. E Company was considered a total loss and F Company was reduced to a third of its size. G and H suffered light casualties. At 2200 orders finally came to pull back and we were glad of the opportunity to rest and reorganize.

The next day was spent recovering from our terrific set back and attempting to settle our nerves. We set up outposts and, nervous as we were, we were still determined to get at the Jerries. Company G and part of Company H held the line for the night. Orders were for us not to fire until we could see the swastika on a German's belt. G Company caught a three man patrol along a fence line and shot them as they crossed over.

Later in the night we were ordered to move to a road junction south of Carentan in the 330th. Regimental area to back up the line. The 330th. had been hit by a counterattack and their aid station had been captured.



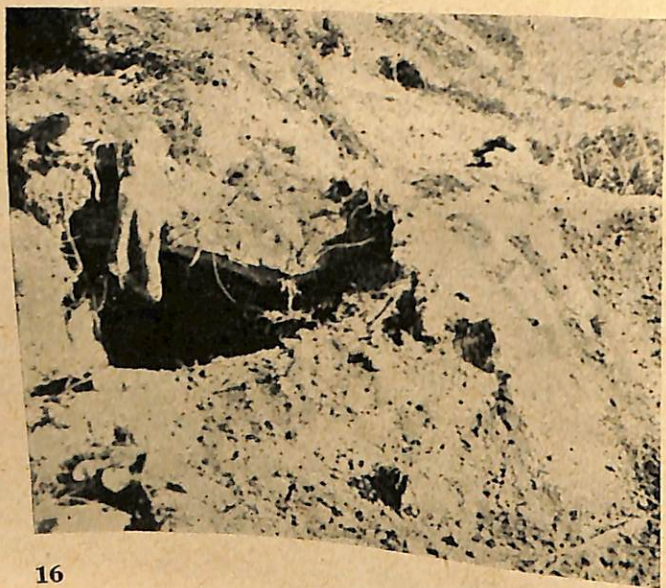
We took up positions at the road junction at 2200 and worked until midnight digging fox holes to sleep in.

We were awakened at early dawn by fire from a Jerry tank which set fire to one of our own tanks. It was here that we first heard the horrible sound of a GI tank burning, ammunition exploding, and our own doughboys mournfully calling "Medic".

On July 6th. we moved to a new area and set up defensive positions and sweated out the order for the next attack. Ahead of us was hedgerow after hedgerow and we knew that each one meant a terrific battle. The enemy had the advantage of ideal defensive positions. They had trenches dug on the opposite side of each hedgerow and holes cut through just big enough for their guns. Our determination drove us forward but the cost was high. These were dark days in our campaign to liberate the enslaved people of Europe and to defeat our enemy. At the rate of one hedgerow a day we could see the war lasting for twenty years.

We were under heavy artillery fire throughout July 7th. but fortunately suffered only a few casualties.

G Company was called upon to clear a road junction that was on the main supply route. The Jerries had reoccupied their old positions during the night and had cut the 3rd. Battalion supply route. A terrific battle ensued in which we used every thing in the book including anti-tank guns





Tank that held  
up the Battalion  
for three days



to blast a house that overlooked the road junction. Late in the afternoon the rest of the Battalion joined G Company. The fight had been rough and we had lost many men among which were several key NCO's that had been with us since the Division was reactivated. We finally were able to accomplish our mission when a P-47 dropped a bomb on our objective, demoralizing the enemy and scaring hell out of us.

With night-fall came our usual change in orders we moved up along the Jerries' highway where we listened to our artillery put the enemy to sleep. It was a very pleasant lullaby. At dawn we drew back about two thousand yards and watched our Air Force inflict disaster on the enemy positions.

Contact having been made with the 1st. and 3rd. Battalions, we moved back to an assembly area where we received orders for an anticipated attack for the morning.

The planned attack did not materialize so we moved back to a rear assembly area and took advantage of this opportunity to catch up on some much needed rest.

On July 10th. E and F Companies attacked the town of St. Eny and met only light resistance. However, as soon as we had taken the town we were fired upon by tanks located on a nearby ridge. We suffered heavy



casualties. Our Companies now were reduced to such a low number of men in each that the need for reorganization was apparent to all.

Not only had we lost men in killed and wounded but the continuous strain had taken its toll in combat fatigue casualties. Later in the day the 4th. Division advanced on our flanks and forced the enemy to withdraw from our front. With the immediate danger decreased, we drew back to reorganize and dig defensive positions around the town.

We stayed in these positions that night and all of the next day. On July 12th. G Company jumped off leading the attack but met stiff resistance from tanks, machine guns, and infantry. Twelve tanks were reported to our front so we moved our antitank guns up to G Company's area in anticipation of a counterattack. The position of the tanks was reported back and a heavy concentration of artillery and mortar fire was brought to bear on them.

After the strong point had been partially neutralized, G Company moved East along a creek but, on nearing a bridge, again were held up by tank fire. They had no bazookas or anti-tank grenades with them so, after killing three tank commanders with rifle fire, they moved back a hundred yards and took cover. The tank fired steadily at them until our artillery came to the rescue and reduced the danger.

On July 14th. we received replacement of greatly needed Officers and men. Their first day with us was anything but encouraging since we were pounded constantly by mortar and artillery fire that was trying to knock out H Company's Mortars. However, despite this H Company continued laying it's deadly fire on the enemy position.

G Company was poised along a hedgerow just sixteen feet short of a road. The thick brush and trees concealed their view of much of the road which was being patrolled by a German Tiger Tank and a squad of riflemen. These men kept yelling "Handi Ho" and laughing like mad. Each time we raised up to fire we were answered immediately by heavy calibre machine gun fire and 88 shells which burst in the trees above and made us cling to the ground.

E Company tried desperately to get up on line with G Company but the strategic position of the tank made E Company's movements impossible. After three attempts, the Battalion adopted another plan to relieve the tension on G Company. F Company attacked on the left flank and succeeded in reaching its objective after a four-hour battle. Some men succeeded in crossing the road but were pinned down on the opposite side by fire from the tank and its supporting Infantry.





Abandoned and  
destroyed:  
Two 88's and a 75 MM



F Company succeeded in locating the Tank but was unable to move the Anti-Tank guns into a firing position. The location of the Tank was relayed to the Artillery observation plane, who called for artillery fire on the position. Artillery fire, heavy H E fire from H Company's 81 MM Mortars, and small Arms fire from our riflemen succeeded in neutralizing the tank and the enemy strong-point was reduced.

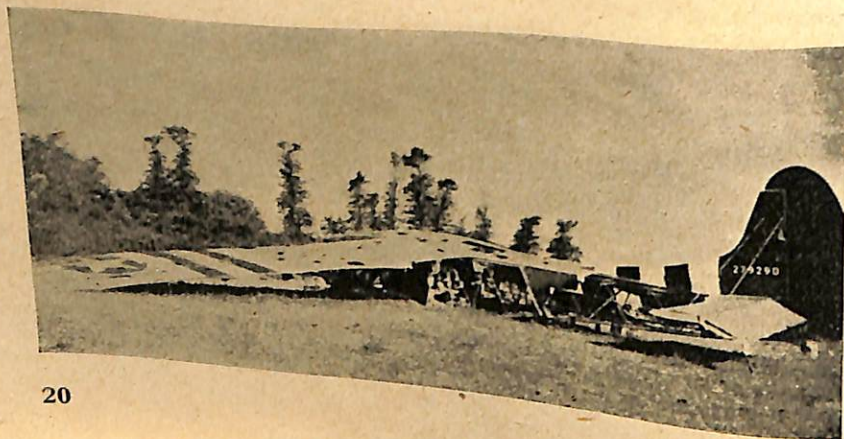
The 15th of July was a typical hot, sunshiny summer day, but, in spite of the bright day, nothing but darkness seemed to loom over the dreaded hedgerow that lay ahead. G Company succeeded in contacting the 3rd Bn. of the 331st Regiment, which had been cut off for three days without rations or communications. Continuing on, resistance began to increase until both E and G Companies were held up by German tanks and a fortified hedgerow line.

At the same time, E Company was the target of a counterattack from the right flank but succeeded in repulsing it.

G Company attacked in seven different directions and succeeded in gaining three more hedgerows to the southeast before discovering a heavily fortified defensive line.

F Company made a wide sweep to the left of G Company and found a battalion defensive line with three companies on line. Orders came down to button up, so we settled here for the night.

After a restless night, during which very few of us were able to sleep because of the close proximity of the enemy. G and E Companies supported by fire while F Company attacked in a movement to out-flank the enemy defensive fortress and take the ground directly to the front of G and E Companies. Stiff resistance was met by F Company but they finally succeeded in taking two hedgerows.



U.S. Glider in  
Normandy



Hedgerow Armor



Camouflaged Tent in  
Hedgerows



We dug in here and waited until we were relieved by the 331st Regiment on the night of July 16th. We built defensive positions and set up a final line of resistance some 300 yards to the rear and south of St. Eny. It was here that our morale was boosted, as increased tank and air support convinced us that we would no longer have to combat enemy armored units with riflemen alone.

The next nine days were peaceful, except for occasional shelling, and we took full advantage of the rest. We had no houses and no beds to sleep in, so we spent our time improving our foxholes and lining them with straw, which helped to keep out the dampness. Three hot meals each day also assisted in making these nine days the most enjoyable we had experienced since the Fourth of July.



On the 26th of July, we watched echelon of our bombers fly over. It was an almost unbelievable armada, numbering over 5000 planes. They pounded the enemy defenses and paved the way for the break through at St. Lo, which was successful in driving the enemy from Normandy.

Our participation in the break-through was soon realized as we moved up on line and relieved the 3rd Battalion.

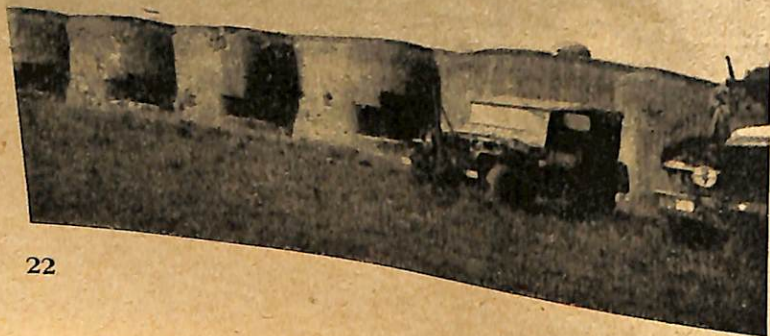
Patrols, sent out by G Company to feel out the enemy, came back with reports that the Germans were excited and disorganized, presumably because of the reported deep penetration of our forces in and around St. Lo.

The following morning we attacked but met very stiff resistance. F Company received machine gun fire from their flanks and were unable to advance. With very little gain for the day, we settled down in our positions for the night.

Following a tremendous artillery barrage on the 27th, we attacked again, meeting little resistance in reaching and crossing the Tante River. We moved to an assembly area two miles south of the river where we held up for the night.

Our spirits and confidence were restored. We had overcome our lack of battle experience which hampered us in early July and now we were experienced fighters. We had proved our worth by driving the enemy from the dreaded hedgerows of Normandy and were now accepted as an important cog in the greatest fighting machine ever assembled, the U. S. Army. In the short span of less than a month, the enemy had felt our power and had been driven out into the open. Early in July we had been fighting all day to gain one hedgerow, and now we moved ahead 5 to 10 miles a day, virtually unopposed.

On July 29th the enemy had been completely driven from Normandy and our first campaign came to a successful conclusion.



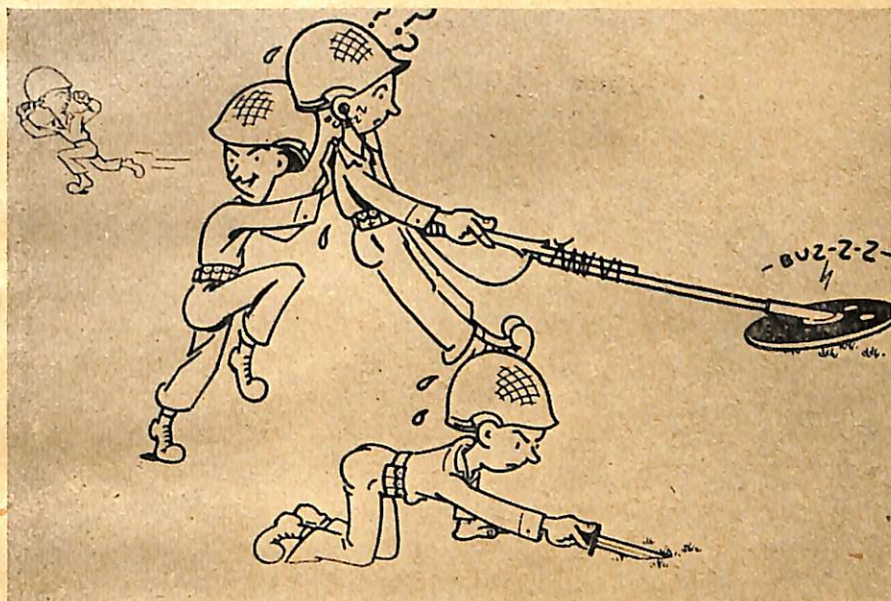
German Pill Boxes



II

*BRITTANY*

NORTHERN FRANCE





No one need tell a Thunderbolt vet that fighting in the Normandy hedgerows was a tough deal: none of us liked particularly to press on and on in the face of death — especially when each of those harmless-looking hedgerows nested hidden, waiting, lurking enemy troops. The Brittany hedgerows differed little from those we learned to hate in Normandy. Though they parceled off the countryside in pretty patterns, they were just as treacherous and filled with just as much hidden, mortal danger. But the seasoning we got in Normandy served us in good stead: we proceeded through the coastal regions of Brittany steadily and rapidly, and, what is more important, as experienced, hedgerow-wise soldiers. August 4th found us approaching Dolet, a village a mile short of Chateauneuf. We had marched to our defilade position in a wide ditch that flanked the railroad track. Our first job was to clear out the village ahead of us, and it was no easy task. We jumped off at dusk in the face of an intense concentration of enemy fire — small arms, mortars, artillery, and, every now and then, the rumbling, deafening 340's fired from coastal guns miles away on the shores of the sea. By 2200 every last German was driven out of town. Under the cover of darkness, we planned the morning's attack and bedded down as best as we could for the night.

Chateauneuf was our next objective. The enemy was'nt willing to give up the city without a struggle, and we were just as ready to meet him on his own terms. Every type weapon the enemy had available, including tanks and coastal guns, swung around landwards, guarded the approaches to our goal. E and G Companies were able to advance 500 yards forward in a brilliant display of fire and movement before they were pinned down by machine gun and tank fire. Open ground lay ahead and, under the cover of heavy tank fire, the men literally raced ahead to the outskirts of the town. We found ourselves in an excellent position in attack. Patrols and tanks went into Chateauneuf undaunted by the barrage of direct fire from a fortress overlooking the town. Enemy tanks and infantry awaited our entrance, but our superior fire power and determination were enough to drive them back. While E and G Companies were ferreting out the hiding, sniping Germans, F Company was busy neutralizing the fortress above the town. Captain Sharpe became our Commander that day; his





aggressiveness at once made us confident and assured of the same high leadership so characteristic of the two Commanders who had been wounded in the day's action.

We spent the morning of the next day, August 6th, in moving up to an area just short of the town of La Bouralais. It was Sunday, and most of us took advantage of our Regimental reserve situation to attend church services and to rest. That afternoon the 1st Battalion took the town, and towards evening we marched forward to our new defensive positions on the outer perimeter of La Bouralais.

We sent out patrols the next two days. A platoon from G Company went out on a reconnaissance mission and was able to proceed 3000 yards ahead before a counter attack forced them back to the security of the Battalion area. Other patrols scoured the countryside for nests overlooked in the speedy forward motion of the other Battalions. The hedgerows still contained small groups of enemy who were more a nuisance than a threat. One by one our patrols flushed them out — our day's bag of prisoners looked impressive.

On the 8th we did have a scare. Our Aid station had moved forward of our front lines in anticipation of a rapid move by the Battalion. The enemy attacked our positions and captured our aid station intact. All our medics and our chaplain were momentarily at the mercy of their captors who seemed more at a loss what to do than did the captives. Their stay was short as prisoners of war for we counter-attacked and the enemy hastily withdrew.

We were then put in Regimental reserve and spent the night of the 10th in moving by truck to St. Coutombe. On the 12th we advanced to the



town of Rothneuf where we made contact with a unit of FFI. They were well acquainted with the terrain — these French were a big help in our drive towards the Channel. G Company spearheaded our advance. The going was slow; it took long hours to silence the machine gun nests and pillboxes along the way. By midnight we reached the beaches and we spent the rest of the night in consolidating our positions. In the meantime, the other Battalions were putting to siege Colonel Von Aulock's Citadel defenses at St. Malo. 3 miles northeast was another strongly fortified position, Fort de la Varde. It was our mission to capture this fort. In what our superiors termed a "brilliant display of tactics and courage we did the work assigned to us.

An hour before dawn our artillery began to soften up our objective. Under this protective barrage, G and E Company slowly advanced close enough to knock out 3 high velocity guns. A fourth 75 proved to be too much for these determined infantrymen, and heavy weapons were called up to silence this gun. Two 57's weren't enough to do the job, so a battery of 3 inch guns was towed up and they were able to knock out this last big obstacle to our capture of the fort. By 2100, all the heavy enemy weapons were silenced and our forward troops, now less than 200 yards from the fort, were trading small arms fire with the enemy. The Germans saw the futility of further resistance — 24 of them came out with hands upraised, and the battle was over. Though no orders for surrender had been given and no one waved a white flag, the Germans indicated that those still alive in the fort had enough. We took 197 of the enemy prisoner. After



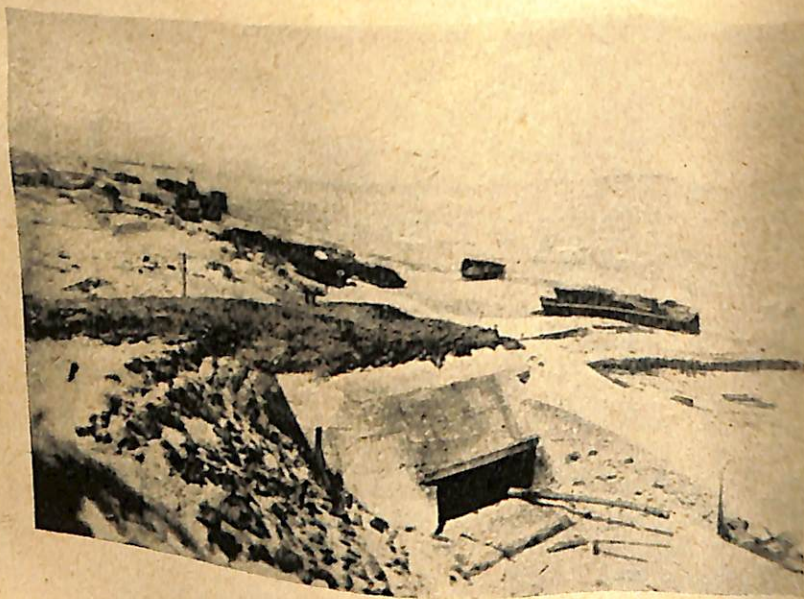
Pill Box Around St. Malo



we had prepared to make the fort our home for the night, we examined every corner of it. We could easily see why our advance during the day had been so slow. A fifty yard circle of mines and barbed-wire entanglements protected the landward approaches to the fort. Directly in front were 8 heavily reinforced concrete bunkers; these heavy weapon emplacements had connecting open trenches which enabled the Germans to move



Barricade Around  
St. Malo



German Coastal Defence



Pole Charge at St. Malo



freely from bunker to bunker. The fort itself was actually a gigantic pill box — 200 feet across and 12 feet deep. It was built of reinforced concrete, 2 feet thick at the top and increasing to a 5 foot thickness at the ground. The living quarters in the fort were complete enough to provide ample comfort for at least 300 men. In addition to the warehouse and wireless room, there was a completely equipped machine shop. Below ground-level there was the reinforced ammunition dump. Here we found some 2000 rounds of 75 mm cannon, 100,000 rounds of small arms ammunitions and 300 grenades.

Our next day's operation was easy. During the low tide we went out to attack the Island of la Grand Bey. The Germans saw us coming, and rather than take the same kind of beating their Fort de la Varde neighbors took the day before, the entire force of 150 surrendered with all their equipment.

The Division's mission of clearing an estimated 15,000 Germans out of the St. Malo peninsula was completed. We left this region on the 19th of August. Though the motor convoy ride southward seemed long, we were grateful that others had liberated the territory en route to Angers and that we didn't have to wrest these slow miles out of the enemy's grasp.

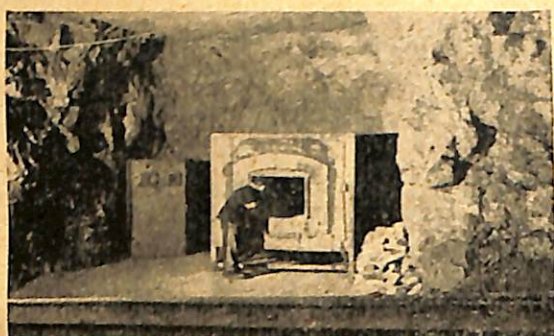




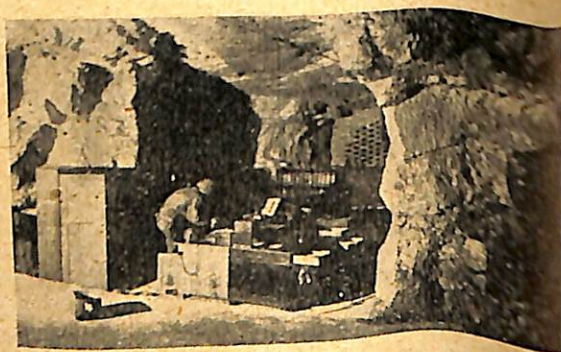
French Civies Help Load Assault Boats



Effective Support - Chateaufort



Underground Factory



Office at Underground Factory



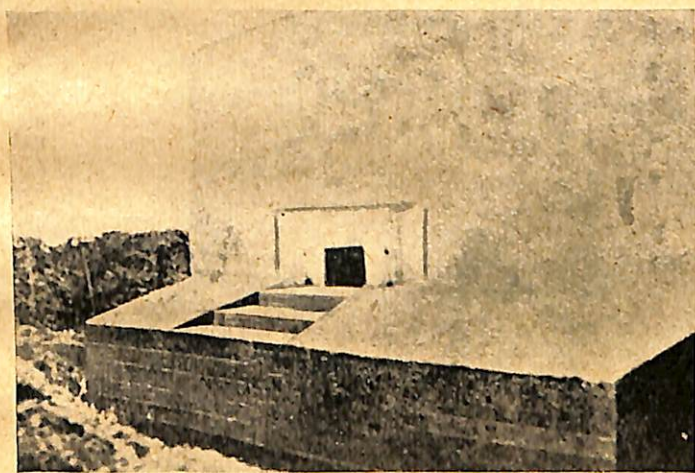
III  
*LOIRE VALLEY  
AND  
LUXEMBOURG*



Innocent Roads meant this!



And looked like this



Built for war



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Our stay in the Loire Valley near Angers was, for the most part, a pleasant one. We helped defend the city by maintaining strong patrols for miles along the north bank of the river.

The first afternoon we were there, E Company set up an outpost on the island of Pont de Ce, 3 miles south of Angers. During that night, under the cover of a heavy fog, a German raiding party stormed the island, killing two of our men and capturing the rest of the 15 man outpost. On the island was the Angers waterworks and we were immediately ordered to regain this important objective. E Company drew this assignment and, after a brief skirmish, they more than avenged the loss of their comrades. To insure against further attacks, the whole Company remained to man the island. Until we left, they lived a semi-garrison sort of life there: the Company CP was located in an old castle, and for living quarters, they had a hotel, complete with clean white sheets. The men on guard had tea and coffee served to them at odd hours, and if anyone wanted to perfect his marksmanship, he merely had to go upstairs in the hotel and snipe away at the Germans across the river.

In the meantime, the rest of us repelled without difficulty the occasional enemy attempts to cross the river. G Company's reconnaissance group maintained long motor patrols 20 miles to each flank of the battalion CP in Angers.

We were two weeks in these positions and there was no threat that the enemy would try to drive us back. Permission was granted by higher headquarters to authorize leaves as the situation would permit. We were glad to get these passes — our first on the continent, and we took full advantage of them to rest and to inspect the quaint charm of the ancient city of Angers.

The 5th of September found the Battalion moving to the town of Vendone for training. Out of the immediate combat zone, we put on our first parade since the days we were preparing ourselves for combat in England. It was a gala affair, and the French civilians were loudly enthusiastic in their response. The built us a reviewing stand and provided us with a brass band. An estimated 3000 people watched us pass in review. The onlookers included the governor of the province, mayors of neigh-





Chow



And Now to Work

boring towns, and there were even newspaper cameramen to record the event. Of course we were proud of this display, not because we were "dress soldiers" nor because the French saw fit to declare the day a holiday in our honor, but mostly because we were soldiers of the Second Battalion. A week of intense training came next and after that we moved to other defense positions along the Loire near Chateauneuf. Our defense lines stretched 75 miles and to bring hot food up to the men some of the chow trucks had to travel 110 miles.



On the 16th and 17th of September came the event that gained for the 83rd Division wide newspaper publicity and acclaim. General Elster surrendered his 20,000 troops at Beaugency Bridge on the Loire. This was the largest number of troops to surrender to any American unit during the War to his time. The next five days were busily spent in setting up stockades for these captives, feeding and transporting them to the rear.

With our mission accomplished in the Loire Valley, we moved first to Orleans. Two days later, the 24th of September, we moved to Birch, Luxembourg, where we were given a holding and patrolling assignment. Our job was to clean all the enemy out of the area up to the high ground that commanded a view of the Siegfried line. The opposition we met in our mopping-up operation was light. Patrols cleared all the Germans out of the assigned area and, by the afternoon of the 27th, we were setting up defensive positions along the Luxembourg banks of the Sauer and Moselle Rivers. Just across from us was the vaunted Siegfried Line. From then on until we left Luxembourg it was largely a battle of nerves. The Germans across the river sweated out our artillery and nervously anticipated our first step onto their homeland, and we sweated out whatever counter-measures the enemy might be planning. Both sides tried to feel out the other's strength by sending out patrols. Our men were on constant alert and in the first three days took prisoners from each of the 5 enemy patrols they encountered in fire fights. From these prisoners we gained valuable information on enemy positions and the effectiveness of our artillery fire on their pill boxes.

Civilians proved helpful in pointing out mine locations along the Osweiler-Dickweiler road and the woods in our area. There were some of the



General Elster After Surrendering





Major General Macon  
Receives Surrender of  
General Elster



Some very young, some very old



These, the Super-Men!



On the Inside Looking Out



Enroute to America





Nazi War Machines

population who didn't welcome our presence. In three successive volleys, German artillery hit our Battalion CP at Herborn, the artillery CP, and a battery of our big guns. Their accuracy made us suspicious, and it wasn't long before we discovered the reason for this uncanny fire — a short — wave set in a nearby home occupied by a handful of women and children. We promptly turned these suspects over to the CIC.

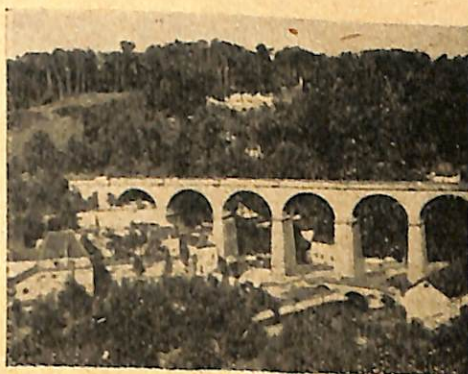
On October 3rd the Germans layed mines around Wasserbillig and ordered the civilians to evacuate the city. The enemy foresaw a possible crossing at this point and blew the Wasserbillig Ferry Bridge that crossed the Sauer River. However, the time was not yet ripe to storm the Siegfried Line. Our combat activity was limited almost entirely to patrolling. Each day, while we were on the line, patrols went out. Regularly they would engage enemy reconnaissance patrols in fire fights, and it was a rare day that our patrols returned without any prisoners.

Men weren't the only casualties of war. One day a herd of pigs broke into the basement where G Company stored its food, and they ate so much that ten died on the spot. F Company took over a little town for its billets, and also every chicken in sight to replenish its food supply. E Company men even operated a laundry service, and it seemed that more than the Luftwaffe would be needed to disposses them of their comfortable quarters. There was air activity — P 47's flew regularly over the German lines and from time to time our planes dropped surrender leaflets. The enemy provided air activity, too. Grimly we watched the white vapor trails of the V-bombs as they crossed over our heads, and each time hoped in our in our hearts that they would fail to reach their destination. Each time we relayed to higher headquarters, "Another Highboy heading northwest!"





View of Luxembourg



Approach to Luxembourg

Once, to increase the enemy's case of jitters, we staged a fake river crossing over the Moselle. H Company's guns were moved forward, and, between these and our artillery, a heavy rain of shells poured on the Siegfried Line. H Company alone fired 42 belts of machine gun bullets and a thousand rounds of 81 mortar in less than 25 minutes. Characteristically, Axis Sally reported the action as an unsuccessful attempt at crossing the river. We laughed when we heard her boast, "American Battallions attacking in the north and northeast of Luxembourg were driven back across the Moselle by a strong advance guard of our troops!"

Day in and day out our patrols and observation posts picked up information on increasing enemy activity and movement behind their front lines. Most of the information concerned troop movements and the unloading of trainload after trainload of equipment and personnel. Little did we realize then that this was the German preparation for their great winter offensive.



Battalion CP

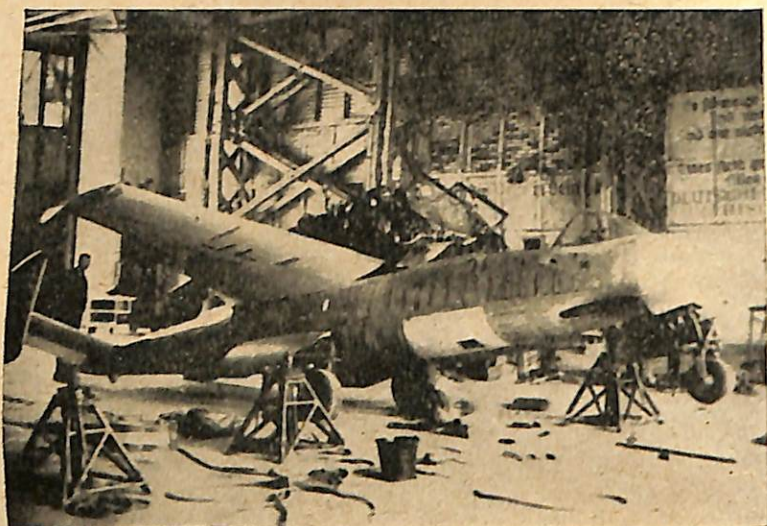


Von Rundstedt Aimed at This





Liberated



Captured High Boy

It was while we were in this sector that we strengthened what we've always regarded as a great Battalion. Replacements came to us and what experience we had gained so far was invaluable in tempering the men to become integral parts of our fighting machine. We proved over and over to ourselves and those who entrusted us with the mission that we were fighting infantrymen. As many as 20 patrols went out each day and at least 6 patrols went out each night. We scouted, we searched, we fired at the enemy, we reported positions, we adjusted artillery fire — in short, we harrassed the enemy as much as we could. Here, in sight of Germany, we developed the kind of leadership we would need in our coming step by step advance towards Berlin.



There were pleasant interludes during these days. What we'll always remember is our stay in Echternach — white sheets, comfortable quarters, gas stoves, champagne. Nor will we forget our passes to Luxembourg City, ice cream, and our Thanksgiving dinner — all these seemed like pleasant flashbacks to our homes in the States.

All along we had guessed that our next big test would be an assault on the Siegfried Line ahead of us. But higher headquarters had other plans, and on the 8th of December we sent an advance party to the Hurtgen Forest. The same day an advance party from the 4th Division came to prepare for their unit to relieve us. The next day the main body from the 8th Infantry Regiment arrived and immediately took over our outposts. They had just come from long bloody weeks in the Hurtgen Forest, and we obtained from them many valuable suggestions on woods fighting. Early in the morning of the 10th, we departed northwards and arrived late the same day in the vicinity of Gressenich.



Empty 81mm Mortar  
Cartons Used In Fake  
River Crossing

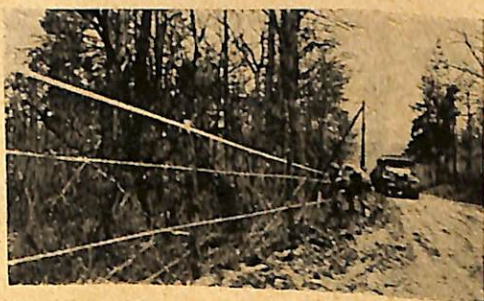


IV

*HURTGEN FOREST*



Mud in Hurtgen slows armor



Marking off mined area



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We crossed the border into Germany on the 10th of December. For weeks we had heard and read of the bitter hell that was the Hurtgen Forest. In spite of ourselves, as we were now being swallowed up into its darkening depths, an unconscious feeling of dreadful anticipation came over us. We had known war in the open, we had known war in the hedgerows, in cities and in towns — and we had faced it bravely and had been loyal to our determination not to give up an inch of our hardwon ground. Now, as we silently and solemnly foresaw the dread uncertainties of war in the Hurtgen Forest, it took every last measure of our courage to dispel those fears. The Hurtgen Forest, dark, foreboding, and treacherous as it was, seemed symbolic of the enemy we had left our homes to fight. We helped clean out that forest, and we are proud of our part in making it something no longer for anyone to fear. It's with a feeling of warm pride that we wear the Distinguished Unit Citation we earned in the Hurtgen Forest. We had been given a difficult job to do and we did not fail.

Our first day in the forest was anything but encouraging. All around us the tall trees seemed to reach up to touch the cloudy, rain-filled skies. Wherever we walked, we had to wade through sucking, soupy mud that reached well over the top of our combat boots. Many a vehicle was bogged down for long hours in this mire. We dared not wander far off the beaten track as we were encircled by an invisible ring of snipers, and the booby-trapped trees and mines made each of us more doubly cautious.

Our presence here wasn't to pass unnoticed by the enemy. That night planes swooped low over us and strafed us. Their mission wasn't successful. Anti-aircraft units to our rear gave them a warm welcome and it was with great relief that we watched the umbrella of bright ack-ack that drove these raiders away.

The next day was quiet. In the secure dimness of our muddy dugouts we planned our next day's attack. Our mission was to take Hof Hardt, a cluster of houses on the forest's edge. At 121000 we jumped off, and by dusk Hof Hardt was ours, but only after slow, bitter hours of fighting. Tree bursts made our progress very slow. Snipers and mines convinced us beyond all doubt of the hellishness of war. G Company literally butchered their way forward, and their bloody bayonets stood mute witnesses to how diffi-



cult their going was. That evening, we talked with especial pride of the men of F Company, who, by sheer courage alone, had rushed and overrun 5 machine gun nests.

Capturing Hof Hardt did not mean security and safety. The enemy poured a thundering barrage of artillery onto our defense positions, and ours was a sleepless night.

At dawn we continued our attack, with the town of Gruzenich as our next objective. H Company's mortars laid down an effective smoke screen, and under its cover G Company moved swiftly across open fields to wooded land that circled Gruzenich. F Company protected G Company's left flank, and, between them, all the small pockets of resistance scattered in the woods were speedily mopped up.

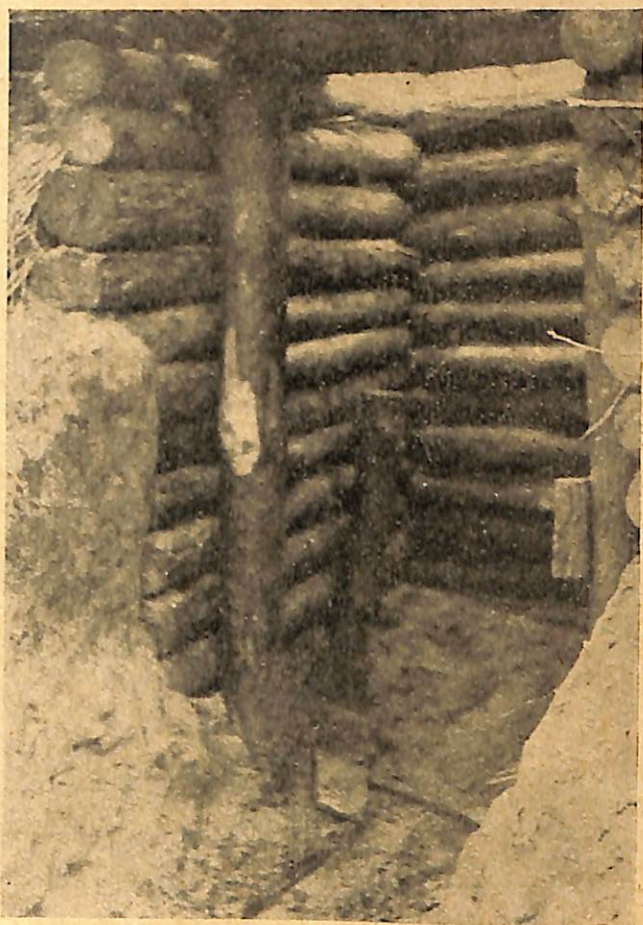
At the edge of the town the battalion reorganized its far-flung ranks. With G Company in the lead, we forced our way into Gruzenich. Resistance was heavy and fierce and at bayonet point we repulsed the first of a series of enemy counterattacks. We were determined to take that town even though our progress was slowed down by the many snipers and machine gun nests. By evening, half the town was ours. We decided to solidify our positions rather than risk wide dispersal throughout the town. F Company maintained a strong defensive line, and, under the cover of darkness, H Company set up its heavy weapons in buildings and streets we had captured only a few hours before. We had been the lead Battalion in the attack, and throughout the night forward elements of the 1st and 3rd Battalions took their places beside us. Our position was precarious, and all night long the enemy shelled the muddy, heavily-mined road back to Hof Hardt. This was our only supply line, and it wasn't till just before dawn that a few tanks and ammo trucks succeeded in running the gauntlet.

The next day's fighting was just as savage. At 1100, in the face of heavy fire, we crossed the road that divided the town. The enemy had set up machine gun nests in cellars and in attics, and their artillery pounded us incessantly. E and G Companies gained ground slowly but steadily, and the enemy was forced to withdraw to the outskirts.

In the meantime, F Company was wiping out a large pocket of Germans dug in on our right flank. Our artillery had that packet zeroed in, and their accuracy and F Company's effective fire and movement were persuasive enough to induce 65 of the enemy to surrender. They hated to admit defeat, and even in surrendering indicated how little a Nazi could be trusted. Two of them came out with hands raised high in the air. One of our men stood



Dugout Entrance in the  
Hurtgen Forest



Anti-Tank Gun Goes Into Action





Looking for Snipers in  
Gruzenich



Dead Germans in Street  
at Gruzenich

up to take them prisoner only to be shot down by another German concealed in a nearby embankment.

All along the line the resistance was bitter. With the 50 German soldiers they had taken prisoner, G Company captured 7 armed women. The attack continued unabated — house to house, cellar to cellar, attic to attic: the Germans were everywhere. A road junction near the rail-road tracks was our primary objective and it was only after a savage fire fight that we reached this point and consolidated our positions.

A large gap still separated F Company from the rest of the Battalion. B Company was rushed in to fill what seemed to us like a cavity in the strong teeth biting deeper and deeper into the German home-land. The Germans weren't yet convinced that we really meant to press on forward to the Roer River. They poured an earthshaking concentration of



artillery on G and F Companies and in the wake of this barrage came a counter attack. Their two tanks and a company of infantry were no match for our defensive power and we knocked out both tanks and forced their beaten footsoldiers back across the tracks.

The Battalion held fast the next day. We sweated out an intense artillery barrage while units on our flanks caught up with us.

The following day was December 16th. Perhaps it was just another day on the calendar to folks back home, but to us, on the the edge of the Hurtgen Forest, it was a day filled with all the horrors and harshness that war can produce. Dawn brought an unusually heavy concentration of enemy artillery on the areas held by E and G Companies. Sometime, in the dark of night, enemy infiltrated through our lines, and F and B Companies spent a busy morning tracking down upwards of 80 of these Germans. We were told to expect a counter attack, and it came in the direction of G Company. Behind the protective armor of 4 Tiger tanks and a battery of self-propelled guns, a batalion of footsoldiers tried to find a soft spot in our lines, but G Company was'nt awed by this display of power tactics and stood their ground. It took great courage for those men to be unmindful of the odds against them, and it took every man's full fighting ability to put the enemy to flight. The lead tank was knocked out by a rifle grenade fired from a carbine and a well-placed bazooka round crippled another tank beyond practical use. The forward observer of our Cannon Company directed one of his 105's point blank at an 88. The shell hit the breech of the Jerry gun and blew it to pieces. From the front, G Company fired at the enemy with every available weapon and, from the flanks, H Company's machine guns caught retreating Germans in a deadly crossfire. For four hours the battle raged. The two remaining tanks managed to get back to



Gruzénich



Gare and Cleaning of Equipment in Gruzénich





Men and Armored Car at Gruzenich



Weapons Are Made Ready for the Next Push

the protective defilade of the railroad embankment and the few Germans who survived this death trap seemed glad to come in with hands lifted high and trembling stammers of surrender on their lips.

Everyone fought that day: mess sergeants, up with chow unexpectedly but willingly, became riflemen; telephone operators and clerks pitched in to help fire away at the enemy, and many a painfully wounded soldier begged the medics to let him return to his place on the lines.

This attack was part of General Von Rundstedts great winter offensive. The „bulge“ wasn't a word to be found in our vocabulary. Hitler's Christmas surprise for us backfired into staggering fatality lists for those elements of his army who risked the determined stand of the men of our Regiment.

Gruzenich wasn't entirely clear of enemy opposition, for here and there on the outskirts of town nests of German troops were still sources of trouble. The plan of operations for the next day called for our systematic wiping out of these pockets, while troops of the other two Battalions would deceive the enemy into believing that Rolsdorf was our objective. Colonel Crabill's plan was a success. The Germans massed their main defenses around Rolsdorf, and our Battalion spearheaded the Regiment's real drive towards Duren on the Roer River.

E Company led this attack and, with the help of F Company, cleared houses on both sides of the road leading down to the river. G Company,



to the left, had an all-day job on their hands — sniper and machine gun fire hampered their task of clearing out a factory along the railroad tracks. E and F Company moved so quickly that they caught many of the enemy completely off guard. In their charge down the road they captured several mortars and anti-tank guns and their crews, and even knocked out a Mark IV tank. H Company's mortars and machine guns were particularly effective in causing confusion among the enemy. Heavy artillery and mortar fire kept us from reaching the river until the next morning. While we were consolidating our positions during the night, the enemy did what we had expected him to do: he retreated across the river and deafening roars during the night told us that he had blown the bridges leading into Duren. We set up defensive positions on the river's bank throughout the day, and waited for the units on our flanks to come up to straighten out the lines. The enemy knew where we were and, to add to the discomfort of the rain and snow, he made the next few days noisy and uncomfortable with an incessant barrage of artillery and mortars.

On the 20th, elements of the 414th Regiment of the 104th Division came to take our places opposite Duren. We were looking forward to a much-needed rest, but the situation then was so critical that we had to forego this privilege. Our next few days were spent on the road. We travelled from Gruzenich to Eilendorf and from there to the Haverennege-Rochfort sector defended by units of the 78th Division.

We will never forget the Hurtgen Forest: These past two weeks had been hectic — filled with the horror and hellishness of war. As we left the Hurtgen Forest sector for our new assignment, the Chaplain "doubted that the blue braid of the Infantry could ever burn long in hell — there's too much blood and mud on it." That was the Hurtgen Forest. For our



Street Inside Gruzenich



V

*ARDENNES*



Moving up



Gas detail



Mud and snow



We had helped drive the enemy out of France and Luxembourg and we had helped repel the enemy's great counteroffensive in Germany. Now we found ourselves in another forest area, this time the Ardennes in Belgium. Two questions stood foremost in our minds: one was, "Where is the rest of the Army?", and the other, "What in the hell are we doing here?". It didn't take long before both of these questions were answered for us.

The Germans had "bulged" the week before. They had retaken miles of territory, captured stores of equipment, and inflicted heavy casualties on our forces. All available units were committed to halt this desperate onslaught and to retake the ground that had been lost. Von Rundstedt had planned well. He attacked at a time when the weather was his greatest ally: our vehicles froze, our weapons froze, and we froze with them. The rapidity of his attack caused great confusion and our long supply lines were hampered severely by the cold weather and snow. The SS, Paratroopers, Panzer Divisions, and the weather comprised a powerful force, but all together were not enough to drive the Allies back and to keep us off German soil. We had come too far to even think of stopping now.

On December 28th, we jumped off with the mission of securing the approaches to Rochefort and of relieving the A Company troops surrounded in the city. E Company spearheaded the attack with tank support, and this team reached the city's outskirts before the enemy provided any

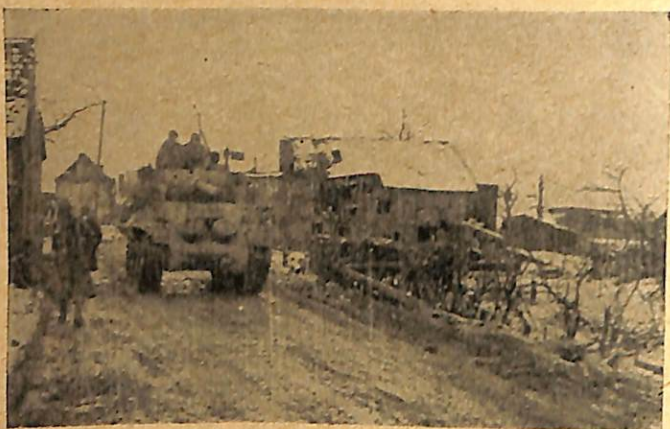


Bad Weather Causes Traffic Jams





Taking Time Out  
For Chow



Tank Destroyer On  
Way to the Front



Cargo Carrier For  
Medics



opposition. Tanks and infantry were waiting for our men, and it was with much difficulty that our forward elements entered Rochefort. Just inside the city E Company men by-passed an apparently knocked-out tank. After they passed, hidden tankers opened fire and mowed down many of our men from the rear. E Company continued forward until pressure on A Company was relieved. In the meantime, G Company cleared the woods east of the town and destroyed a company of Germans. Our positions in town were secure, so we remained in Rochefort for the night. The main body of Germans had withdrawn and left behind a delaying force of 55 men. These we rounded up and took prisoner the following day.

The British came and relieved us and moved to Baux Chavanne to relieve elements of the 82nd Airborne Division. Our mission was to repel any counter-attack. We remained here until the 8th of January and our activity was limited to sending out patrols.

On January 9th we moved to Halt, Belgium. E and F Companies attacked down a road to the northwest of Petite Langlir. E Company met light resistance and gained their objective quickly. F Company was not so fortunate. As soon as they secured the crossroads, they became the target of a major counter-offensive by enemy Panzer and Infantry troops. Our men rose to the occasion, repulsed the attack and drove the Germans back along snow-covered roads to the road block.

Though the snow was heavy on January 10th, we gave the enemy no rest. We staged a daring attack which overran every machine gun nest and defensive position in the woods ahead of us. E and G Companies drove



Doughboy Express - Next  
Stop Petite Langlir



furthest ahead and reached points across the river west of Langlir. Southwest of the crossroads a large farmhouse overlooked the countryside that led up to Langlir. The enemy used this strong-point to good advantage and delayed considerably the forward advance of other units in the Regiment. F Company was called upon to take this obstacle. With an expert flanking maneuver they forced the German tanks to deploy and stormed the farmhouse.

That night our artillery concentrated on the city of Petite Langlir in an attempt to soften up the enemy. Under cover of this heavy fire, E and G Companies attacked through the snow drifts, undergrowth, and thick woods. They advanced 1500 yards and, with darkness to aid them, entered the town. The enemy was taken by complete surprise: their casualties were heavy and a artillery CP was captured intact.



81 MM Mortar in Action



Engineers Building Bridge  
Across Iced River



## Digging Out the Ammo



Defense of Battalion O. P.

With G and E Companies securely in position in Petite Langlir, F Company received orders the next day to take Langlir, just across the river. The attack was unnecessary, for friendly troops had already taken the town, and F Company moved back to rejoin the rest of the Battalion.

Two miles southeast was an important crossroads that had to be taken before the 3rd Armored Division could advance. F Company reached this objective early on the morning of the 13th, but only after a long, drawn-out night fight. They took many prisoners, and once they were almost cut off completely from the rear. In the morning, German tanks counter-attacked and cut the 3rd and 4th platoons from the rest of the Company. American tanks arrived on the scene and put an end to the German menace by knocking out two tanks and forcing 125 Germans to surrender. F Company showed great courage in fulfilling their assignment and our Commanding General gave them special mention in his commendation of the Battalion. In the meantime, the rest of us were clearing enemy out of the high wooded area that overlooked the town of Honyelez, and by dusk we had reached the edge of the forest that approached the town. The enemy had not expected us in this sudden strike eastwards, and we caught them by complete surprise. G Company entered the town first and found themselves uninvited and found unwelcome guests of enemy





Wrecked Jerry Equipment



Vehicles in Maintenance

CP personnel busy at breakfast. Three quarters of the town was cleared out quietly and thoroughly before any opposition was encountered and this resistance was speedily overcome. Honeyealz on the German supply route was ours: we had severed the enemy's supply lines. Unsuspecting vehicles drove into the town only to be destroyed or captured.

On January 18th, E Company had the task of clearing a dense forest and securing the high ground a mile ahead. The lead patrol encountered a tank and platoon of Germans. Our patrol waited until the first platoon arrived and between them they drove away the tank and killed or wounded most of the enemy. They held up at this point for the night and in the morning continued on to their objective. Though they were in reserve, F



Company men were not idle. They maintained a shuttle system for bringing up hot meals to the men of the other two line Companies.

We stayed in Honyelez until January 22nd. The 333rd Regiment of the 83rd came to relieve us, and we moved back to Tohagne, Belgium, for a long awaited rest. Here we reorganized and trained to our methods the many replacements who joined us. The following two weeks were filled with training during the day and welcome passes in the evening. Liege and Paris were leave cities and many of us were fortunate to make the pass quotas to these places.

February 5th we were ordered to remove our shoulder patches, and unit designations were taken off the bumpers of our vehicles. Ours was to be a "secret" move. We left Tohagne and passing through Liege, arrived

Generals Bradley, Macon,  
and Stimpson Talk it Over



Mattress-G I Style





at Ekklerade, Holland, close to Maastrich. Here we intensified our training and here we enjoyed several USO shows and passes to Liege and Maastrich.

On February 26th we moved to Aldsdorf, Germany, where soon we would take part in the widely publicized "Big Push" towards the Rhine.



HEADQUARTERS 83 RD INFANTRY DIVISION

Office of the Commanding General

APO 83, U. S. Army

5. February 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 329th Infantry, APO 83  
U. S. Army.

Thru : Commanding Officer, 329th Infantry, APO 83, U. S. Army.

1. The exceptionally meritorious performance of combat duty by our Battalion during the accomplishment of the Division's mission in the ARDENNES 27 December 1944 to 21 January 1945 brings great credit to you and to the Division.

2. The 2nd Battalion demonstrated outstanding determination, courage, and military skill in its operations in the Langlir-Bois De Ronce area. The seizure of the edge of the woods East of Linglir and the capture of Pont De Langlir was a vital fact in the capture of Petite Langlir and Langlir by the Division. The action of "F" Company on the morning of 13 January while enroute to a blocking position Southwest of Langlir was particularly praiseworthy. Also noteworthy was the capture of Honyelez, which was accomplished by the 2nd Battalion on 14 January 1945 with complete surprise.

3. I highly commend you and your unit for the successful accomplishments of a difficult mission.

ROBERT C MACON

Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.



# VI RHINELAND



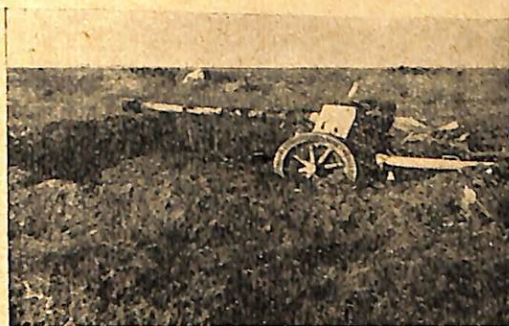
A New Toy



Information Booth?



Knocked-out U.S. Medium



Jerry 75 MM



For a long time we had been told to expect the enemy to blow the dams along the Roer River. When we were at Gruzenich we talked about this at great length and wondered how long the Germans would wait before they used this their strongest obstacle to our progress and speculated on the difficulties involved in crossing the rushing, swollen river. Our expectations became a reality, and we spent the last days of February waiting for the waters to recede so that we could make a crossing.

Plans called for the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions to make the initial assault with the 83rd Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Amored Divisions to follow closely behind them. We were fortunate in drawing the easy assignment of reserve Battalion of the reserve Regiment. We crossed the Roer near Julich on a bridge built by our Engineers. The operation involved thousands of troops and long convoys of equipment. Some confusion resulted from this mass movement and we were lucky to escape with nothing more than jangled nerves and a case of shortened tempers. We spent the next day, 1st of March, on the east bank of the Roer. We stayed in open fields for the nearby towns were in shambles and offered no other alternative. Enemy artillery was aware of our location and were glad that we had dug our foxholes deep. Late afternoon brought an alert to move on a half-hour's notice and we prepared to move forward and



Gateway to Germany





Alles kaput



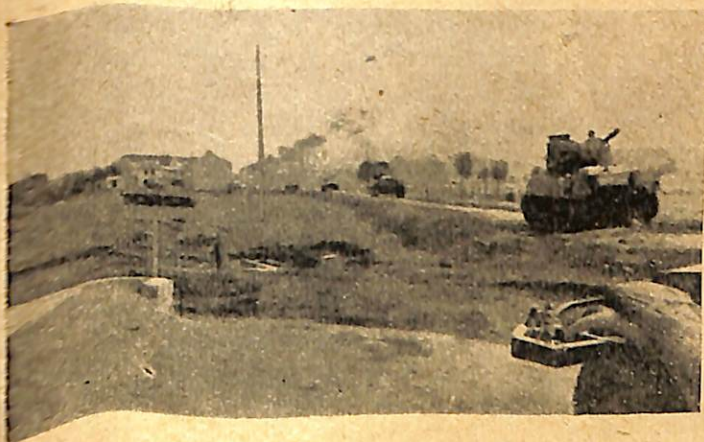
then awaited impatiently orders to "saddle up" and take off. Movement orders did not come until the afternoon of the next day.

It was during the rainy afternoon of March 2nd that we finally did move forward. Our objective was to advance towards Neuss and then to move on to the Rhine at a point opposite the city of Dusseldorf. Intense enemy activity drove us off the main road. We tried travelling on the side roads and trails, but these were almost impossible because of the heavy mud, so we went back to the main roads — the importance of speed made



us oblivious to enemy marksmanship. The advance parties and Company guides moved into the town of Holzheim by way of the dreaded "Lucky Teeter" corner, a crossroad that the German 88's had zeroed in well. We moved into town on foot, and that way missed most of the "incoming mail". Company E became confused by the orders and approached the town, ready to wrest it from enemy hands. Elements of the 331st were already in the town, and only hasty raising of white flags prevented the tragedy of an unwitting civil war. E and F Companies took their places beside the 331st spread out along the Erft Canal.

Before us coursed the Rhine, Germany's first natural barrier of defense. Although we won acclaim for being the first American soldiers to reach the Rhine, we were prouder still that we had debunked the enemy's boast that we would never reach this river.



On Road to Neuss



Moving Into Neuss





View of Rhine at Neuss



Wrecked Warehouse at Neuß



Wrecked Railroad Station at Neuß



One of the German Big Boys



The next few days we enacted the American version of „Watch on the Rhine“ and sweated out nightly bombings by the faltering Luftwaffe and continual shelling from German artillery in Dusseldorf across the river.

Elements of the 99 th Division came up and took our holding positions along the River and the Erft Canal, and we moved back to Neuss, where we rested and trained for the eventual river crossing. Although German artillery was zeroed in on us and continued to pound us day and night, many of us concerned ourselves with taking care of the abundant supply of schnapps and cognac we found in the town. Neuss was a rich Rhine-land town, so for the time being we lived in comparative style, with bathroom, electricity, and even radios. We had come here as conquerors, and we were acting our role to a "T".

We enjoyed these luxuries for two weeks, and then we moved back to Holland to make further preparations for the Rhine. Long days we spent in assault boats, and in the evenings we were allowed welcome passes to nearby towns.

The news of the crossing at Remagen was greeted with joy, and it pleased us to hear how rapidly our armor was pushing ahead into the Ruhr Valley. With repeated victories for our forces came rumors that the Germans would surrender soon, and the optimistic news broadcasts were our greatest morale factors in those days of preparing for further battle that we hoped wouldn't be necessary.



Dough Captures Himself a  
Rtde in Neuss





Ex-Warehouse



Looking It Over



General Macon Receives  
Distinguished Service  
Medal From General Simpson

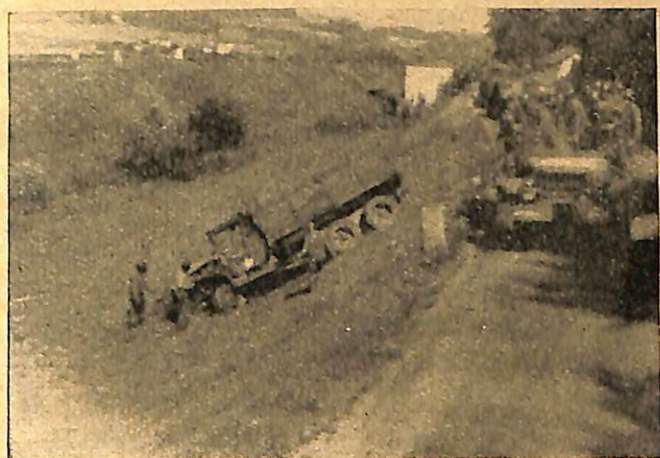




Wrecked German Factories



Troop Mascot



G I Accident



VII

*CENTRAL GERMANY  
AND THE ELBE*

CENTRAL EUROPE



Truman Bridge across the Elbe

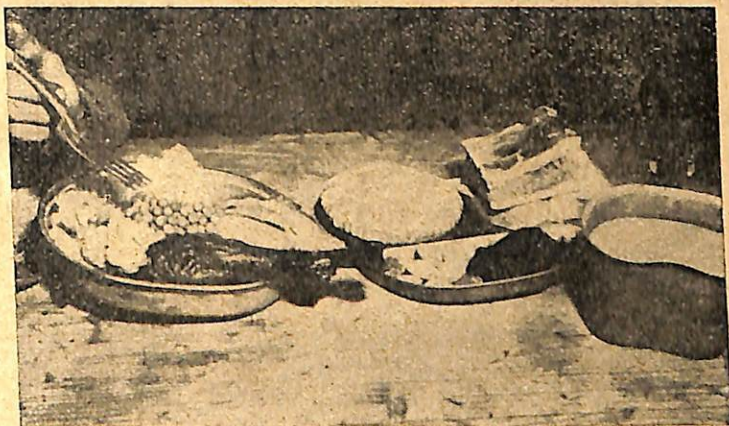


Hopeful rumors of an early German surrender did not materialize, so we resigned ourselves to uncertain weeks of further war. How much longer the war would last, we couldn't even guess, but we were sure that victory was ours and that V-E Day was inevitably close.

On March 28th, we again entered Germany. Our first day was spent at Horstar-Schelsan. At dusk on the next evening we crossed the Rhine River on a bridge hastily constructed by our Engineers. We were grateful for this easy way of crossing — assault boats are not conducive to a long life.

The 29th and 30th were days of rapid movement as we furthered our advance towards Berlin. Swift-moving armor was spearheading the way, and our mission was to engage the cut-off enemy forces wherever we could meet them. The German press must have reported many "strategic withdrawals" those days, for we didn't catch up with the fleeing enemy until Easter Sunday.

South of Beckum, a force of enemy tried unsuccessfully to make a stand. We cleared the entire area to the right of the Lippe River and pushed what Germans remained back across the canal. With good observation, they fired direct across the canal at the men of E Company. The casualties they inflicted were not many since we brought our heavy weapons into action and these enemy positions were soon neutralized. We were ordered to hold up at this point. On April 3rd, a Battalion from the 75th Division came to relieve us, and we moved eastward to Haustenback. Here a



Easter Sunday Dinner



Company of tanks from the 736 th Tans Battalion joined us and we teamed up throughout the rest of the campaign.

The town of Horn was our next objective and F Company drew the assignment of leading the attack. The terrain gave an advantage to the enemy. Heavy woods led up to Horn and from atop a cliff at the edge of town the enemy looked down at our troops and tanks approaching through the forest area. This excellent defensive position commanded the only road leading into Horn from the west, and, as we found out the hard way, was manned by a Lt. Colonel and a company of die-hard paratroopers. Even this defense could not withstand our tanks and machine guns. Two 20 mm guns were knocked out and with fire and movement we climbed the cliff and entered the town. A small group was left behind to ferret the remaining enemy out of their holes in the cliff.

As they entered Horn, some of F Company's men came in as guest's of the tankers — they rode along on the sides of the tanks. The retreating enemy tried vigorously to halt our progress three times, but none of these counter-attacks were successful. It was here that we met civilian resistance for the first time fighting side by side with the Germans soldiers, the civilians fired panzerfausts at our tanks. This desperate civilian defense intensified the deeper we drove into the heart of Germany. E Company followed closely after F Company, and, in overrunning a position, they captured a very much surprised and chagrined German general. We will remember the capture of Horn as the start of our "rat race" with the 2nd Armored Division towards the Elbe River. Some have souvenirs of Horn to remind them that here was developed a new teamwork technique, "Souvenir hunting and shooting".

On the next day, G Company led "Task Force Ritchie" to a well-deserved bit of praise and acclaim. They spearheaded the Battalion's attack and lashed out with a remarkable display of maneuver and speed. In less than two hours, seven towns were captured along with over 2000 stunned German soldiers. "Task Force Ritchie" met its first strong opposition at a fortified roadblock on the outskirts of Scheider. The attack bogged down, so E Company was called up hurriedly to outflank and attack the town and to relieve the pressure on F Company. The resistance we met was literally last-ditch. The Germans found it necessary to use their panzerfausts as anti-personnel weapons. Dug in well, they fought like cornered, wounded animals in holes that for most of them became graves. The battle, seen sawed back and forth for a long time, but by nightfall the roadblock was overrun and by midnight Scheider was safely in our hands.



The rat-race in pursuit of retreating Germans continued through the next day — and for many, many days after that as well. In our 30 kilometer dash across Germany on April 6th, towns and villages fell into our hands so rapidly that we could hardly recall what any of them looked like. Never in our combat days so far had we covered so much territory with so much speed. Just before dusk, F Company moved into Bodeweder on the Weser, and snipers immediately let us know that we were not welcome there. Each house in this river town was searched and in an hour's time 81 prisoners were rounded up. There was no rest for the weary, for shortly before dawn F Company sent a platoon to cross the Weser and get a foot-hold on the opposite bank. Their efforts to keep the Germans from blowing up the bridge were not successful. The enemy set off explosives and the bridge sank into the muddy water.

On the 7th of April we crossed the Weser River using the bridge the 2nd Armored had constructed farther north. That day we kept pace with the Armored Division. Enemy planes strafed us in a vain attempt to slow us down but by the day's end our gains totalled 30 kilometers, a score of villages and 200 more prisoners.

Early the next day the reconnaissance units with us moved ahead. We followed closely behind and cleared the woods and farmhouses of the Germans who couldn't keep up with the "strategic withdrawals" of their





comrades. The day's operations saw the Battalion move across the Leine River. We gained 15 kilometers and took 146 prisoners and captured several big prizes — among these were a synthetic oil refinery, one of Germany's largest underground armement works, and, what seemed most welcome, a complete brewery. The Schnapps flowed like water!

April 9th found the Battalion CP at Ardenstedt and the Companies scattered around the nearby villages. We stopped for the day to catch our breath before we again took to the road. It was while taking these towns the last few days that cheering crowds lining the streets brought back memories of our liberation of France. Questioning revealed that there wasn't a Nazi in town. Sometimes we believed these civilians, but mostly we didn't — war had made us sceptical "Bed-Check Charlie" paid us a visit that night, but we were too busy resting or sampling our liberated schnapps to let him get on our nerves.

Early on the morning of the 10th, we continued our mad dash towards Berlin. We found ourselves moving ahead so swiftly that our allotment of vehicles proved insufficient. We had the enemy on the run and we couldn't afford to let him slow down to catch his breath, so we loaded men and equipment on our captured enemy vehicles and began our record-smashing drive. Our convoys were made up of a motley mixture of American and German vehicles. If it had wheels, it became a troop-carrier. We used everything from motorcycles to a fire engine. The press called us the "Rag Tag Circus", and, even though we might look like a circus to them, we were making history faster than the correspondents could write it down. Not only did we outstrip our own armor, but we even passed retreating enemy convoys. These we left for rear echelon units to disarm and send further back.

50 kilometers was the extent of that day's drive. Towards evening we moved into Goslar, the largest German city we had taken since we crossed the Rhine. We were tired and looked forward to a good night's rest in town, but orders came down to push further ahead to Hardingende, a small town on the outskirts of Goslar. No sooner had we entered Hardingende than it seemed hell itself broke loose with deafening roars and balls of fire rising high into the air. An ammunition dump had exploded. After our nerves quieted down, we made ourselves comfortable for the night. We hit the road again before dawn and the "Rag Tag Circus" advances matched those of the day before. One of our conquests was joyously welcomed. We overran a PW camp and liberated a thousand British PW's along with a handful of Americans. These prisoners had been forced to



"Rat Race" Push Towards Elbe



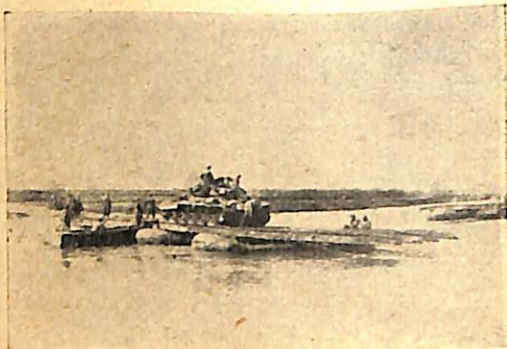
Nazi Troops Rounded Up



Attack in Rat Race







Last of Luftwaffe Trying to K.O. Truman Bridge – The Engineers Float Our Armor Across Elbe

it was quickly shot down by our ack-ack batteries. We crossed the river and raced into Watterburg to set up defensive positions there. It was well that we moved so fast, for almost immediately the enemy began to counter-attack. Wave after wave of Germans came after us and for a time it looked as though we might be on the losing end of the battle. E Company moved over to Flatz and the enemy succeeded in cutting it off from the rest of the Battalion. It was surrounded but remained typically E Company by repelling counter-attack after counter-attack. F Company had set up



Prisoner Taken After Attempt to Blow Up Truman Bridge





defensive positions along a wood line with the help of H Company's heavy weapons and Headquarters Company's anti-tank guns. The enemy tried an all-out counter-attack at dawn and they came in using our method of marching fire. F Company beat off this attack, and the enemy decided to try other methods. All day long we dug in deeper and bettered our positions. That night the Luftwaffe began its nightly bombing raids but dawn found us still there — and determined to remain.

On April 15th the enemy was observed massing troops and equipment in the vicinity of Zerbst, 10 kilometers eastward. To our flank, the 331st was being subjected to the blow of a major counter-attack that was designed to drive all of us back across the Elbe. Only one bridge spanned the river, and we were ordered to protect that vitally important link to victory at all costs. During the day we sighed with relief when we saw elements of the 2nd Armored Division cross the bridge, coming to help us out. We





Waiting Attack on Zerbst



Doughboys on Tanks Going Into Zerbst

were proud, too, that we infantrymen had accomplished what tacticians say is impossible — we had established and maintained a bridge-head that was too much for armored troops who had tried it before. We gained wide recognition for our speed in surpassing one of our Army's best units.

The 33rd Regiment had driven the enemy back to their defensive ring around Zerbst. With the threat to our foothold on the east bank of the Elbe minimized, we moved ahead to positions within artillery range of Zerbst. In moving ahead, we noted the fact that enemy road-blocks were facing east rather than westwards. This meant only one thing: the Germans had expected the Russians to reach the Elbe before we did.

We spent the following week in holding positions. While we waited for an order to attack the town, we sweated out incessant artillery barrages and repeated visits of low-flying German planes.

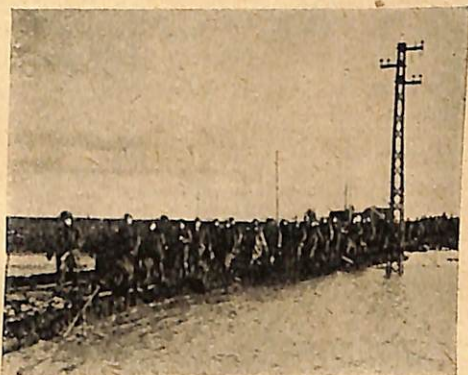


Advancing into Zerbst





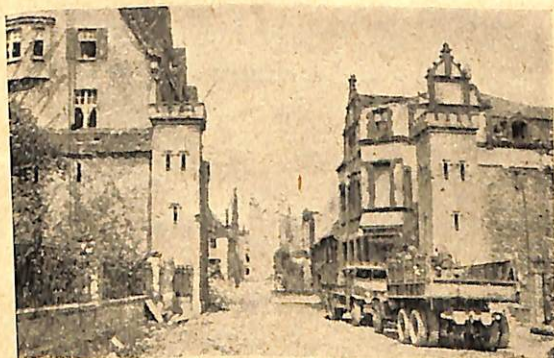
Germans Come Into Zerbst To Surrender



German Prisoners In "Rat Race"



PW's Taken in Zerbst



Engineer Unit Opens Street in Zerbst







