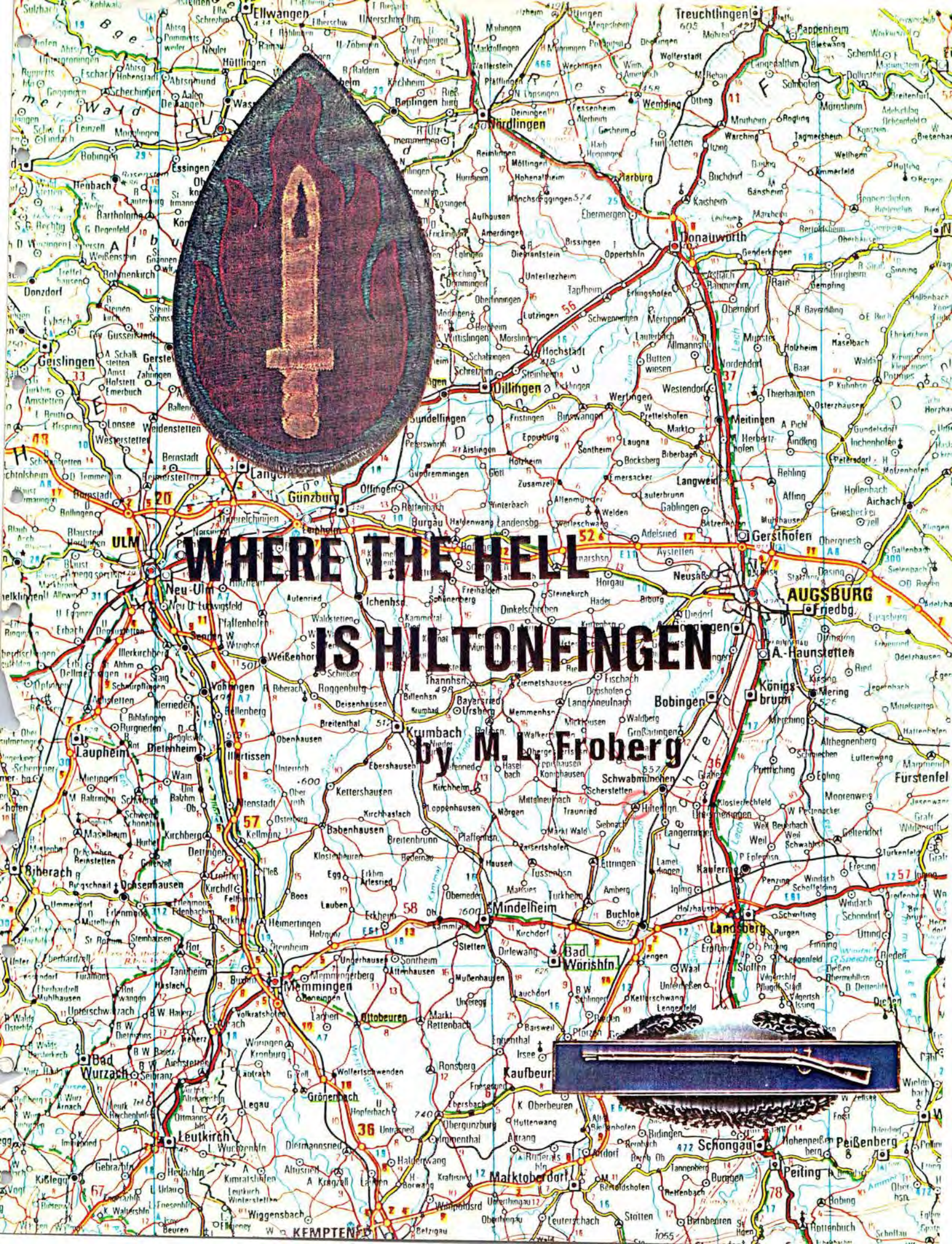
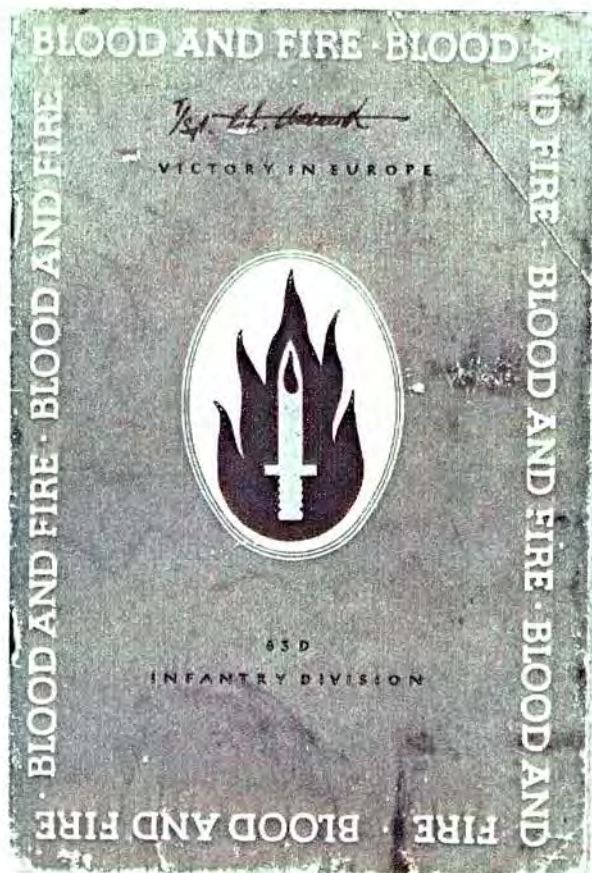




WHERE THE HELL IS HILTONFINGEN by M. L. Froberg



WHERE THE HELL IS HILTONFINGEN



Company C - 253rd Infantry Regiment

Copyright, 1981, by Magnus Laird Froberg

WHERE THE HELL IS HILTONFINGEN

This is the story of the first platoon, Company "C", 253rd Infantry, 63rd Infantry Division, Army of the United States--called the "Forty Thieves" by Captain Thomas Moore, the Company Commander of "C" Company because of its ability to secure comforts in the face of adversity and "The best platoon in the Army" by General Alexander Patch the Commander of the American Seventh Army because of its military ability. The first platoon was nevertheless a group typical of the American men who proudly called themselves "dogfaces," and as one of them said in 1980--"We were so young." Young indeed, over two-thirds of the platoon were nineteen years old.

Led first by Tech. Sergeant Tom Murphy a wild flamboyant Irishman from Chicago and secondly by Tech. Sergeant Lou Warmoth, a true military leader in the finest tradition of the south from Sumter, South Carolina, the Forty Thieves were a melange of Americans from all parts of the United States. There was Bert Leckstrom and Henry Laska and Rod Backus and Maurice Gibeault and Eddie Lockwood from New England. There was Ed Arcinega, the Indian from New Mexico and Vern Altberg from Denver, Colorado. And Warner Esneault and Jean Perez from Louisiana. John Haffee and Elmer Kisner from Pennsylvania, John Smith from Buffalo. Sherwood Exum and Lou Warmoth from the Carolinas. Joe Clarkson from Georgia, Rupert Dunlap from Tennessee and Max Maughon from Boaz, Alabama. Of course there were others like Perry Myers, Dick Noble and Don Mace and their names and exploits appear in the story.

This widely diverse group was welded into a well coordinated fighting group by Tom Murphy. To understand Tom Murphy was to understand the Forty Thieves.

Thomas Joseph Patrick Timothy Murphy was born and raised on Chicago's south side and attended a Catholic High School there where he excelled in football. His football prowess led to a scholarship at Mississippi State University where he played in the line prior to his enlistment in the Army of the United States. Reddish brown hair and a ruddy complexion complete with scars from barroom brawls topped his six foot two-hundred pound frame, and from his eye sparkled the devilishness of a leprechaun. Tom Murphy believed in two things--work hard and play hard.

He knew that precision timing and perfection in every detail of the infantry platoon's strategy, tactic, disposition and movement were required for success just as they were in football. And he knew that discipline and practice over and over and over was the way to achieve perfection. Murphy demanded perfection in his platoon and he got it.

But when the practice was over, Tom Murphy was the first to arrive at the beer hall, the first to take off to the local bar, the first to get into a fight with the artillery or the air force and the first to defend any

activity of any member of his platoon.

In battle, Tom Murphy showed no fear and reacted to each changing condition with clear and concise direction. If someone got hurt he accepted the responsibility for the wounded. He was awarded the silver star for his exploits as he carried six wounded through a hail of machine gun fire to safety. Six times he went through gun fire back and forth across the road in Hanweiller carrying his wounded men. In the end, Tom Murphy was hit by a sniper bullet in the left chest. True to the luck of the Irish the bullet missed his heart by an inch or so to the left, missed the major portion of his lung by an inch or so and went between two ribs so it did not spin enough to tear a hole in his back of any consequence.

With Murphy a casualty, the Forty Thieves were led by Tech. Sergeant Lou Warmoth. Edward Louis Warmoth was the exact opposite of Tom Murphy in all respects except in his military ability. Lou Warmoth was calm, cool and calculating in his approach to the various situations he was forced to face. His calm demeanor and calculating approach to the very disorganized activity of a platoon in combat brought a sense of professionalism to the Forty Thieves.

Lou Warmoth came from Sumter, South Carolina, was somewhat older than Murphy, and had previously been a member of the regular army. Add to that the true and real attributes of a gentleman coupled with a large amount of self discipline and one can draw the picture of Warmoth a quiet, dignified, skilled soldier. The first platoon altered its approach under his leadership from JEB Stewart like cavaliers to the professional soldierism of T. J. Jackson.

The large majority of soldiers in the first platoon were ordinary typical American young men. About half of this group came from the Army Specialized Training Program or from the Army Air Cadet Program and, consequently, had received approximately a year of college training. Almost all of the rest were recent high school graduates.

Every platoon has its "sad sack" and the first platoon had its "Frenchy." Frenchy was very small and it seemed that his dimensions were less than the Army minimums since all of his issued clothing hung on him like a bag on a pipe rack. His helmet was always cocked to the left or right or down over his eyes, but it never fit squarely on his head.

When Frenchy was weighted down with a helmet, full field pack, cartridge belt with canteen, bandoleers, two or three hand grenades and a rifle he looked like a disorganized pile of clothing and military gear thrown in a corner. At Camp Van Dorn in Mississippi when the 63rd Division was in training and the platoon would go on a twenty mile march it was not uncommon for several other platoon members to end the march carrying most of Frenchy's equipment. But he never fell out of the march, and that was the important thing.

In combat and on the front line, Frenchy was still right there on patrol and in the fight, scared but still there. So these were the men of the first platoon of Charlie Company, 253rd Infantry. And so in this accounting we follow this group of young men for about 150 days of their lifetimes. In that period they changed from brash young boys to confident young men. They had shared a significant emotional event which will bind them together forever.



Sgts. Altberg, Kisner, Murphy and Exum
in New York City - November 1944

Early in the morning of the 22nd of November, 1944, Mag Froberg's 19th birthday, members of the first platoon of "C" Company, 253rd Infantry Regiment embarked on a train from Camp Shanks, New York for the trip down the west side of the Hudson River to West New York, New Jersey. The platoon was destined for guard and kitchen police duty on board the troopship Thomas M. Barrie during a 15 day voyage across the North Atlantic and through the Mediterranean sea to Marseilles. On the 8th of December 1944 the Barrie, which was the sister ship to the illfated Morro Castle, arrived in the recently cleared port of Marseilles and was tied up in the old harbor to a

hastily repaired quay.

Marseilles, although situated in the south of France, can be very cold in the winter time, particularly when the mistral winds funnel cold air in from the north. The mistral winds occur when an area of high atmospheric pressure centers itself in the middle portions of France causing north winds to flow down the Rhone river valley. The winds are concentrated between the Alp mountains to the east and the Pyrenees to the west causing an increase in wind velocity. Continual 75 miles per hour winds are not uncommon in the Rhone river valley during mistral season. Natures reception to the men of the first platoon on December 8th was platonic for Southern France, a cold rain with winds of about twenty miles per hour.

After debarking from the Thomas Barrie, all members of the platoon were transported in 6 x 6 military trucks to a staging area called C.P. No. 2 about ten miles to the northeast of Marseilles. This area was a high rocky plateau near the towns of Aix en Provence, Gardanne and St. Saviourin. After arriving at the staging area and the company location determined, shelter halves were assembled and tents pitched on the rocky ground.

Small fires were started here, there, and elsewhere to try to stave off the cold, but most of the platoon members spent their first days in France rubbing their hands and exercising their legs to keep away the chill which kept inching deeper and deeper into their bodies. The ground which was frozen at night, thawed in the daytime and formed a sea of mud.

At about nine p.m. on the evening of the second day an Italian or German aircraft flew over the encampment. This was the first time anyone had seen any enemy equipment in action and the result was an unbelievable lack of calm. The fires burning in the area provided perfect beacons for the plane and someone shouted "PUT OUT THE FIRES." In most cases the fires were extinguished with dirt or water, but somewhere just behind the area in which the first platoon was encamped someone mistakenly tried to extinguish the fire with a five gallon can of "water." Unfortunately it was a five gallon can of gasoline and a gigantic plume of flame rose about fifty feet into the darkness. Fortunately the aircraft was not interested in attacking the encampment and he departed into the night.

On about the 11th of December the first platoon and the other elements of the first battalion, 253rd Regiment were moved to the railhead at Marseilles where a train comprised of a small coal fired engine and about fifty railcards awaited. The cars were the typical European box cars which were constructed of wood with a rounded roof structure, sliding doors on each side, and a single pair of wheels at either end. Each was painted with a reddish brown paint and had a black roof. On the side was the statement "40 hommes ou 8 cheval." These were the "40 and 8s" that the men from the American Legion talked about.

Each platoon of men, about 43, occupied one car and the train departed

northward on the main line of the SNCF--the French National Railroad. As one viewed the countryside through the opened doors he could see the Rhone River and of course quite a bit of abandoned and wrecked military and civilian equipment. Only a few months before, the 7th Army had fought its way up this valley and destroyed tanks, trucks and other equipment lay idle along the roads.

Windswept rocks lay bare everywhere, but vineyards climbed each hillside with terraced rock walls defining each stepped elevation change. Stone houses with red tiled roofs lined the city streets and stood at each crossing where a railroad man lowered the crossing gates. The train proceeded very slowly because the track and roadbed had been repaired just enough to support a slow moving train.

Following the river northward, the train went through small towns such as Avignon, Orange, and Bollene. It stopped for fuel and water at the larger cities of Valence, Lyon, Macon and Chalon and finally at Dijon in the dolomite hills, where the mainline proceeds on to the northwest and Paris the train followed the branch line to the northeast. Four days and four nights had passed since the departure from Marseilles.

In the evenings it was cold in the box cars but there was some straw in each car to make the ride a bit more comfortable and each man had his duffle bag containing all of his clothing and worldly goods. The duffle bag served as combination mattresses and pillows. The days were long and the nights were longer as the train rattled on.

To pass some of the hours some of the people looked out of the doorway and others played the inevitable card game. During the hours of darkness the doors were closed so that only about a foot remained open to provide air. But the card games went on.

To provide light enough to see the cards, a coffee can with about an inch of sand in the bottom was used as a torch. Gasoline was poured on the sand which acted as a wick and was lighted with a match. Eventually the gasoline supply in the coffee can was depleted requiring a refill, but unfortunately since the sand was hot there was a large amount of evaporation which took place filling the interior of the box car with gasoline fumes. Although there were numerous shouts to be careful, put out cigarets, etc., on one occasion the impatience of the card players overruled sound thinking and a match was tossed into the hot coffee can.

Fire completely circled the inside of the box car and one soldier standing near the slightly opened door was blown out onto the railroad tracks. Fortunately the train moved so slowly that he was able to collect himself and get back on the last car. Singed hair, eyebrows and eyelashes distinguished the members of the first platoon for sometime but when Captain Moore, the Company Commander questioned the reason, all pleaded innocent. None knew the person responsible for creating the fire.

It was very cold and there was about 6" of snow on the ground as the train passed through Neufchateau and Nancy and finally, in the evening of the fourth day the train came to a halt in the railyards of Sarrebourg. That was the 16th of December 1944.

The 16th of December was also the day that the German army began its counterattack from the Eifel region into the Ardennes section of Belgium. The Battle of the Bulge, the popular name for this offensive, eventually required a large number of American military units and would, therefore, affect the employment of the first platoon. Of course, the magnitude of the German effort was not fully realized on the 16th of December.

The boom of distant artillery fire sounded as the first platoon and the rest of "C" Company, 253rd Regiment debarked from the train in Sarrebourg in the darkness of that night and were transported in 6 x 6 trucks about 65 KM (35 miles) through the Alsatian towns of Saverne, Brumath, Weyersheim and Bischwiller to an abandoned French military camp at a small town called Oberhoffen. The military camp took the town's name Camp D'Oberhoffen near Bischwiller.

A stable in Camp D'Oberhoffen provided shelter for the first platoon while arrangements were made for their first encounter with frontline conditions. While the Seventh Army was making combat arrangements, the first platoon was making arrangements of its own. The stable was very dirty and cold as might be expected of an old abandoned building in Alsace in the middle of December, so early in the morning of the 17th of December, each member of the first platoon left the stable in search of the tools required to make life more comfortable. They returned in an hour or so with brooms, brushes, furniture and even a stove. Soon the stable was clean and habitable.

After this episode, Captain Moore referred to the first platoon as Zellner and his "Forty Thieves." The name remained and the 1st platoon of "C" Company, 253rd Infantry has been known as the "Forty Thieves" ever since. At that time the platoon was comprised of the original group which trained at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi. Lieutenant Norman Zellner was the platoon leader and Tech Sergeant Tom Murphy was the platoon sergeant. S/Sergeant Elmer Kisner was the platoon guide and Pfc. Fred Terman was the platoon medic. The first squad leader was S/Sgt. Edward Louis Warmoth and his assistant squad leader was Sgt. George L. Sarosy. The second squad leader was S/Sgt. Vernon Altberg and his assistant squad leader was Sgt. Sherwood Exum and the third squad leader was S/Sgt. John K. Smith with his assistant squad leader Sgt. Rupert Dunlap.

The first squad consisted of Pfc's Dick Noble, Mag Froberg, Cicero Beck, Ed Goins, Joe Clarkson, Max Maughon, Blair, Bert Leckstrom, Sam Page, Don Mace, and Perry Myers. In the second squad were Pfc's John Haffee, Jean Perez, Edsel Murray, Cauthen, Haggerty, Bieski, Henry Laska, Miller, Stokes, Herman Santí, and Ed Lockwood. The third squad included Pfc's Maurice Gibeault, Ed

Arcinega, Warner Esneault, Grover Vanette, Pop Stidd, Red Thomas, Bruno Madrak, Henry Langa, Lang, Vosceles, and Joe Chavez.

At this moment, Seventh Army had concluded that three newly acquired divisions required additional training and, therefore, each was organized as a task force. The three infantry regiments, 253, 254, and 255 of the 63rd Infantry Division under the leadership of Brigadier General Frederick M. Harris with the 74th Signal Co., 533 AAA AW Bn., 1 Med TK Co. 753 Tk Bn., 1 TD Co. 636 TD Bn., 1 FA Bn. 105 How 36 Inf. Div., 1 FA Bn. 155 How 36 Inf. Div. units attached were designated as Task Force Harris. This system blended inexperienced infantry units with experienced artillery and other support units. Similarly the infantry regiments of the 70th Division were assembled as Task Force Herren and those of the 42nd Division were assembled as Task Force Linden.

Where did the name dogface come from? Who knows. In the states, while in training, he is an infantryman or a rifleman MOS746 or he is an infantry replacement, but after a week on the front line everyone becomes a "doggie." The name probably comes from the gaunt look that a guy gets after a few days and nights of lying in some muddy embankment without being able to stand up or move around. He looks and sounds like a dog with his heavy beard and red sunken eyes and with a deep chest cough that imitates a dogs bark from the rainy days and freezing nights. The "doggie" is not a noble person, he couldn't be noble if he tried. Perhaps there is a certain dignity in combat soldiers and medical aid men with their dirt in their ears. They are rough and their language is coarse because they live a life stripped of convention and niceties. Their dignity comes from the way they live unselfishly and risk their lives to help each other. They are normal people who were put where they were.

Late in December 1944, the forty thieves became dogfaces.

Seventh Army order No. 39 of December 22, 1944, assigned Task Force Harris the responsibility of holding defensive positions along the Army's right flank and to maintain contact with the 36th Division and Task Force Linden.

On the 22nd of December 1944 the first platoon of "C" Company, 253rd Infantry left Camp D'Oberhoffen and traveled about 10 KM to Roeschwoog, Alsace and then forward toward the Rhine River to a small community called Neuheusel. The road to Neuheusel was elevated about four feet above the flood plain on either side, paved with stone and lined on each side of the road with trees about thirty feet apart. The flood plain had been farmed in the spring and summer, but now it laid dormant in the cold raw winter weather. From Neuheusel it was only a short march down a farm lane to the levee or dike which bordered the river in this area.

Foxholes were dug approximately every fifty feet along the base of the dike on the farmland side, and two doggies occupied each hole. The dike ranged in height from seven to ten feet although it seemed much higher to the men

of the first platoon as they settled into their foxholes. On the other side of the dike stretched a muddy plain about 150 yards wide which reached out to the river and across the river in the warm permanent emplacements of this part of the defensive wall were elements of the German 405th Infantry Division.

About eight weeks prior to this time, the 63rd Division left Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi and in keeping with military secrecy all identification patches were removed from all uniforms. Everyone was restricted from mentioning the name of the division or regiment and even all identification had to be cut from photographs. It was considered very important that the enemy not know when and where new units were added to the front line. On the 24th of December the German artillery fired shells with leaflets enclosed rather than high explosives. The leaflets said "Welcome to the Front Line 63rd Infantry Division" and included the blood and fire insignia.

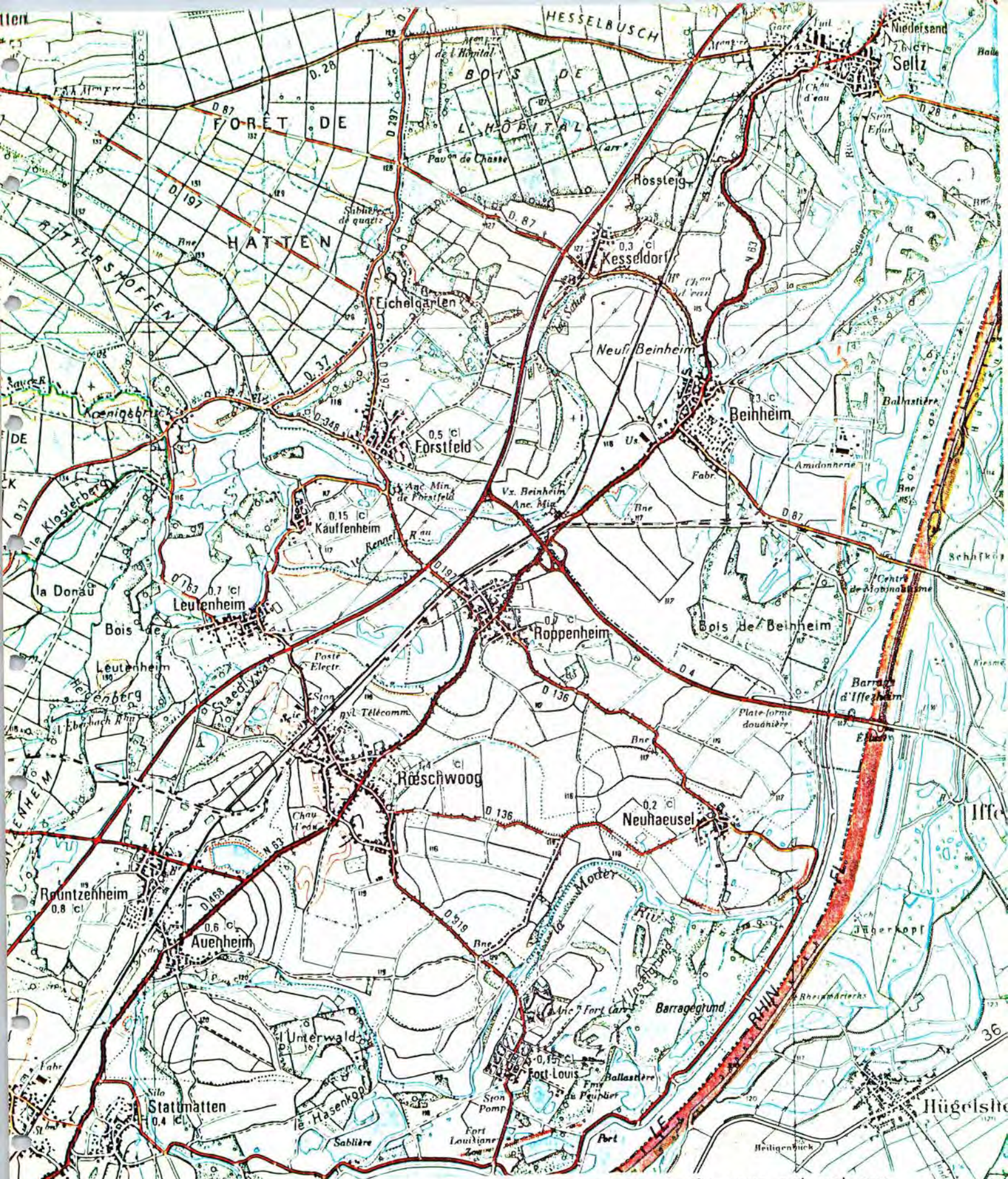
A light snow fell on the morning of December 24, 1944 and the men in the foxholes wondered what the poles which were erected vertically on top of the dike were for. A couple of men left their holes and crept up the bank to inspect the poles further, and as they peered over the top of the dike the chatter of light machine gun fire from across the river served notice that they were zeroed in on those poles. Further explorations to the top of the dike were accomplished with extreme caution and away from those poles. All through the day and night each man kept his eyes glued on the top of the dike as one had no idea when an enemy patrol might come over the top.

Occasionally during the darkened hours of the night, patrols from across the river could be heard emplanting mines on the river side of the levee, and hushed tones signaled their whereabouts. In each foxhole the rule was one man awake for two hours and the other could sleep, then the roles were reversed. In actuality very little sleep was gotten by anyone. It was cold, the holes were wet or damp at best, and an occasional snowfall occurred. A shot rang out from the third squad area.

What happened is not clear, but in the anxious moments, Pfc. Stokes was wounded in the leg and removed for hospital treatment. The first of the "Forty Thieves" had fallen by the wayside.

On the morning after the German patrols had planted mines on the river side of the levee it was necessary for an American patrol to survey the extent of the penetration and to locate the mines. The first patrol over the dike was made by the third squad of the first platoon. Pfc. Warner (Frenchy) Esneault was sure that he would be killed if he went over the levee so he carefully prepared a message to be delivered to his parents if such an event occurred. The other members of the third squad were also very concerned about their safety. At 0755 and again at 0800 the German machine guns sprayed the top of the levee near the poles as was their normal practice.

After the machine gun fire ceased, Lieutenant Zellner gave the command for



In the winter of 1944, the Barrage d'Iffezheim and the locks were not yet constructed on the Rhein. The Rhein-Moder confluence was located where the bridge now spans the Moder southeast of Neuhaeusel. The spit of land which extends northward from that bridge to the Barrage d'Iffezheim did not exist except as flood plain in front of the dike.

the squad to go over the dike. No one moved. Again he gave the command to go over the dike and again no one moved. Tech. Sergeant Tom Murphy explained to each member of the squad that they had to go and since everyone trusted Murphy they went over the dike.

Once on the other side of the dike and in the open field, they crawled to the river front where they dug in and observed the action out the opposite side. Patrols on motorcycles ranged from pillbox to pillbox but other than enemy troops departing for chow no activity occurred. The third squad patrol remained on the river bank until the cover of darkness set in to protect them on the way back to the friendly line.

In complete darkness, the squad spread out and began to pick their way back to the levee and the rest of the platoon. They crossed the patches of ice and frozen mud and crept over fallen trees and around dormant willows. As they approached the levee, Pfc. Esneault felt a slight tug at his foot and heard a snap, then a sharp explosion. He hit the ground and high above the sky a flare lighted the countryside. Luck allowed him to trip a flare and not an antipersonnel mine and negated the need for his letter to his parents.

At noontime of December 25th, Christmas day, the mess Sergeant, George Trakas, and the company cooks brought Christmas dinner to the front line. One at a time each man proceeded to the area where the farm road came down from Neuheusal and the dinner, Turkey, Stuffing, Mashed Potatoes, Cranberry Sauce, etc. was piled one ingredient upon the other in his mess kit. Each was given a can of beer which was frozen and had to be cut open with a bayonet and eaten with a spoon. There were no complaints--it was better than K rations and completely unexpected.

On the morning of December 26, 1944 the rattle of mess kits could be heard from across the river where the men of the 405th Division were sending notice that they were going for a nice warm chow while those of Task Force Harris had to eat K rations. Occasional rifle shots shattered the silence as members of the first platoon attempted to shoot the mess kits from the hands of the German soldiers.

On the morning of December 27th the first platoon was moved back to the town of Roeschwoog where defensive positions were established in the buildings at the edges of the town. To the left, signs pointed to Rastatt and the Rhine River ferry--temporarily out of business. To the right signs pointed to Ft. Louis, another old French Army barrack, but on December 27th, this one was occupied by German troops. Snipers were placed in the church tower looking down the road which led to Ft. Louis to add to the light machine guns and riflemen established in the buildings at the town's border.



1977 Photo of Roeschwaag looking from
Ft. Louis Road toward the Church Tower

Other events were beginning to take place which would influence the movement of Task Force Harris and the first platoon. In the Ardennes far to the west, Von Reunsted and the German Army had pushed all the way to the Meuse River. They had broken the American 106th and 99th Divisions and they had surrounded the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne. The American Third Army had received orders to attack the bulge from the south and reduce the pressure on Bastogne. In order to accomplish that, the Third Army removed its 4th Armored Division from the battle line and the American Seventh Army had to absorb the difference by extending its mainline of defense running east and west across northern France eight miles to the west.

To further complicate matters, Seventh Army Intelligence had learned of yet another German Army counterattack called operation "Nordwind" which was to direct its efforts south from the Sarreguemines--Bitche area and also westward from the Colmar salient. The two pincers were to meet at Sarrebourg and encircle all of the American Seventh Army in the Northeast section of France. Twelve complete and three partial Divisions of infantry and panzers were assembled for this maneuver by German Army Group G.

As a counter measure Seventh Army assigned Task Force Harris less one regiment to reinforce the 44th Division in the Sarreguemines area and the 100th Division in the Bitche area. The remaining regiment, the 254th was assigned to reinforce the 3rd Division in the Colmar area.

On the 30th of December Task Force Harris was withdrawn from its initial positions along the Rhine and redeployed according to the Seventh Army directive. Company "C" 253 was staged in the Haguenau Woods to the northwest of Bischwiller to be positioned for transport to the 44th Division area.

The ground was frozen and snow was falling heavily in the staging area where the members of the first platoon attempted to dig holes for protection. It was possible to dig shallow holes in the deeply wooded area and to cover those holes with felled pine tree logs and pine bows for camouflaging purposes. In the open fields it was another story as the frost had penetrated much more deeply into the ground. T/Sgt. Tom Murphy attempted to open a fox hole in the ground by chopping a small hole with an axe and placing a quarter pound of TNT in the hole. When it was set off, the TNT blew straight up and did not move one pebble or one grain of earth.

Operation "Nordwind" was put into effect at 2300 December 31, 1944. Task Force Linden had been given the responsibility for the Rhine defense as Task Force Herren was attached to the 79th Division and moved to the line east of Bitche. Armored patrols probably of the 21st Panzer Division moved from the north and northeast. One of these patrols came upon the dug in elements of "C" Company on the morning of December 31st. It consisted of approximately three tanks and several armored reconnaissance cars.

Because this patrol was so far from the known front line very little retaliation occurred as the members of "C" Company fired on the armored vehicles. Several shells did enter the company area. This was the first experience with "tree bursts." In this case the tanks fired 88mm shells, not at the dug in positions of the infantry, but rather at the trees in the area. They were aimed to hit branches and limbs where each shell would explode and rain shrapnel down from thirty or so feet in the air. The logs which covered most foxholes absorbed most of the punishment from this firefight.

On the 1st of January, the first platoon and the balance of "C" Company were transported by truck from the Haguenau woods area. By this time the entire battle line had become very fluid. Enemy patrols had broken the thinly held Task Force Linden lines between Kilstett and Drusenheim with the main effort at Gamsheim.

The truck trip through Haguenau was a wild affair as the inhabitants were removing the French and American flags and replacing them with black, red and white swastikas. Artillery fire could be heard in the distance and an

occasional rifle shot from patrols encouraged the truck drivers to move faster. The route from Haguenu to Neunkirch near Sarreguemines went through the territories of the 79th Division, the 45th Division, Task Force Hudelson, the 100th Division and the 44th Division in that order. On the left flank of the 44th Division between Sarreguemines and Fopersviller, the 114th Infantry Regiment with the help of concentrated artillery fire had smothered a determined enemy effort to exploit his Blies River bridgehead at the bend north of the Airport the day before. In the center of the 44th line southeast of Habkirchen, the 324th Regiment held the Blies River line against three attempted crossings on the afternoon of December 31st.

Three companies of enemy had penetrated the 71st Regiment lines on the right flank and had moved about 2000 yards into the Bliesbrucken Woods. On January 1st and 2nd elements of the 324th Regiment aided the 71st in restoring their lines, however they could not hold their position and reestablished their line south of the woods.

On the 2nd of January, Company "C" and the 1st Battalion of the 253rd Regiment occupied the positions of the 114th Regiment in Neunkirch just west of the Airport, thus freeing elements of the 114th to assist the 71st and 324th Regiments in stopping the enemy advance on the right flank.

The 1st platoon occupied the last row of buildings in Neunkirch which faced the open field before the Blies River. Machine guns were placed in the second story windows firing down toward the river. At the bend in the river was a factory which usually produced pottery, dishes and the like. A patrol, usually three men were sent in each morning to occupy the factory and maintain contact with the enemy. At night these troops would be increased to full squad strength. For warmth those who were not on guard posts huddled inside the big furnaces which were formerly used for firing the clay ware. Listening posts positioned halfway between the factory and the line of houses at the edge of town were established. Enemy patrols ranged up and down the streets at night meeting determined gun fire from sentries posted in the doorways.



1977 Photo of Neunkirch Homes occupied
by 1st Platoon in January 1945



Neunkirch - January 1945
Herman Santi, Bruno Madrak, Maurice Gibeault,
Bertil Leckstrom and Ed Lockwood in the Foxhole

Alternating with this holding position, the 1st platoon held positions near the "castle" before Habkirchen. Frozen German bodies lay on the ground in the orchard near the castle, the result of the attack on the 44th Division several days earlier. The snow covered foxholes were on the high ground on the south side of the Blies River while the German occupied town lay in the valley below and across the river.

Approximately 12 KM to the south and behind the line held by the 1st Battalion 253rd Infantry, elements of the 71st Infantry 44th Division and the 3rd Battalion of the 253 Infantry Regiment were forced back and past the town of Achen. Elements of the French 2nd Armored and the 255th Infantry Regiment were required to stop the gap and recapture Achen. Severe losses

at this point appear to have influenced the German High Command's decision to curtail the Sarre offensive. By the 5th of January, the line had been reestablished and the Sarre Pincer of Operation Nordwind had failed in its mission.

The Forty Thieves continued to alternate positions between Neunkirch and Habkirchen, however most of the first half of January was spent in the Neunkirch positions. Although the front line was relatively quiet with only an occasional artillery shell being fired, all troops were continually alert. At night time observance of the password procedure was imperative. Unfortunately Pfc. Bieski failed on one occasion to remember the password or give the countersign. On the night of the 14th of January 1945 he was killed by a member of "D" Company.

In mid-January, the first platoon was moved to Sarreguemines to take up positions along the Blies River from the confluence of the Blies and Sarre Rivers eastward about one block. Across the Blies River was the German town of Hanweiler. At the end of January, all of the elements of the 63rd Infantry Division were reunited, Task Force Harris was disbanded and Lt. General Louis Hibbs resumed command of the Division. The Division front extended from Welferding on the left flank through Sarreguemines to Habkirchen, followed the Blies River to Bliesbruck then southeast to Bellvue Farm on the right flank. Adjoining the divisions left flank was the 70th Infantry Division and on the right flank was the 44th Infantry Division.



1977 Photo of 11 Rue Roth, Sarreguemmes occupied
by the First Platoon in late January 1945

By this time Sgt. George L. Sarosy was accepted for officer training and was transferred to the 45th Division which had been badly mauled. Mag Froberg was promoted to Sergeant and assistant squad leader of the first squad, first platoon of "C" Company. At end of January 1945, the 4th Armored Division of the American Third Army had penetrated the German Ardennes salient from the south and the Battle of the Bulge was concluded. The Sixth Panzer Army had withdrawn behind its original position and had lost about 100,000 men. The Americans also paid a stiff price: 80,990 casualties including 10,276 killed, 47,493 wounded, and 23,218 missing.

With the conclusion of the Ardennes battle, the American Third and Seventh Armies were in a position to resume their offensive stance. Prominent along the 63rd Division front was a "sag" called the "Welferding Sag" which Seventh Army felt should be eliminated and a plan was laid for a limited offensive to reduce the sag. Company "C" was to move across the Sarre River, secure Hanweiller so that a bridge could be erected, and proceed northward through a series of initial objectives to the left flank of the Vorderwald at Kleinblittersdorf.

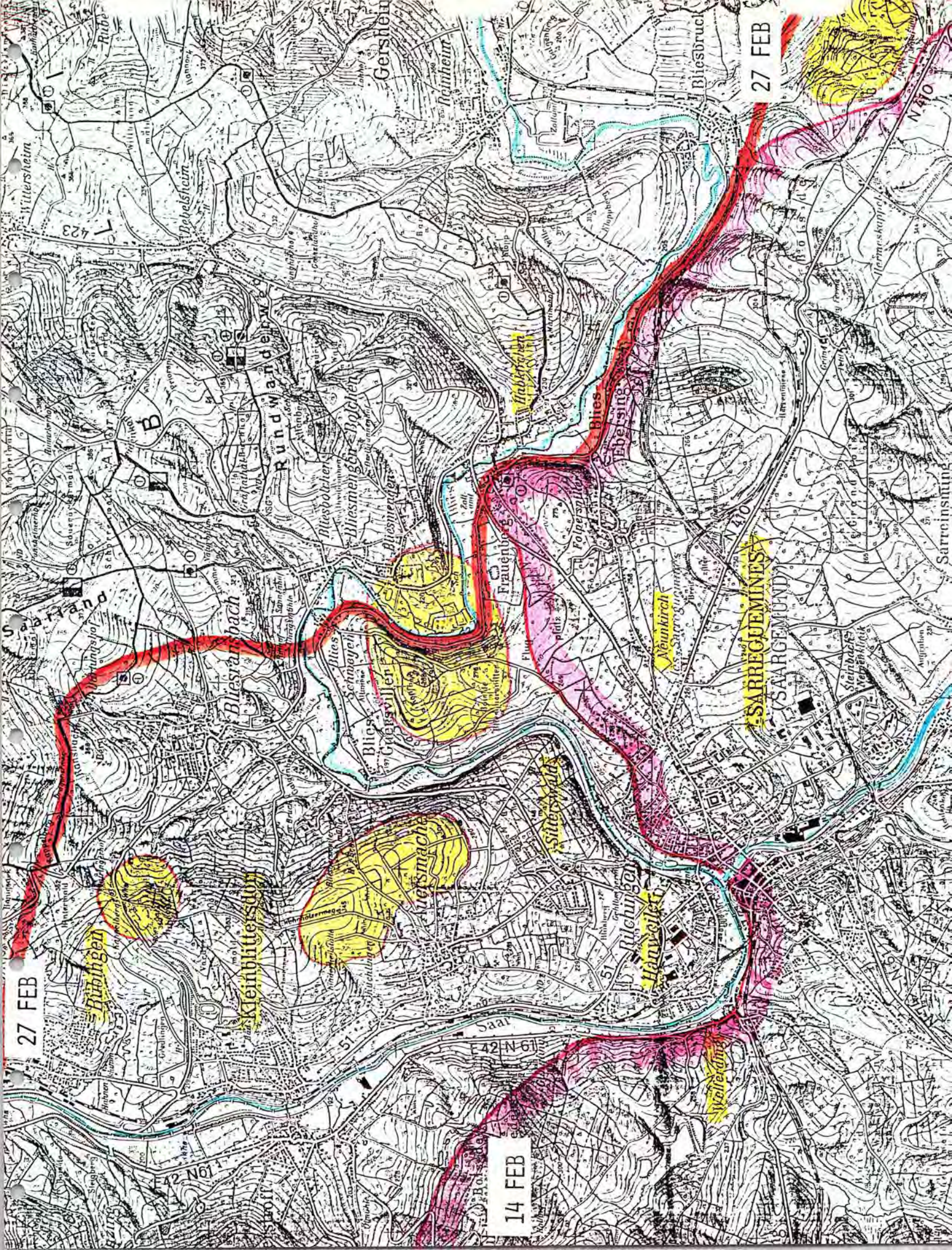
On the night of February 13th, 1944 a four man patrol consisting of Mag Froberg, Cicero Beck, Dick Noble and Joe Clarkson from the first squad of the first platoon of "C" Company, 253rd Infantry crossed the Blies River to the east of Hanweiller to determine the extent of enemy occupation of the town. It was known that the 559 Infantry Division occupied the town but to what extent seemed questionable. After returning, the patrol reported extensive troop movement in all of the buildings on the east side of Hanweiller.

In many of the following skirmish descriptions, reference will be made to "House to House Combat." Such combat is almost always the same with minor variations dependent upon the local conditions but typically a contingent of attacking troops will approach a town by marching toward it along the sides of a road. One squad would be on one side of the road, another squad on the remaining side and the third squad would be called "in reserve" and would be split, one half on either side of the road. If the town had been occupied for a long period of time it was proper to anticipate that mines and perhaps barbed wire would be planted at some distance, say 100 yards before the initial houses on the edge of the town.

At approximately 200-300 yards before reaching the town, the attacking troops would spread out into the fields along the roadway and proceed until defensive fire was drawn usually from machine gun or rifle emplacements in the nearest house or mortar fire which would emanate from the central portion of the town. Once the location of the defending fire could be pinpointed, one squad or a portion of a squad would remain more or less stationary and fire at the exact location of the enemy gun emplacement. This is called a "base of fire" and it would make the enemy gunners keep their heads down long enough for a small contingent of attacking troops to circle around to the side of the building or foxhole in which the enemy defensive position was hidden. A hand grenade thrown into the position was usually enough to silence it.

If the encircling movement or flanking movement was impossible, it would be necessary to fire a bazooka round or fire a rifle grenade at it to nullify the position. Once the position was eradicated, the attacking force would move into the building and provide a "base of fire" so that other attackers could move into the next building, and so that the squad across the street could move down their row of houses.

An enemy machine gun placed in a building at a street corner could usually keep the attacking forces from using the street entrances by spraying fire back and forth across the street and it would effectively prevent the troops on one side from crossing to aid their comrades on the other. Such a gun position usually forced the attacking squads to the backyards and the rear entrances of the buildings. In this case the following half squad would provide a fire base as the attacking squad would leap frog from building to building.



27 FEB

27 FEB

14 FEB

Hülbingen

Krennbiffeswiler

Saarlouis

Ruchungen
Hammel

Hülbingen

SARREQUEMINES
SAARGEMÜND

Neubirch

Süderwald

Blies
Schwaben
Görsvillen

Frauenberg

Blies
Ebersing

Bliesbollen
Bliesmengen-Höflein
Bliesmengen

Rundwandelweg

Gersheim

Reinheim

Biesbruck

Sarreinsming

42 N61

[42-N 61]

N 410

N 410

Naturally the intelligent enemy would emplant mines in the back yards of the houses to slow the attackers and reduce their numbers.

Once a foot soldier successfully gained a position adjacent to a house he would proceed to the doorway and when another doggie was in position on the opposite side of the doorway, the door was broken open as rapidly as possible and either a grenade thrown into the house or a rapid discharge of several rifle shots was fired into the entry way. Swift entry with the rifle in position to return any fire was required, because surprise even though the enemy was alert usually was the element which allowed for success.

After the first few houses were occupied, it was usually not necessary to use a grenade because the town's defense was normally at the perimeters. Deeper into the town localized strong points would have to be nullified one by one as they were approached.

If one thought there were people in the basement or a closed room the expression was "Commen Zee Out Mit de Hand de Hoh." It's hard to imagine that anyone could understand such a language, but they did. Sometimes a soldier would come out, sometimes the civilian occupants of the house would creep up from the basement.

Hanweiller is a small German hamlet located on the north side of the Sarre and Blies Rivers immediately across from Sarreguemines, France at the confluence of these two rivers. On the east side of Hanweiller is a road which climbs a small hill and runs north and south from the Blies River bridge in Sarreguemines to the village of Auersmacher. The west side of Hanweiller is a railroad which is elevated on an embankment above the flood plain of the Sarre River. The railroad also runs north and south from the steel bridge at the Sarre River crossing and follows the river as it flows northward to Kleinblittersdorf and Bubingen. Running east and west from the railroad to the northbound Auersmacher road is the main street of Hanweiller. On the north side of the main street are approximately 15 houses and buildings with an equal number on the south side of the street. The house rows are not continuous and there are occasional empty lots between the houses on either side of the road.

The houses are all constructed from stone and clay tile which has been stuccoed with mortar and finished to a smooth texture. They are mostly two story houses although there are occasional three story buildings. Each is topped with a red clay tile roof.

In February, 1945, almost all of the buildings had been damaged by artillery fire. Many of the roofs were collapsed exposing the supporting beams and piping of the upper floors. Rubble from the broken stone, tile and fallen walls littered the sidewalks and streets. Mines had been placed in the fields between the town and the railroad embankment and also in the open

lots between the buildings on the main street. Machine guns were placed in the rear windows of the three story houses on the south side of the street so that they could cover the railroad embankment and the mine fields between. Machine guns were also placed in the buildings facing the open lots to protect them from any advancement. Finally mortars and artillery was located in strategic positions behind the town so that their fire could cover the town and its approaches.

An hour before daybreak on the morning of February 16th, 1945, Lt. Norman Zellner led the 1st platoon across the Sarre River from Welferding to German soil on the opposite bank. The platoon crossed the river on a hastily erected floating foot bridge which was constructed by the 263rd Engineer Battalion.



Engineers removing wounded from
Hanweiler - February 1945

On the opposite side of the river after crossing apparently unnoticed the platoon spread out and moved over a flood plain of about 200 yards which was covered with dead trees to a railroad embankment which provided cover from observation by those in the town. While crossing the field, a handheld

machine gun (grease gun) fired mistakenly and unintentionally. One of the rounds hit Lt. Zellner, who screamed loudly. The noise undoubtedly alerted the defenders in the town.

The first squad built up a base of fire along the railroad embankment while the second and third squads attempted to out flank the town by proceeding behind the railroad embankment to the left. Mortar fire came into the town from the area of the crossroad about a 1/2 mile behind the town, as the 2nd and 3rd squads moved into town from the left. The first squad followed immediately behind them with half a squad on each side of the road. Tech. Sgt. Tom Murphy was leading the platoon as it proceeded with house to house fighting. Mortars and machine gun fire took their toll as well as shue mines, those wooden boxes of TNT and bouncing bettys which would rise off the ground about three feet before exploding and throw shrapnel in all directions. After taking four or five houses on each side of the road, the first platoon was stopped by a machine gun firing from a shell torn building on the right side.

The target was pointed out by Murphy to Pfc. Esneault who had a bazooka and S/Sgt. Vernon Altberg who carried additional rounds. Two rounds failed to fire but the third hit the building which housed the machine gun. The hit, however, was not accurate enough to quiet the enemy machine gun, and artillery fire from the 861st FA located in the hills overlooking Sarreguemines was called upon. The first platoon moved back one house on either side to allow the artillery to concentrate on the building with the machine gun. Assistance from the 2nd platoon which was attacking from the right enabled the movement to continue after the machine gun at the first phase line was silenced by the artillery.

In the afternoon Hanweiler was in the hands of "C" Company and the first platoon had lost Herman Santi, killed by a mine and wounded were Lt. Zellner, S/Sgt. Elmer Kisner, S/Sgt. John K. Smith, Maurice Gibeault, Ed Arcienega, S/Sgt. Vern Altberg, John Haffee, Warner Esneault, Grover Vanette, Red Thomas, Pop Stidd, Sgt. Rupert Dunlap and Joe Chavez.

With Hanweiler in the hands of "C" Company, a floating footbridge was erected by the 263rd Engineers from Sarreguemines. "B" Company, 253rd Infantry crossed this bridge at 0430 on the morning of the 17th of February and attacked the high ground to the northeast of Auersmacher and by 0730 they had secured that ground to protect the left flank of the 3rd Battalion.

On the morning of the 17th, the 1st platoon of "C" Company attacked and secured the village of Sitterswald northeast of Hanweiler. In Sitterswald sniper fire wounded Sgt. Sherwood Exum. The first platoon had lost seventeen men either killed or wounded from its starting complement of 43. Seven more had been transferred to Division, Battalion or AMG leaving only 19 men available for combat duty. The platoon had lost its Platoon Leader, Platoon Guide, two of the three Squad Leaders and two of the three Assistant Squad Leaders.

On the 18th of February while in the town of Sitterswald, the 1st platoon was reinforced by the addition of its first replacements. They were Privates Rod Backus, Bakos, Bell, Benvenuto, Barcomb, Burnside, Busko, Butler, Callery and Dugan. In order to strengthen its leadership, Tech. Sgt. John E. Smith from the 3rd platoon was transferred to the 1st platoon and was assigned as third squad leader. These additions brought the strength of the 1st platoon up to 29 men including three non commissioned officers but no commissioned officer.

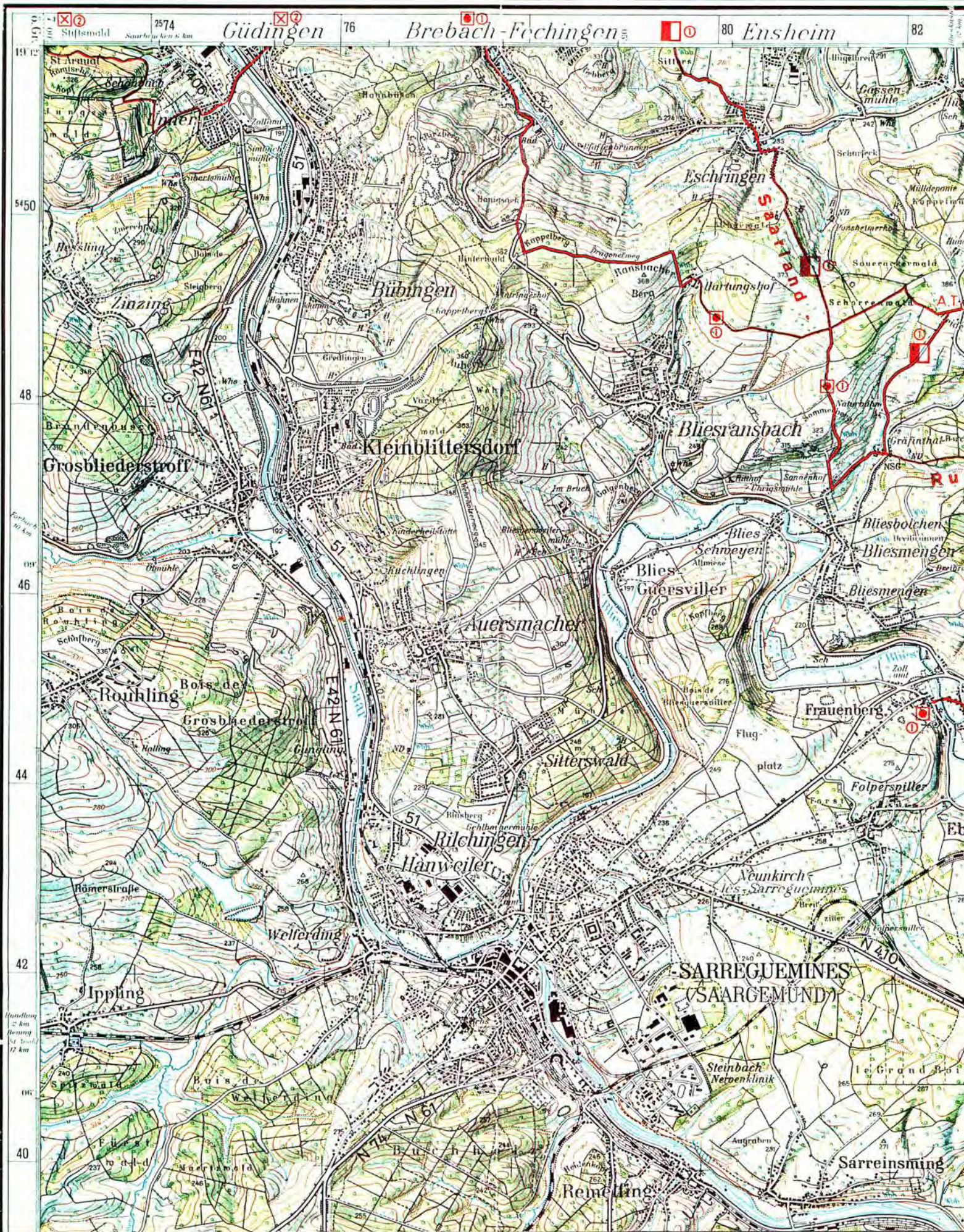
On February 19, 1945, the first platoon of "C" Company was attached to "A" Company 253rd Infantry for an assault on the town of Auersmacher. "A" Company had attacked Auersmacher the day before and had a platoon sized patrol in the town. A counter attack by enemy infantry assisted by self propelled guns and panzers had driven the "A" Company contingent out of the village.

The center of Auersmacher was a small square with a building lined road entering the right side of the square from the south and exiting from the left side of the square to the north. At dawn "A" Company with the first platoon attached attacked the town from the south. The first platoon moved into the houses on the left side of the street. An enemy machine gun was positioned to fire down the street preventing any frontal movement so the entry to the houses was almost always through the back yards and rear entry ways.

After about 3 hours, the first platoon had proceeded around the square and to the cemetery at the edge of town. Dick Noble entered the cemetery with a bazooka and was hidden behind a stone fence which bordered the street. A panther tank came up the road and fired several rounds at members of "A" Company in the area of the square and at a machine gun which was in the last house at the edge of the cemetery. Noble proceeded to the gate opening in the wall and fired a bazooka round at point blank range into the tank tread. The panther caught fire and its occupants were killed as they tried to flee the vehicle. The disabled tank blocked the entry of the following panthers and they withdrew to the north.

By noon time, Auersmacher was in the hands of "A" Company and the first platoon followed the north road out of town to join the rest of "C" Company on the left flank of the battalion. Pfc. Jean Perez and Tech. Sgt. Tom Murphy were wounded in this house to house combat and returned to the Aid Station. After rejoining Company "C", the first platoon received Lieutenant Taft as Platoon Leader. The company dug in along the base of the hill below Auersmacher and watched as "B" Company assaulted and took Kleinblittersdorf in the afternoon of February 19th. T/Sgt. Louis Warmoth was promoted to 1st Platoon Sergeant and Sgt. Mag Froberg to Platoon Guide. Joe Clarkson was promoted to S/Sgt. and First Squad Leader while Dick Noble was appointed as Assistant Squad Leader and Sergeant.

Topographische Karte 1:50 000 (Ausgabe mit Wanderwegen)



"C" Company followed "B" Company into Kleinblittersdorf on the 20th, mopping up some small areas of resistance scattered through the town. Lieutenant Taft was wounded in these actions and was returned to the Aid Station. The balance of the day was spent in readjusting positions and moving into a defensive mode at the far northern edge of town.

Lieutenant Levitt replaced Lieutenant Taft on the 23th of February and Privates Anderson and Arries were added to the first platoon to bring the strength back to 31 including a commissioned officer.

The final action of the limited offensive to eliminate the Welferding sag took place on the 24th of February after resupplying all units. The action called for the seizure of Bubingen and the high ground to the east. Very little resistance was offered as "C" Company moved to the northeast edge of the town. The first platoon established positions along the road and in the fields northeast of town and the platoon CP was organized on a lone building somewhat to the rear of the entrenched platoon.

The nights were cold late in February 1945 inciting Private Eddie Lockwood to build a fire in the stove in the platoon CP building. Although the stove warmed the building and its inhabitants, the smoke from the fire drew the attention of the enemy artillery observer and early in the morning of February 25th an 88 shell hit the CP and penetrated the wall and roof. Lieutenant Levitt and the platoon medic, Pfc. Fred Terman were wounded. The platoon CP was re-established in foxholes far away from the building.

With the capture of Bubingen and the surrounding heights, the 63rd Division objectives had been accomplished. Lieutenant Selby and Pfc. Sporing, a medic were assigned to the first platoon on February 26th, and the stage was set for the last offensive which would put the division and the regiment in position before the Siegfried defensive line.

On the morning of March 3, 1945, while preparing for the afternoon's offensive manouver, the first platoon was further supplied with six replacements. They were Privates Oliver Goldsmith, Harry Danley, Hart, Haas, Crumley, and Barber.

Later that day the 253rd Infantry Regiment moved forward to seize a small forest and an adjacent hill which were located to the northeast of Bubingen and overlooked the town of Gudingen. The forest was known as the Hahnbusch and the hill was called the Birnberg. On the face of the Birnberg was a limestone quarry with a pit depth of about twenty to thirty feet. This high ground controlled the surrounding territory and commanded the approaches to Sarrebrucken, therefore it was stoutly defended by the 559th Volksgrenadier Division.

The main effort was made by Company "C", 253rd Infantry and the 1st Battalion of 255th Infantry, reinforced by the 255th AntiTank Company and medium tanks from the 749th Tank Battalion. Company "C" was to attack the

Birnberg and the 1st Battalion was to sieze the Hahnbusch woods. After a short barrage by the 861st Field Artillery Battalion, the attacking eschelons moved out at 1400 hours. As the tanks ventured into the open, they were met by AT fire from the quarry. Six were quickly destroyed and the remainder withdrew to move into new positions to set up a base of fire for the infantry. Troops of the 1st Battalion, 255th Infantry could penetrate no further and they too were forced back by 88 fire from the quarry.

The stone quarry was a typical limestone pit lying on the west side of the Birnberg hill. It was oriented in a north-south direction and approximately seven hundred yards long and four hundred yards wide by about seven to ten yards deep. Entrance is gained by a cut from the west to the approximate central position of the quarry equidistant from either end. A mine railroad which traversed the quarry was used to transport the mined stone to the crushing plant at the base of the hill near the town of Gudingen.

One section of the railway was elevated in the quarry and at ground elevation outside the quarry. It ran in a northwest-southeast direction across the quarry and was supported by pillars of stone, wooden pole bridges and stone embankments.

On the quarry floor the railroad had spur lines which ran to the north, south and center ends of the mine faces and back through the entrance cut. The two lines met well below the mine face about halfway down the hill. Also on the quarry floor were two small buildings. One was in the entrance cut and another farther into the mine. Finally, on the quarry floor were several square or rectangular piles of mined limestone rock. Between each rock pile was a small roadway formerly used to move the rock toward the railway.



Lower Floor of the Stone Quarry -
Bubingen - March 1945

The afternoon of March 3, 1945 found the defensive positions of the 559th Volksgrenadier Division located on the perimeter of the quarry in position to fire down into the pit and with machine guns trained on the entrance cut from the eastern wall. Most effective was the artillery which was zeroed in on the quarry floor and the mortars which were effectively positioned on the hillside overlooking the quarry. Finally, knee mortars, small missiles about one inch in diameter were employed by the defensive units located within the confining walls of the limestone pit.

"C" Company, 253rd Infantry including the first platoon was attempting to clear the stone quarry to allow the other units to complete their mission. Entry was made into the quarry from the entrance cut and immediately the men of "C" Company were faced with determined machine gun and rifle fire. The defenders were behind rock barricades which protected them very effectively and were also very difficult to see in the dust which filled the air everytime a mortar shell exploded. Progress was very very slow for those of the first platoon because each shell explosion was multiplied as the limestone splintered. Flying rock fragments did as much damage as the

schrapnel. By nightfall, "C" Company had only penetrated the quarry to a depth of perhaps 150 yards. Enemy seemed to be everywhere--dug into the quarry sides up high--dug into the floor and dug into the surrounding ground outside the pit.

It required two days and two nights for Company "C" to finally clear the stone quarry of enemy troops. In doing so, the company was awarded the distinguished unit citation and the first platoon lost Cicero Beck, Vosceles and Butler killed and Barcomb, Callery, Dugan, S/Sgt. Mag Froberg, Ed Goins, T/Sgt. Lou Warmoth, Miller, S/Sgt. Joe Clarkson, T/Sgt. John E. Smith, Burnside, Medic Sporing, and Lieutenant Selby all wounded. The platoon was reduced to seventeen men who were dazed and barely available for combat. T/Sgt. Louis Warmoth, although wounded, returned to the platoon later that same day. The remaining wounded were returned to various hospitals depending on the extent of their wounds.

The German account of the battles around Bubingen which follows was supplied by Doctor Laufer, Archivoberrat, Saarbrucken.

Until the beginning of February 1945 the situation around the Blies and Sarre rivers remained unchanged. The strength of the German Division, estimated by the Americans was 4500 men comprised of 1500 men in the LXXXV A.K. belonging to the 347th Grenadier Division stationed around Forbach; 1300 men of the 19th Volks Grenadier Division in the area of Sarreguemines, and 1700 in the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division around Rimlingen. The 19th Volks Grenadier Division and the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division belonged to the XIII SS Corps. The 347th Grenadier Division had been reassembled from the 526th Division after October 1944.

The 19th Volks Grenadier Division originated in Denmark on August 8, 1944 as the 19th Grenadier Division and was renamed on October 9, 1944 while the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Gotz von Berlichingen" was formed in western France on November 15, 1943. It was nearly destroyed near St. Lo on 29 July 1944 and rebuilt again near Paris.

On February 15, 1945 the 7th U.S. Army offensive started. In difficult skirmishes against the German defense, the Americans reached the Bliesbrucken forest and the Buchenbusch hill north of Rimlingen. In the center of the battle were the Bellevue farm and the Brandelfinger farm. On the 17th of February the 63rd Infantry division continued the attack in the region of the Sarre and Bliesbrucken. The attacking line was: The south corner of Bubingen--north point of the Vorderwald--Blies near Bliesmengen--Bolchen. The main attack of the 253rd Infantry Regiment was preceded by another attack by the 255th Infantry Regiment on the right wing.

1. A small group crossed the Blies unnoticed at 0200 on February 17, 1945 near Habkirchen and stormed the village after a short fire fight. After an hour the group withdrew.

2. Seventeen other American soldiers performed a similar action in Bliesburgen from 0300 to 0800.

The main attack of the 253rd Infantry Regiment: Frontline: Grossblittersdorf - along the Sarre and Blies eastwards to Sitterswald-Habkirchen.

17 February 1945: The right group, 2nd Battalion, 253rd Infantry, under artificial moonlight attacked the loop between Habkirchen and Frauenberg at 0200. In the beginning the German resistance was very weak, however in the afternoon they returned strong grenade fire. Around 1700 the German troops counterattacked with tanks near Bliesgersweiler. Supported by heavy artillery fire, the Americans were able to restore the original situation.

Left Group, 1st Battalion, 253rd Infantry Regiment. Crossed a quickly erected bridge over the Sarre between Welferdingen and Sarreguemines at 0430. They bypassed the village of Auersmacher at 0745 and reached a hill north of that community. In the evening another group penetrated the village and took the hill to the south.

Center Group, 3rd Battalion, 253rd Infantry. After protecting their flanks were able to follow the other groups. A 15 minute artillery fire at the Muhlenwald weakened the barbed wire and mine barriers. In boats and on a wooden bridge they reached the Muhlenwald hill on the other side of the Blies at 1700. Faced only with a weak defense, the battalion captured the Vorderwald in the afternoon and prepared defensive positions on the north side. The German counter attacks started in this area during the night.

18 February 1945: Right Group (2nd Batt. 253) - After a 1 1/2 hour battle, Company F took Bliesgerweiler in the early afternoon.

Left Group, 1st Battalion. German Infantry supported by machine guns penetrated into Auersmacher and forced the Americans to leave.

Center Group, 3rd Battalion. The German counter attacks were unsuccessful at first, but eventually penetrated the Vorderwald defenses from several sides. This situation seriously endangered the III Battalion.

19 February 1945: Meanwhile the Americans regrouped. The 1st Battalion 253rd Infantry group from the reserves crossed the Sarre and positioned themselves south of Auersmacher. At dawn,

supported by artillery fire, they began the attack on the village. After 4 hours of heavy street fighting Auersmacher fell into the hands of the Americans. This automatically stopped the danger to the 3rd Battalion in the vorderwald.

The 1st Battalion turned towards Kleinblittersdorf and after another 4 1/2 hour street battle, Kleinblittersdorf was taken by the Americans.

The last German troops left Bubingen on 24 February 1945 and the peoples troop from the Pfalz was engaged in the defense of the village. The German soldiers destroyed the bridge to the stone quarry and four local residents were killed during the fighting. The first American soldiers reached Bubingen at 1300 24 February 1945.

During the period between the 19th and 24th of February 1945 relative peace returned to the area of Auersmacher-Bubingen. The time was used to reorganize the troops. Then a new attack started extending over the previous attack field in order to conquer Bubingen, Bliesransbach and the hills between the towns. With three battalions progressing in a row the 253rd American Infantry Regiment took all of the designated targets on 24 February 1945.

Before another attack could be started on the 15th of March 1945, it was necessary for the 63rd Infantry Division to gain a more convenient starting position. For the 63rd that meant an attack out of Bubingen with the target of winning the Hahnbusch and hill 287 between Guding and Fechingen. This main attack was again combined with two diversionary attacks at side targets.

In the first attack Habkirchen was occupied again for a short time. The other attack was against the Hartung farm. This mission started with machine gun support on the afternoon of 3 March 1945 and was intended to end with a withdrawal during the darkness. An air attack was included, but the mission turned out to bring more losses than previously intended.

The 1st Battalion 255 Infantry Regiment was prepared for the main attack on the Hahnbusch at 1405 on March 3, 1945. Company C, 253rd Regiment was to protect the right flank with its target the Birnberg. Also the 255 Anti-tank Company and Company A of the 749th Tank Battalion were included. After a five minute artillery barrage at the Birnberg and smoke at the Hahnbusch, tanks and infantry proceeded from Bubingen.

The tanks and infantry got into a German crossfire from south of the Hahnbusch and from the stone quarry in Birnberg. Six American tanks were destroyed and the rest retreated to apply supporting fire from a position in the rear. At first the American infantry could not move and remained covered in the German defensive fire of machine guns and 8.8 Flak guns.

Shortly before midnight Company B succeeded to come as close as 200 meters from the Hahnbusch and dug in there.

Company C, 253rd Infantry progressed toward the Birnberg where strong flanking fire from the German guns were able to bring the attack to a temporary stop. Around 2100 the Americans reached the lower part of the quarry and by 1200 the attackers took possession of the whole quarry.

The next day, 4 March 1945, the Hahnbusch was attacked with varied success. A Company 255th Regiment progressed through the forest to hill 287 at 0600. To the left Company B remained in the position obtained at midnight. A German tank attack forced Company A back into the forest.

Not until the following day did the Americans, with the aid of two more supporting companies, succeed in taking the Hahnbusch and around 1300 the hill 287.

The following article from Blood and Fire and the Unit Citation preceding it vividly describe the battle of the stone quarry.

HEADQUARTERS
SEVENTH UNITED STATES ARMY--APO 758
U. S. ARMY

16 March 1946

Award	1
Award	2
Award	3
Award	4
Award	5
Battle Honers----Citation of Unit	5

5. Battle Honers-Citation of Unit: By direction of the President, under the provisions of Section 4, Circular No. 333, War Department, the following named organization is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action:

Company C, 253rd Infantry, 63rd Infantry Division for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy from 3 to 5 March 1945, at the rock quarry northeast of Bubingen, Germany. This quarry, the dominant terrain feature in the area, and last main enemy defense before the Siegfried Line, with its sheer cliffs, maze of tunnels, piles of loose rock and covered routes of approach which greatly favored the defenders, was assaulted at 1400 on 3 March 1945, by Company C in conjunction with an attack by 1st Battalion, 255th Infantry, attacking to the left to secure woods northeast of the quarry. While attempting to sieze the northern end of the quarry, they were halted for two days and nights by concentrated enemy mortar and machine gun fire and suffered tremendous losses. At the same time, two companys on their left directed (small arms fire) at them from the northern end of the quarry. On the night of 4 March reconnaissance patrols from Company C succeeded in locating some of the well camouflaged machine gun positions. Later that night the company, with less than one-quarter of its original strength, and these men exhausted by two days and nights of violent action, renewed the attack. With great valor, skill and determination the assault was pressed home and the final heights were carried. The extraordinary courage, fidelity and tenacity of purpose in pressing the attack and capturing this vital enemy position reflect the highest credit on the officers and men of Company C and the armed forces.

By Command of Lieutenant General Keys:

John M. Willens
Brigadier General, GSC
Chief of Staff

(from "The Blood and Fire")

The Battle of the Quarry
3, 4, 5, March 1945

QUARRY BECAME A PIT OF HELL TO THE MEN WHO BATTLED THERE

The "Battle of the Quarry" militarily speaking, was scarcely more than a skirmish. It will be remembered only as an unforeseen delay in a small operation--except by the men of Company "C", 253rd Inf.

Southeast of the Badenland village of Gudingen lies the quarry, cut in a substantial hill. It is about seven hundred yards long and five hundred yards wide. A narrow-gauge railroad runs around the bottom of the steep sides. In short, it is an ordinary commercial limestone pit--but to what is left of Company "C", it was a pit of Hell.

Back at the regimental CP an officer said, "There's nothing in the book that tells you how to fight in a place like that." The men of Company "C" learned how to fight in a place like that. For 72 hours they learned to stand in the bottom of that pit while, as one of them said, "The damn Jerries looked right down your throat."

The company cleared the quarry, but the enemy got back at night. Small arms fire broke out anew within those stone walls.

Company "C" began to endure a screaming, reverberating nightmare--the worse because daylight brought no surcease. From the German side of the cliff-top, machine guns chattered and mortars spoke. Somewhere to the left the enemy brought up selfpropelled guns. From the right, up a sparsely wooded slope, 75mm howitzers hurled shells into the quarry. Arching into the pit came a rain of rockets and 150mm and 81mm steel.

As though the crash and echo of flying splinters of steel were not enough, the rock itself added to the terror, horror and danger. Nearly every shell and rocket shattered the brittle limestone and sent shrapnel flying about. Every projectile became ten.

American machine guns were stationed in draws, but the Nazis huddled in virtual forts of stones and logs. PWs said later that they had been ordered to hold the quarry at all costs, though they did not know why.

Something like 108 men of company C began that battle. Two score finished it. Not all of the rest were casualties in a military sense, but fit for duty were only two-score men, uninjured and able to stay on their feet in the former German dugouts, behind big rocks and in foxholes for three days.

Command of the company changed hands at least twice as officers were

wounded. At the end there were men who did not know who their CO was. The story of Company "C" was told by a man who was picked to carry food:

"When I got back from chow, I didn't know anyone anymore."

The company has lost five aid-men since it came to France and Germany. The only one left is Pfc. James Cullinane of Boston. He has been hit twice.

Of the normal five man, Sgt. Allen Peterson's mortar squad had only two left. His gunner is Buster Davenport of Mertzon, Texas.

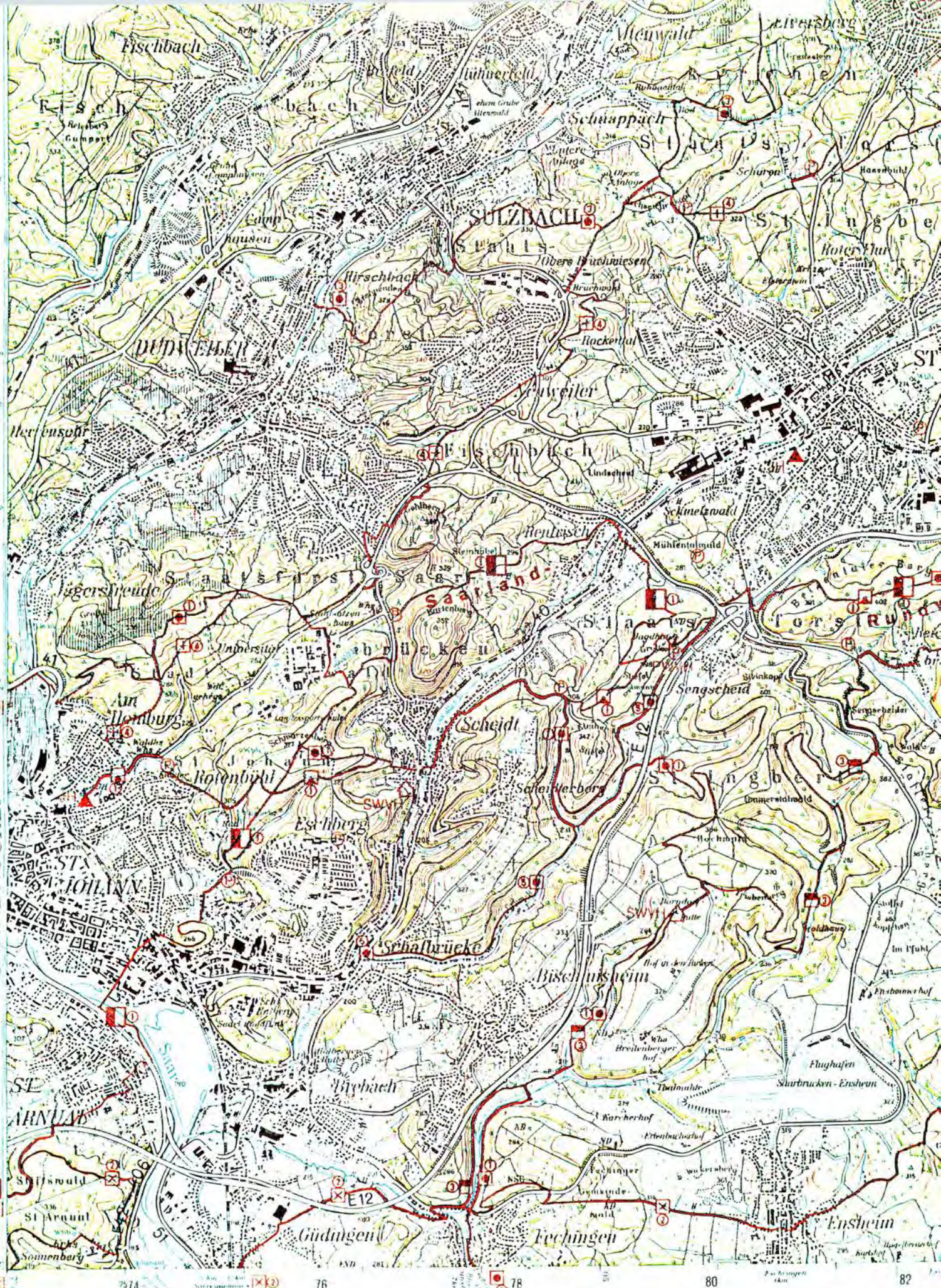
At the end, the battle of the quarry seemed to have been a fight between the teen-agers. In one squad of Company "C", all of the men are 19 except one who is 35. The Krauts were even younger. Four who looked 15 or 16 stumbled down the broken rock with a wounded comrade. The German dead (a correspondent said that he had never seen so many in one place) were only boys.

The last afternoon, Captain Herbert Haughteling, battalion adjutant, told some of the men that Company "C" would be relieved that night. Sgt. Peterson, a small, husky 19-year-old from Pottstown, Pa., almost folded.

"Relieved!" he gasped, "I never thought that I would hear a word that sounded so good!"

64
62
60
58
56
54
542
540

SAARBRÜCKEN



75 76 78 80 82

After securing the quarry, the first platoon moved forward toward the north and into the town of Fechingen. The area north of the quarry was mostly wooded and lightly held by the German defenders who were providing a rear guard action to allow their comrades time to assume their defensive positions in and before the Siegfried Line. The 253rd Regiment moved slowly forward through the woods against little resistance. The 12th of March saw reinforcements Aureccio, Eliano, Caplan, Bacon, Coker, Johnson, Early, Hooks, Carr, Curtis Anderson, Furst, McCune, Godbee, Griffen, Aranda, Willingham and Barlow added to the ranks of the Forty Thieves following the addition of Pfc. Stoker on March 8, 1945.

The 13th of March found the "Forty Thieves" dug in southeast of Fechingen along with "C" Company. The 253rd Infantry Regiment held the left flank of the 63rd Division line which ran in a northwest-southeast direction from the Sarre River southeast of Sarrebrucken to the Blies River at the bend near Blies-Schmeyer. Across the river to the west was the 275th Regiment of the 70th Division which held the ground south of Sarrebrucken. To the east of the 253rd, the 254th Infantry held the ground south of Ensheim and Eschringen.

During the night of the 13th of March Sergeant Rod Backus and five others from the first platoon moved forward on a night patrol through the front line to reconnoiter the enemy positions before his main line of defense. They were slowed from the start by barbed wire and concertina wire. During the course of the patrol, several were injured by mortar fire and small arms fire from the defending positions. Backus and his patrol remained beyond the frontal positions of "C" Company until daybreak when they returned to report the incidences of mortar fire and barbed wire. Pfc's Aranda and Willingham were wounded and returned to the aid station.

About 3 kilometers northeast of Fechingen lay the town of Ensheim. The battle plan to capture Ensheim had been formulated and T/Sgt. Lou Warmoth was dispatched to Regimental Headquarters to learn what part the Forty Thieves were to play. "A" Company 254th Regiment was to take the town itself but prior to their attack, the first platoon of "C" Company which was on the right flank of the 253rd Regimental line, was to create a diversion by attacking the wooded area west of Ensheim. Previous recon patrols such as the one conducted by Sgt. Rod Backus had been interpreted to indicate only about 50 German defenders in the woods and no mine fields in the open areas approaching the woods.

In the meantime, each platoon had been returned to an area behind the front line to be trained in assault tactics for attacking the Siegfried Line. The line in this area was about five hundred yards deep and consisted of three rows of dragon teeth, concrete pyramids about three feet high. Behind this belt and on the odd occasion before it were usually two ditches approximately twelve feet wide and eight feet deep. On every knoll was a concrete pillbox each located so that it was covered and supported by fire from one or more of the other pillboxes.

At mid-night on the 15th of March, H-hour for the attack, an artillery barrage was laid down on the woods and the Forty Thieves moved across an open meadow toward the woods. At the same time, a German artillery barrage was laid down on the woods and its approaches. The first platoon advanced through the barrage and into the edge of the woods. The defending German troops held their ground tenaciously and for six hours they gave ground grudgingly. At six in the morning the Forty Thieves had captured 75 enemy troops but had penetrated the woods only to a depth of some thirty to fifty yards. The captured German troops were sent back to the company command post with Pfc. Bennevento who was wounded in the skirmish.

Shortly after daybreak the first platoon was ordered to withdraw to their original position since the diversionary mission had been accomplished and Ensheim was captured. In the daylight it became obvious that the meadowland approach to the woods was indeed mined and extreme care was required to return to the original positions. Later that day 200 more German defenders surrendered and came out of the woods since they had been out flanked and were in an untenable position.

Of the original 75 prisoners who were returned to the company command post, three had been killed. The first sergeant alleged that they had tried to escape. This saddened the members of the Forty Thieves who had only a few hours before seen those men valiantly defend their homeland and knew that they had no route of escape.

During the course of this action Pfc. Johnson and Early were wounded in addition to Pfc. Bennevento and the last of the defensive positions before the Siegfried Line which ran east and west 3 kilometers north of Ensheim were in American hands. During the next two days the Division withstood heavy counterattacks by panzer supported infantry and maintained pressure against the Line.

Aerial photographs indicated that the best location for a breach of the Siegfried Line was a few yards east of the main road running north from Ensheim in the area held by the 254th Infantry Regiment. At 0130 on the morning of March 18th, 1500 pounds of TNT was used by members of the 263rd Combat Engineer Battalion to blow a gap in the Line. By 1400 hours on the 18th, an infantry platoon, five tanks, and four tank destroyers moved into the gap.

Each day the pressure was increased and by the 19th of March 48 pill boxes had been eliminated. The next day a complete penetration of the Siegfried Line had been effected. The first regiment through the line was the 254th in the vicinity of Ober-Wurzbach.

In the "C" Company area, the 263rd Engineers attempted to bridge the moat immediately before the dragon teeth with a bridge section mounted on a tank. As the tank moved forward with the bridging section attached, enemy artillery armed with 88MM guns fired at the bridge. Time and time again the



House to House Sniper Hunt Sig C 37-3



Siegfried Line Pillbox Sig C 37-4

SIGNAL CORPS
PHOTOGRAPHS
FROM THE
FECHINGEN
HECKENDALHEIM
OBERWURZBACH
AREAS



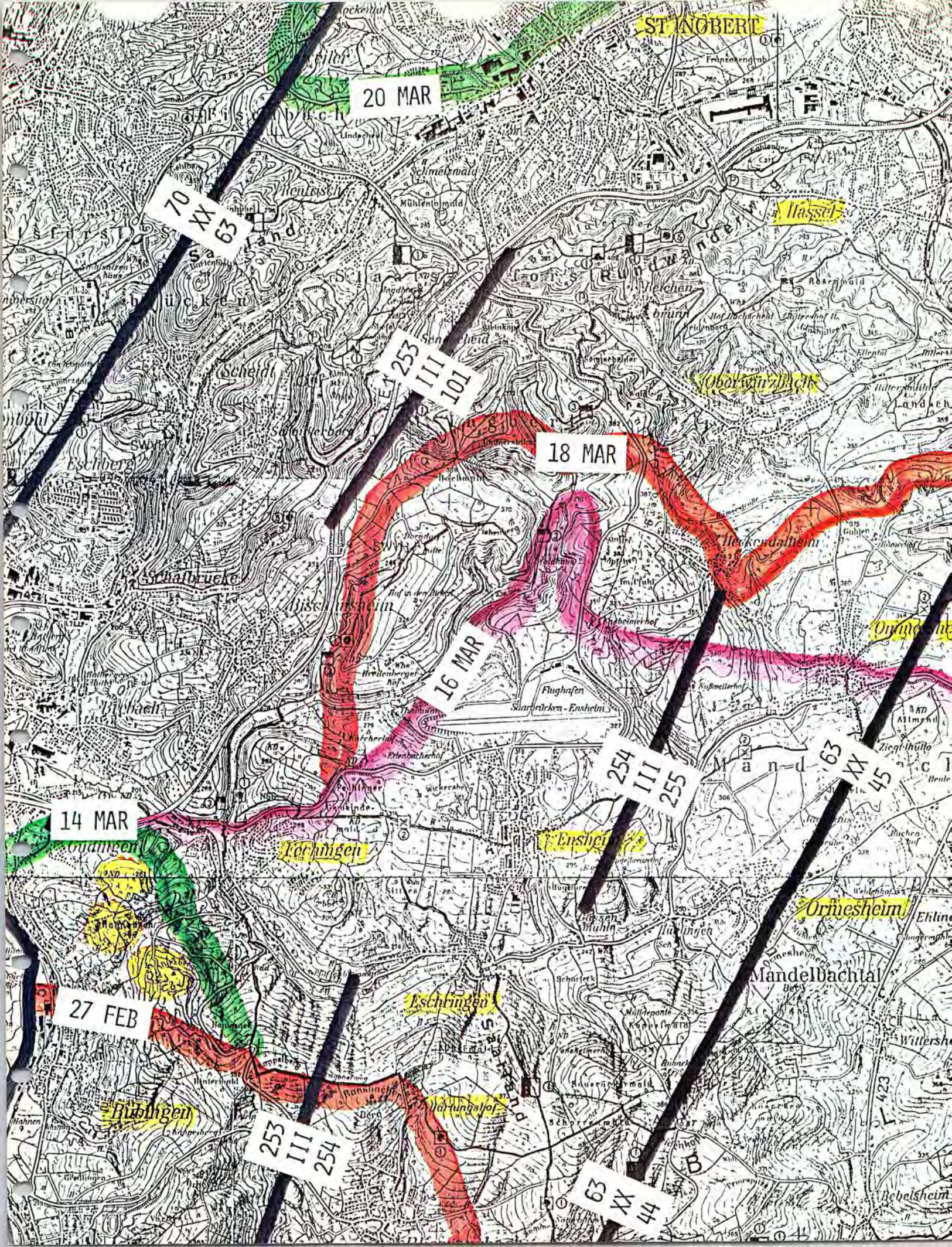
Over Siegfried Line Wurzbach, Ger 37-11

bridge was damaged, withdrawn, repaired, moved forward and damaged again. Finally, after about six attempts, the moat was bridged and the attack on the line was completed by "B" Company which moved through the entrenched positions between "A" and "C" Companies. Once penetration of the line had been effected, division elements moved into Hassel and Saint Ingbert without pause and the 6th Armored Division poured through the breach.

General Millburn commanding the XXI Corps wrote to General Hibbs commanding the 63rd Infantry Division: "It is my desire to commend you and the officers and enlisted men under your command on the proud accomplishment of being the first Division of the Seventh Army to effect a complete breakthrough of the stubborn defenses of the Siegfried Line."



Entering Saint Ingbert - March 1945



20 MAR

70 XX 63

253 III 101

18 MAR

16 MAR

254 III 255

14 MAR

27 FEB

253 III 254

63 XX 44

In Saint Ingbert on the morning of the 22nd of March "C" Company once again boarded the 6 x 6 trucks of the 263rd Service Company. The route of the 63rd Infantry Division north of the Siegfried line had been phased out by the advance of the 45th Division on the right flank and the third army moving across the seventh army front to the northeast. The backs of the German 1st and 7th armies had been broken and they were in full retreat attempting to regroup across the Rhine River where they stood some chance of forming a defensive line. By the 23rd of March, elements of the 45th Division and of the 3rd Infantry Division were on the west bank of the Rhine. By the 25th of March, all three Corps of the American Seventh Army had overrun the Saar Palatinate and stood on the Rhine. A bridge head over the river was established by the 3rd Infantry and the 45th Division by the 28th of March.

The trucks of the 263rd Service Company took "C" Company, 253rd Infantry through Homburg and Kaiserslautern on their way to the Rhein just south of Worms and on the 29th of March the first platoon crossed to the east side of the river and bivouaced near the Autobahn which ran southward from Frankfurt to Mannheim. The area selected was adjacent to the main road where large pine trees were planted. The ground was soft and sandy so digging holes was very easy. Spring was in the air and the cold chill of the winter with its snow had all been left behind in northern France.

The 30th found the 763rd Tank Battalion in the area and "C" Company was transported on the tops of the tanks to the vicinity just north of Heidleberg. Other elements of the 63rd Infantry Division moved through the city of Mannheim in relief of the 44th Infantry Division which was at the city limits when the burgermeister capitulated. Mannheim had received enough aerial bombardment and was not interested in further destruction.

The tanks of the 763rd could not cross the bridge at Heidleberg because the center two or three sections had been blown by the retreating German army engineers. Small boats were used by "C" Company and the first platoon to get across to the south side of the Neckar River. The Forty Thieves entered Heidleberg on the 1st of April 1945 and because it had been declared an "open city" it was not shelled and there was very little resistance as the city was entered. Red Cross flags were evident everywhere as there were many hospitals in the city. The first platoon went through the main street of the old city below the Schloss and out the east gate where the city trolley cars turned around.

"C" Company proceeded forward on foot to the next town east of Heidleberg on the Neckar River. This town was called Neckargemund. As the town was approached, white flags appeared from the windows. At first there were only one or two, then there were more and finally a white flag was draped from each window in town. Everyone thought that this was the way to fight a war, but deep down inside each one knew that some place in one of these little towns the German army would stand and fight again and fight they did at the far end of Neckargemund. In order to delay the American advance, a strong

point which consisted of a machine gun and a few protecting riflemen was established in a group of two or three buildings. After eliminating the strong point, the first platoon established defensive positions in the homes along the last street in town.

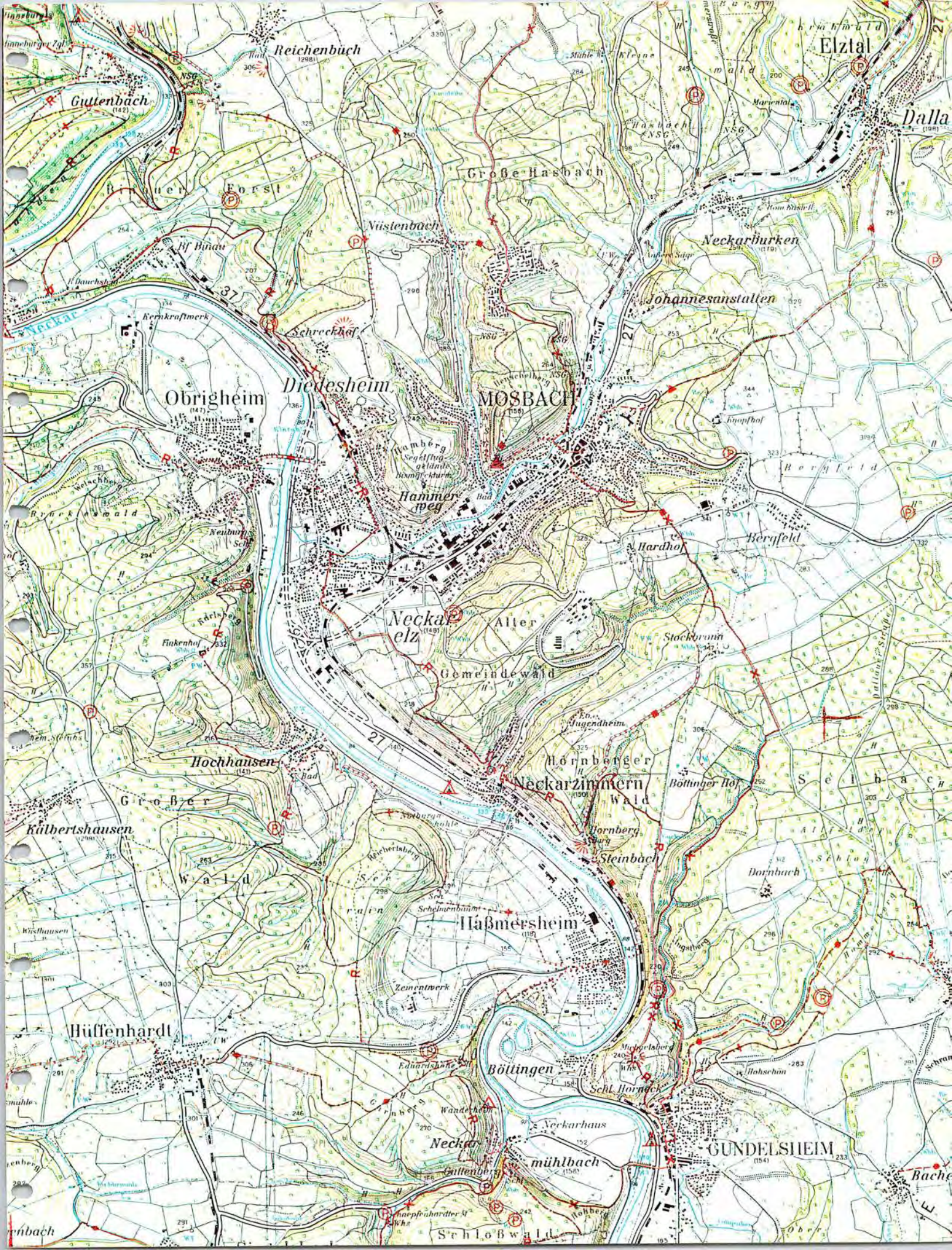
The 2nd, 3rd and 4th of April was much the same. At this time, the 10th Armored Division was spearheading the drive and the 63rd Infantry Division was following along the same roads either on foot or in trucks or on the backs of the 763rd tanks. Each night the company would stop in a small town and establish a defensive position, then in the morning it would move out again. Since "C" Company was following the Neckar River most of the towns were named after it. After Neckargemund there was Neckarsteinach then Eberbach then Neckargerach and Neckarelz, Neckarzimmern and finally Gundelsheim.

At Gundelsheim, "C" Company left the Neckar River Valley and went on foot across country towards the Jagst River. After crossing the river at Herbholztheim the defensive positions of the German Army Group G were finally encountered on the 5th of April. Army Group G had collected remnants of several divisions and formed a defensive line from Heilbronn north along the Neckar River, then northeast along the Jagst River for more than forty miles to Dorzbach and beyond to elements of the German 9th Division at the Tauber River. Included in this grouping were elements of the German 246th Division, the 198th Division, the 553rd Division, the 17th SS Division and the 2nd Mountain Division.

To counter this defensive position, VI Corps developed a battle plan in which the 100th Division was to take Heilbronn while the 10th Armored Division was to swing northeast, pass in the rear of the 63rd Infantry Division's Jagst River line, then drive southeast 25 miles to Crailsheim. Once Crailsheim had fallen, the 10th Armored was to cut back toward the west where it would attack Heilbronn from the rear and isolate the enemy forces resisting the 63rd Infantry Division.

On April 4th it had been discovered that the troops of the 17th SS Division had moved north to defend a wooded area called the Hardhauser Wald, a large forest seven miles long and four miles wide which rises in the center to form a broken plateau, between the Jagst and the Kocher Rivers. On April 5, VI Corps ordered an attack to the south rather than to the east and, therefore, the 63rd Division regrouped its forces for this attack. The 254th Infantry Regiment took the left of the line, the 255th took the center and the 253rd Infantry Regiment on the right which sent two of its battalions across the Jagst River on April 4th. After crossing they turned east and attempted to enter the Hardhauser Wald. The forest lies under a sharp northern loop of the Jagst River below the town of Moeckmuehl.

After crossing the Jagst at Herbholtzheim, the first platoon and Company "C" of the 253rd Infantry Regiment moved toward the town of Kressbach. The attack was slowed by heavy concentration of artillery fire and nebelwerfers.



Nebelwerfers which the infantry called "screaming meemies" were rockets normally used as attacking weapons against cities but in this case they used against the infantry. The "doggie" becomes a specialist on shells after he has been in the line for a while. Sometimes he hates those that come straight at him like the 88s more than those that drop because the high ones give him more warning. On the other hand if the flat trajectory one misses him, it keeps on travelling while the dropped one can kill even if it misses by dozens of yards. Some shells scream, some whiz, some whistle and others whir. Most flat trajectory shells sound like rapidly ripped canvas. Howitzer shells seemed to have a two-toned whisper. Most dogfaces would like to get their hands on the guy who invented the 88 because the shell arrives almost without warning!

On the sixth of April, the first platoon dug in the fields adjacent to Kressbach. The artillery fire continued all night long and it was evident that the 17th SS Division was making a determined stand in this area. Sergeant Max Maughon was struck and wounded by shrapnel from one of the shells.

The town of Kressbach was taken by the Forty Thieves reinforced with two tanks late in the afternoon of April 7th. The battle plan called for the first platoon to withdraw from the town after it was occupied by elements of "A" Company. During the night "A" Company was forced to withdraw from the town because of heavy pressure from the defending 17th SS Panzer Grenadiers and as "A" Company withdrew through the lines of "C" Company they were followed by a German patrol all the members of which were either killed or captured.

Kressbach was a very small village of perhaps ten or fifteen houses and barns which supported the farming area surrounding the town. South of town, across a field a small stream and about five hundred yards distant, was the forest edge of the Hardhauser Wald. To the east of town was open farmland for about 1200 yards with the same small stream running toward the town in the center of the field and the Hardhauser Wald forest line extending along the far south edge of the field.

Early on the morning of April 8th the village of Kressbach was retaken by the first platoon of "C" Company and on two occasions elements of "C" Company had tried to clear the open ground adjacent to the town.

In the afternoon of 8 April, the first platoon of "C" Company plus a five-man machine gun squad was directed to proceed from the town through the open field to the east. This line of attack paralleled the forest line to the south and left the entire right flank of the first platoon exposed to any defending positions of the 17th SS which might be in the forest edge. "A" Company in the meantime was to attack the forest edge which extended in a southward direction from the Hardhauser Wald corner across the field from Kressbach.

There was obviously some confusion in command since no attacking unit leaves its entire flank exposed to enemy fire. The basic infantry strategy of building up a base of fire and outflanking apparently was forgotten and the result was to be a debacle for the first platoon of "C" Company.

In any event, on the cold rainy afternoon of 8 April, 1945, the Forty Thieves, as ordered, moved out into the open field and proceeded toward the east. The first squad was in the lead with scouts very far out in the lead. The squad was spread as widely as possible, with half of its members on one side of the creek and half on the other. The menacing edge of the woods was on their right.

The disciplined 17th SS troops with machine gun emplacements and a line of riflemen dug in at the forest edge watched and held their fire as the first platoon moved out in front of them. The platoon members on the south slope of the field were only 50 yards in front and moving to the east across their line of fire.

When the first squad scouts were out into the field approximately 1000 yards from the town of Kressbach with the rest of the platoon about 400 yards from town, the defensive positions of the 17th SS opened fire. Machine gun and rifle fire cut down the Forty Thieves on all sides, but return fire from the "C" Company Machine Gun Squad nullified it momentarily.

The only place which offered any protection at all was the creek which ran through the center of the field. Those who were close to the stream entered it on Warmoth's order to establish covering fire. Those who were any distance more than twenty yards from the stream failed to negotiate it and were wounded or killed outright.

The spring-fed water in the creek was very cold in early April and at that time of the year it was about a foot to a foot and a half deep. The creek banks were some two or three feet high in the highest places and only about eight inches to a foot high in the lowest places. Those soldiers which were fortunate enough to get into the stream attempted to use the south banks protection and tried to fire back at the SS in the forest edge to protect their fallen comrades, and build the base of fire which was so badly lacking. The SS made sure that no additional Americans got into the creek to reinforce those already in the stream. Any movement of the wounded drew rapid fire from the forest edge. Cries for help could be heard from the wounded, then more rifle and machine gun fire.

Soon there were no more cries.

The SS then turned their attention to those in the creek. Because the defending positions were perhaps twenty or thirty feet higher than the creek, the opposite or north bank and half of the creek was in their field of vision. Those in the creek were ordered to pull back by crawling downstream toward Kressbach. If one made the mistake of venturing toward



the opposite side he was sure to be wounded. If he attempted to look over the near bank he suffered the same fate. The creek soon contained many dead and wounded also. The final results indicated that six died in the creek.

Members of the lead squad who had gotten back to the safety of the creek faced a trip of as much as a thousand yards through the cold water. The only chance of getting back was to stay under water as much as possible and hug the south bank closest to the edge of the forest. Where the bank was lowest it was imperative to stay under water all the way. It was possible to breathe by opening the breach of the rifle and putting the barrel in the mouth. Then by staying on one's back and holding the rifle butt just out of the water one could get a breath.

After creeping down the stream as far as the town there was an open space of about fifty feet and then a large manure pile adjacent to a barn at the southeast corner of town. If he was able to get to the place in the stream closest to the manure pile, one had to get out and run to the pile. After two or three attempts to negotiate this route, the 17th SS defenders zeroed a machine gun in to fire at the escapees. At this point, the creek made a 90 degree turn toward town which afforded enfilading fire for the enemy. Warmoth called for smoke which distorted the 17th SS field of vision and allowed the escape from the creek.



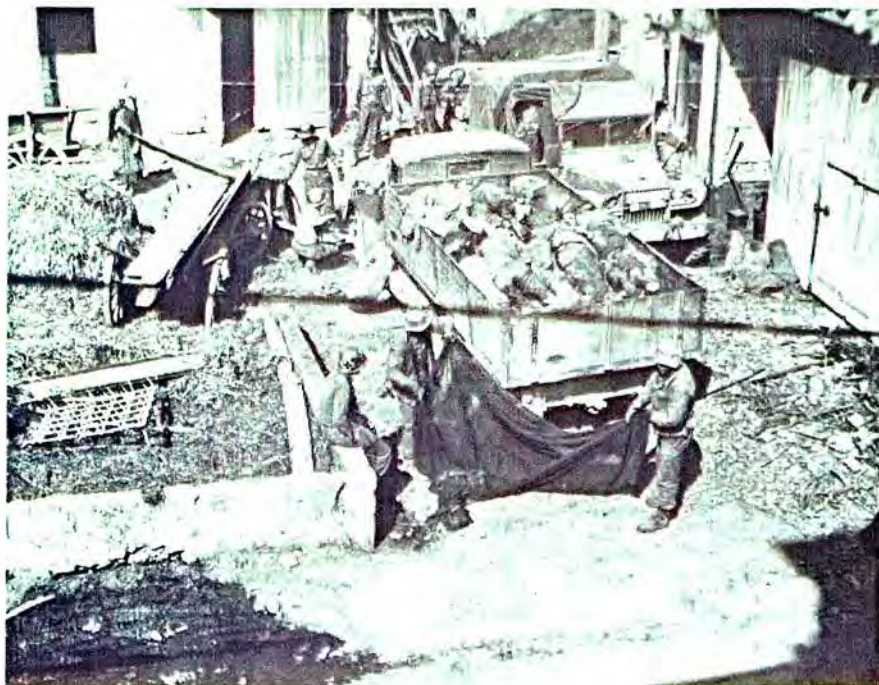
1977 Photo of Kressbach along the
return route toward town

One more surprise was in store. When wearing combat boots, it is normal to tuck the pant legs into the top of the boots. During the trip down the creek, the pants filled with water and as each man would make the attempt to run to the manure pile he had perhaps two gallons of water in his legs to slosh around. This would add about 15 pounds to the weight of his legs making running almost impossible. Most fell two or three times in the fifty-foot run.

In the course of this trip, it was not uncommon for a soldier to lose or leave his rifle in the stream. At the point where they started to run from the stream to the safety of the manure pile T/Sgt. Warmoth directed that his men leave their weapons to reduce the weight during the run. After this skirmish was concluded, there was criticism of the first platoon and T/Sgt. Warmoth for some members who abandoned their rifles. It is assumed that the criticism came from the same people who issued or sanctioned the order to cross an open field parallel to an entrenched enemy defensive line.

On the 8th of April, 1945, at Kressbach, Germany, the 1st platoon of "C"

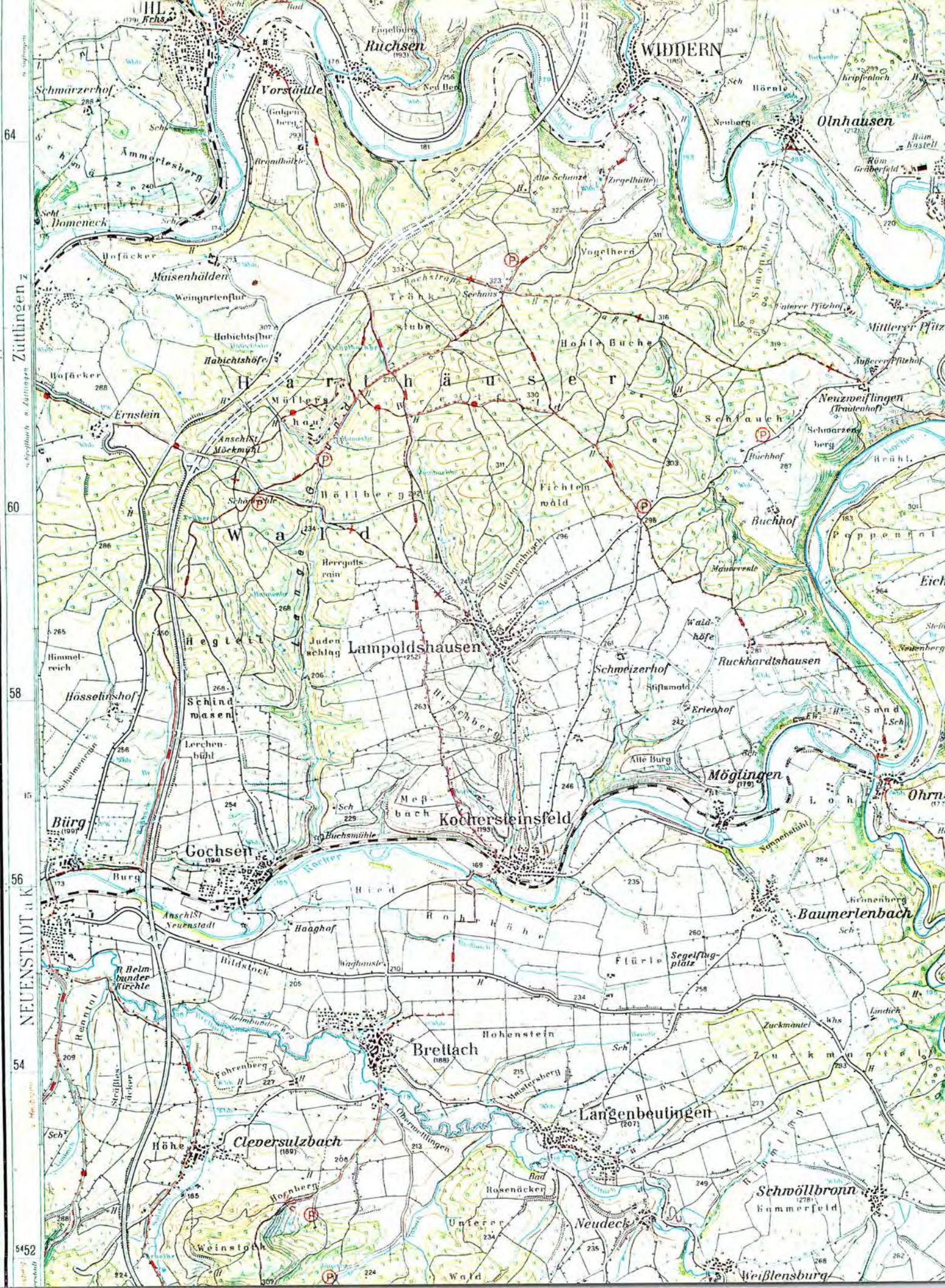
Company, 253rd Infantry lost Sgt. Dick Noble, Pfc. Sam Page, Pfc Haggerty, S/Sgt. Eddie Lockwood, Pfc. Bell, Pfc. Benvenuto, Pfc. Oliver Goldsmith, Pfc. Hooks, Pfc. Furst, Pfc. Barber, Pfc. Crumley, Pfc. Haas, Pfc. Auriccio, Pfc. Eliano, Pfc. Caplan, Pfc. Coker, Pfc. Curtis Anderson--all killed and Pfc. Blair, Sgt. Bert Leckstrom, T/Sgt. Lou Warmoth, Pfc. McCune, Pfc. Hart, Pfc. Bacon and Pfc. Carr wounded. The Forty Thieves had been reduced to nine in number.



Bodies of 1st Platoon dead at
Kriesbach - April 1945

The few who returned from the creek unscathed but cold and wet and frightened gathered in a barn on the east edge of the village. Clothes were removed and the shocked returnees were dried with towels and fed cognac in large quantities. Although some drank as much as a half bottle straight down, there was absolutely no alcoholic affect because everyone was so cold.

Clothing was borrowed from soldiers and civilians in the vicinity--a shirt here, coat there, trousers from somewhere else. It didn't matter if they fit or not--they were all dry. In most cases shoes were found to fit, but Mag Froberg was required to make out with German bedroom slippers.



Sergeant Warmoth was called to the Company Command Post where he was advised that in order to preserve discipline and as punishment for the loss of their weapons, the remaining nine members of the first platoon would lead the attack on the woods the following morning. The alternate was a court-martial for Warmoth. Given this choice, the remaining eight members of the Forty Thieves indicated that they would fight.

Therefore, the morning of the next day, with the nine men of the first platoon leading, bedroom slippers, borrowed clothes and all, "C" Company attacked the forest from Kressbach, however this time the first battalion had built a base of fire along the southwest ridge. The forest was cleared on the 9th of April and as "C" Company exited the woods on the far side it met another German contingent coming into the woods. This enemy group was given orders to relieve the 17th SS troops but discretion proved greater than valor and they decided to surrender instead.

In the meantime, the third battalion of the 255th Infantry was attacking the Hardhauser Wald from the left flank near Moeckmuehl. Their progress forced the 17th SS Division to withdraw to positions south of the Kocher River.

On April 9, 1945, the 255th Regiment established a bridgehead over the Kocher River at Weissbach and the 10th Armored Division passed through the bridgehead to attack southwest toward Heilbronn. The next day the 253rd and "C" Company crossed the Kocher at Ohrnberg. The 11th of April reinforcements Andriola, Sonneborn, Vieria, Perez, Klocko, Fay, Stahl, DiMiglio, Doner, Huxley, Duffy, Tikalski, and Linker were added to the Forty Thieves swelling the ranks to 22.

Seventh Army had concluded that the German Army had only one choice left to defend itself. That would be to retire to the Alps. G-2 wrote that the enemy must realize that the Alps as a redoubt center is the only truly defensible area left to him. Troops from the eastern Italian and western fronts might find a way back to this most precipitously rugged terrain. It might be that the enemy was already preparing elaborate fortifications in the redoubt, storing materials, and coordinating plans for withdrawing some 200,000 to 300,000 loyal Nazi troops who would fight there under the leadership of Hitler and Himmler "to the last man."

It was evident then that if such a build-up were to be prevented, the seventh army would have to move with utmost speed to cut off retreating divisions and to occupy any such defensible positions before they could be incorporated into such a redoubt.

On the 13th of April, the VI Corps was ordered to attack south into the Lowenstein Hills. The 63rd Division on the left flank and the 100th Division on the right advanced to the south. The VI Corps advance met no such coordinated line of defense as it had at Heilbronn and along the Jagst River but it was slowed by mine fields, roadblocks steep ascents along

narrow roads, and by stubborn delaying parties in towns. The Lowenstein Hills stretched between Heilbronn and Schwaebisch-Gemund. Elements of the Infantry divisions rode tanks to the outskirts of town, dismounted, marched through town, eliminated any resistance which might occur and remounted the tanks again on the far side of town. Sometimes they would travel in trucks and at other times they would march through the countryside mopping up any points of resistance which were encountered.

In the meantime, the tank forces of the 10th Armored, the 12th Armored and the 14th Armored Divisions ranged far out ahead exploiting all soft points they could find and by the 18th of April the town of Hall had fallen to the 254th Infantry Regiment. On April 20 elements of the 63rd Division were at the outskirts of Schwaebisch-Gemund. The advance surged forward day and night.

The 12th Armored Division launched a spearhead from Feuchtwangen toward the Danube River on the 20th of April and in two days it had crossed the river at Dillingen. Moving rapidly, the 63rd Division reached the Danube on the 25th of April at Gunzburg. During this rapid movement on the 19th of April, Pfc. Flood, Ledbetter, and Lorrain were assigned to the first platoon of "C" Company bringing the platoon strength up to 25 men.

Upon arriving in Gunzburg, "C" Company immediately went towards the bridge that led over the Danube to the main part of town and the open plains beyond. In Gunzburg and on the flood plain before it, only slight resistance was offered by the remnants of one German infantry division but that was soon overcome and a large number of prisoners were taken and directed to march to the rear. No one seemed to know where all the prisoners of war marched to but that did not seem to matter.

The bridge at Gunzburg was a concrete structure of several spans, and just a few moments before "C" Company arrived it was blown in the center spans. Some platoons of the 254th Infantry Regiment had gotten across the bridge before the attempt to destroy it but they were not able to prevent the ignition of the explosive charges. This was not an attempt by experienced demolition experts since the bridge remained passable to infantry and "C" Company was soon across the river. Several attacks were made by the defending enemy on the south side of the river but each was repulsed. It appeared as if these counterattacks were not a determined effort and were made by older men of the Volksturm.

By the 26th of April, a bridge allowing trucks and tanks across the river was constructed by the engineers and the first platoon was again on the move. This time to the east to the city of Burgau, then south along the western edge of the Augsburg Forest through Jettingen and Thannhausen, and then southeast through the towns of Aichen and Mittelneufnach.

The method of attack was made the same as that preceding Gunzburg. The infantry would ride tanks or trucks to the edge of a town then disembark

from the vehicles and march through town. If any resistance was encountered, it would be eliminated, the vehicles would proceed through town and pick up the infantry on the other side and move on to the next strong point. Since there was not enough motorized equipment to transport every infantryman, about half the time, the advance was made on foot through the open fields and on to the next town.

Although very little resistance was met and most of that resistance was by small children sometimes as young as nine or ten who would fire a gun until it was empty, then surrender, all the infantrymen could think of was when would the German Army stop running and put up a stout defense again? When would they run into the tanks of the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division again? When would they encounter another Kressbach?

After Mittelneufnach, the next town was Trauneid and the Forty Thieves of the 1st platoon were on foot by this time. They met no resistance at Trauneid and proceeded through to the far edge. It was the afternoon of April 29, 1945, and after taking the town of Trauneid, the first platoon entered the farm lands beyond. The fields were very large and covered with winter wheat which had sprouted and was up about six inches. Because the field was so open, all of the men spread out so that there was about 30 yards between each of them. Off to the right about 800 yards was a gentle sun covered sloping hillside. Then there was a shout from the right. "Tanks on the Hill!" Everyone hit the ground immediately. This was it and at a time when they were completely exposed.

On top of the hill to the right was a tank, then two, then three and more. All of the tank turrets turned toward the open field. The men from the first platoon stared at the gun barrels aimed directly at them. What a way to die! In an open field after coming all this way.

T/Sgt. Warmoth and his squad leaders conferred for a brief moment. There was nothing to do except to try to talk their way out of it. Warmoth stood up and walked toward the tank force. Slowly he moved across the open field toward the tanks on the far hillside. It seemed forever and as he kept walking, the lead tank trained its machine gun on him. The men in the field watched as he talked with the tank commander, and then returned across the field.

"Who are they?"

"American Twelfth Armored Division."

"What did they say?"

"Hiltonfingen is just over the hill."

"Hiltonfingen?"

"Where the hell is Hiltonfingen?"

On the 30th of April, 1945 while in the town of Hiltonfingen, approximately 25 miles south of Augsburg and near the city of Landsberg, the first platoon of "C" Company, 253rd Infantry received Seventh Army Operating Instructions

No. 144 which said in part, "Effective 0001B, 30 April 1945, the 63rd Infantry Division is relieved from attachment to XXI Corps and reverts to Army Reserve." Elements of the 36th Division passed through the 63rd Division lines and continued the forward thrust toward the Alps.



The route of the 63rd Division through Germany

One hundred and twenty eight days after they first went on the front line in the defensive positions near Roeschwoog, Alsace in northeastern France, the Forty Thieves and the rest of the 253rd Infantry Regiment were relieved from combat duty and moved to the Tauber River Valley in the towns of Tauberbischofsheim and Wertheim for reserve duty.



1945 Photo of the Forty Thieves in Tauberbischofsheim

Members of the Forty Thieves in mid-May 1945 were: Platoon Leader Lt. Louis Tirelli, who was transferred from the Weapons Platoon, Platoon Sergeant T/Sgt. Tom Murphy, who had returned from the hospital, Platoon Guide T/Sgt. Louis Warmoth, Squad Leaders, S/Sgt. Mag Froberg, S/Sgt. Vern Altberg, S/Sgt. Joe Clarkson, Assistant Squad Leaders, Sgts. Rod Backus, Perry Myers and Max Maughon. The first squad consisted of Cpl. Lawrence Fay, Cpl. Joe Perez, Pfc. Bill Medley, Carlo DiMiglio, Anthony Lorraine, George Bakos, James McCune.

The second squad included Cpl. Jim Sonneborn, Pfc. Harry Langa, Albert Viera, Alvin Godbee, Carlton Griffin, Roy Stahl, Robert Ledbetter, Grover Vanette and Sgt. Frank Andriola.

The third squad consisted of Pfc. Ben Tikalski, Bernard Duffy, Harry Danley, Theodore Flood, Walter Huxley, Warner Esneault, Charles Linker, Alejo Aranda, Henry Laska, Francis Anderson, and Clint Doner.



1945 Photo of the original Platoon of Forty Thieves
Left to right, rear row: Grover Vanette, Joe Clarkson,
Vern Altberg, Rupert Dunlap, Mag Froberg,
Perry Myers, Bert Leckstrom
Front row: Warner Esneault, Elmer Kisner, Tom Murphy,
Lou Warmoth, Max Maughon

Later in the month, Sgt. Rupert Dunlap, S/Sgt. Elmer Kisner, Pfc. Ed Goins, James Willingham, and Lowell Carr rejoined the first platoon after returning from the hospital and T/Sgt. Louis Warmoth was transferred to the position of Platoon Sergeant, second platoon.

German troops began surrendering in large numbers on May 4th and an unconditional surrender was signed by May 7th, 1945. In Tauberbischofsheim the first platoon was retraining for the part it was intended to play in the Pacific war. Many of those who were previously wounded were returning to the platoon. Lowell Carr and Rupert Dunlap returned on May the 2nd from the 112 Evac Hospital. Joe Clarkson returned on the 6th of May, Jim Willingham on the 11th, Alejo Aranda on the 12th, Vernon Altberg on the 20th; Max Maughon, Grover Vanette and Warner Esneault on the 21st.

On the 23rd of May, "C" Company was transferred to Wertheim am Main where it took up quarters in the Volksschule on the Northwest side of town by the railroad station. Bert Leckstrom rejoined the platoon on the 3rd of June just in time to proceed on a week long bivouac 5 miles south of Wertheim. Elmer Kisner returned on 13 June 1945. On the 15th of June all units were granted a holiday since 15 June 1943 was Activation Day for the 63rd Infantry Division. On the 18th of June, it was back to Tauberbischofsheim and on the 25th back to Wertheim.

August 1945 was a month of good-byes for the men of the first platoon. On the 14th of the month Japan had surrendered and there was begun a great movement to return those soldiers who had been away from the United States for the longest period of time. The 63rd Division was chosen to be a carrier unit to accomplish that purpose.

In order to effect such a movement it was necessary to transfer all of the low point Infantrymen out of the Division to units which were to remain on the continent of Europe to make room for the high point returnees. So it began, on the 8th of August Tom Murphy and Lou Tirelli; on the 15th George Bakos and Clint Doner and on and on. By the 25th of August all of the good-byes were said and "C" Company was a skeleton unit.

8 August 1945

Assigned To

Tirelli, Louis D.
Murphy, Thomas J.

3rd Reinf. Depot
3rd Reinf. Depot

15 August 1945

Bakos, George P.
Doner, Clinton R.

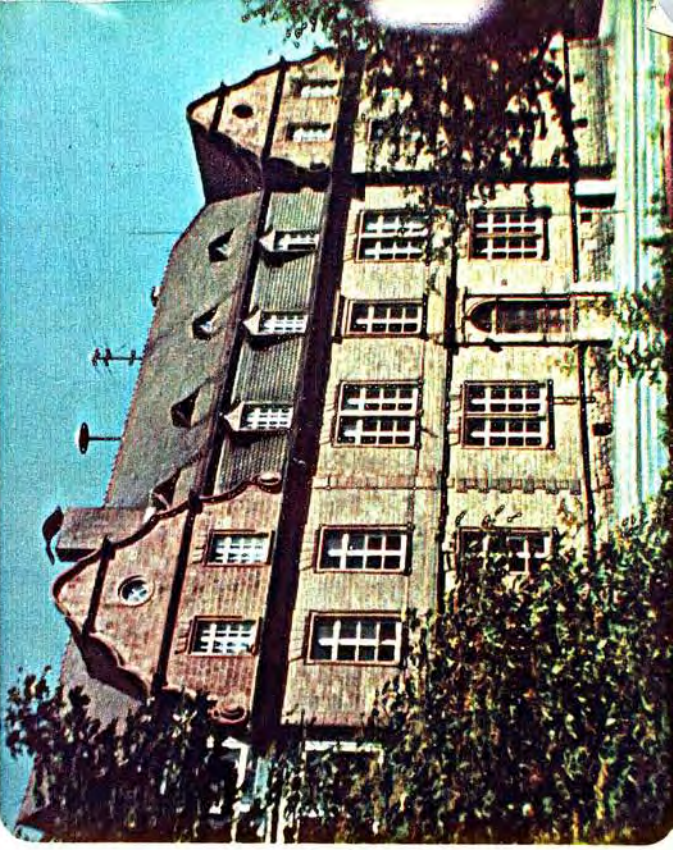
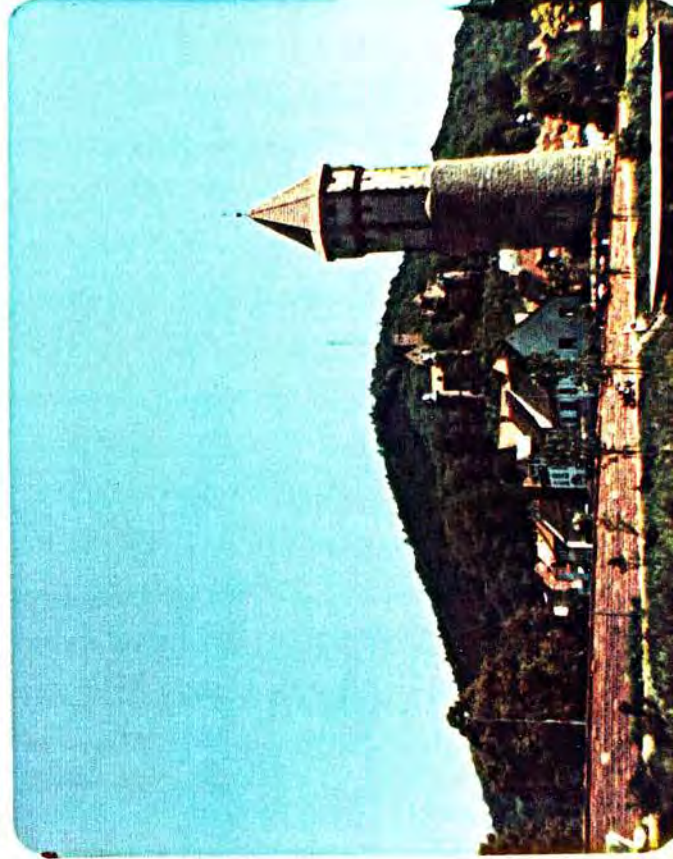
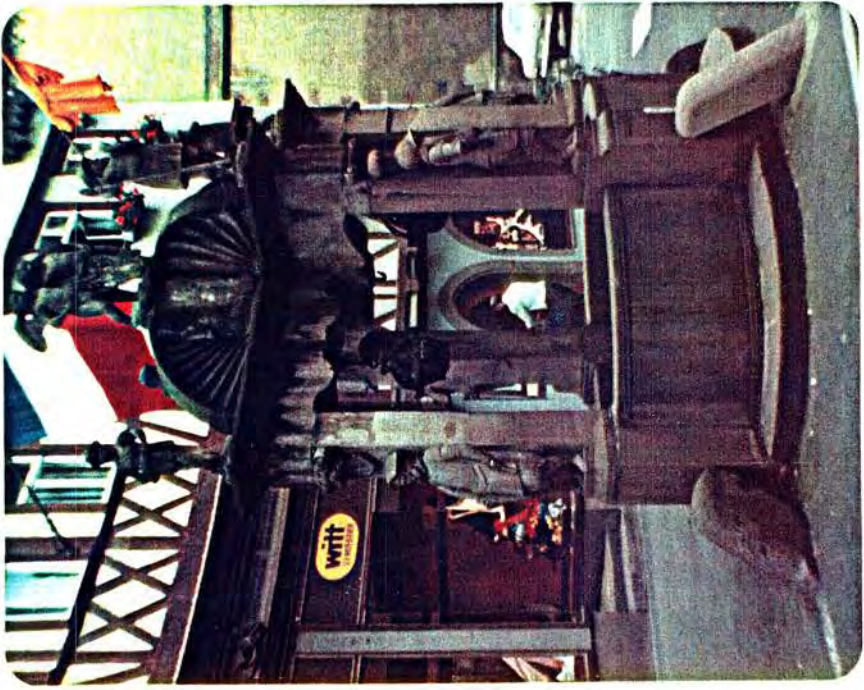
3rd Reinf. Depot
3rd Reinf. Depot

19 August 1945

Altberg, Vernon A.
Ballanger, Allen L.

3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
3258 Sig. Ser. Co.

Froberg, Magnus L.	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Andriola, Frank C.	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Backus, Rodman F.	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Anderson, Francis	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Arries, Rodney O	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Cuillo, Alfred	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Dolski, Charles	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Esneault, Warner S.	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.
Cummings, Pat	3258 Sig. Ser. Co.



WERTHEIM

- TOWN WELL, above L
- MARKETPLATZ, above R
- MARKETPLATZ, above R
- WATER TOWER & CASTLE, L
- VOLKSCHULE, R

23 August 1945

Perez, Joseph	42nd Regulating Sta.
Aranda, Alejo S.	42nd Regulating Sta.
Linker, Charles F.	42nd Regulating Sta.
Lorraine, Anthony A.	42nd Regulating Sta.
McCune, James L.	42nd Regulating Sta.
Stahl, Roy L.	42nd Regulating Sta.
Willingham, James L.	42nd Regulating Sta.

25 August 1945

Maughon, Maxwell	397th Inf. 100 Div.
Myers, Perry S.	397th Inf. 100 Div.
Sonneborn, James	397th Inf. 100 Div.

26 August 1945

Clarkson, Joe L.	399th Inf. 100 Div.
------------------	---------------------

Then 103 men were added. They had strange MOS numbers and were not infantry but rather anti-aircraft people. And on the 28th of August, 70 combat engineers were added. Carl Brown from the anti-aircraft unit became Company Commander.

On September 4, 1945, Company "C" 253rd Infantry departed from Wertheim by motor convoy at 0530 with 202 men and 7 officers. The convoy arrived at Mannheim, Germany at 1015 and departed at 1500 by troop train bound for Camp Lucky Strike, France. The Company arrived at Camp Lucky Strike at 0800 on 7 September 1945.

On the 19th of September 1945, Company "C" 253rd Infantry left Camp Lucky Strike at 1400 by motor convoy and arrived at LeHavre, France at 1700. They boarded the Chapel Hill Victory at 1800 and sailed for the U.S.A. After an eight day voyage, the Chapel Hill Victory arrived at Boston and Company "C" with 202 men and 7 officers debarked at 1600 on the 28th of September. A short train ride took them to Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts.

The final Morning Report dated 29 September 1945 reads:

"This orgn Company "C" 253 Inf Regt is hereby inactivated this date CMS
Mass per GO 49 dtd 29 Sept 45.
All personnel Trfd.
No personnel asngd atchd unasgd or atchd from other orgn
aff this date at 0100 29 Sept 1945."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Inspiration from "Up Front" by Bill Mauldin.
2. Technical Input from "A History of the Seventh Army."
3. Private communication from Warner Esneault.
4. Private communication from Rod Backus.
5. Private communication from E. L. Warmoth.
6. Private communication from Vern Altberg.
7. Private communication from Lou Tirelli.
8. Private communication from J. K. Smith.
9. Maps provided by Pol Minnen - Battice, Belgium

Mag Froberg
"C" Company, 253rd Inf.
63rd Division

08 October 1980

ENTRY NOTES ON MORNING REPORTS OF "C" COMPANY 253RD INFANTRY

MR (Morning Report) 8 December 1944

8 December - Disembarked NY682 (1015) at Marseilles, France.

MR 14 December 1944

14 December - Departed Marseilles, France 2145 via rail (171 EM & 5 off).

MR 15 December 1944

16 EM departed Marseilles, France 0800 via motor convoy for Camp Oberhoffen, France.

MR 17 December 1944

17 December - Arrived Camp Oberhoffen, France 1800 via rail (171 EM & 5 off).

MR 18 December 1944

18 December - 16 EM arrived Camp Oberhoffen, France via motor convoy 1200.

MR 22 Dec. 1944

22 December - Departed Camp Oberhoffen, France 1530 via motor convoy for further movement.
Arrived Roschwaag, France 1600.

MR 27 December 1944

27 December - Left Roschwaag Norde de Guerre 1700 by foot for Soufflenheim Norde de Guerre. Arrived Soufflenheim Norde de Guerre 1900. Distance covered approximately 5 miles.

MR 29 December 1944

29 December - Departed Soufflenheim Norde de Guerre 1600 for Camp Oberhoffen Norde de Guerre. Arrived Camp Oberhoffen Norde de Guerre 1645 via motor convoy.

MR 30 December 1944

30 December - Departed Camp Oberhoffen Norde de Guerre by motor convoy 2145 for Oermingen Norde de Guerre.

MR 31 December 1944

31 December - Arrived Oermingen Norde de Guerre 0200 by motor convoy. Departed Oermingen Norde de Guerre by foot 1030 for 1 mile north of St. Michel Norde de Guerre. Arrived St. Michel Norde de Guerre 1230.

MR 4 January 1945

4 January - Departed St. Michel Norde de Guerre 1335 via motor convoy for Neunkirch Norde de Guerre. Arrived Neunkirch Norde de Guerre 1600.

MR 26 January 1945

26 January - Departed Neunkirch Norde de Guerre 1400 by foot for Sarreguemines Norde de Guerre. Arrived Sarreguemines Norde de Guerre 1530. Distance covered approximately 2-9/10 miles.

MR 16 February 1945

16 February - 15 EM & 1 officer wounded in action, 1 EM missing in action Hanweiller, Germany.

MR 18 February 1945

17 February - 1 officer and 6 enlisted men wounded in action during engagements with the enemy at Sitterswald, Germany.

MR 21 February 1945

20 February - Departed Sarreguemines Norde de Guerre for Kleinblittersdorf Norde de Guerre. Arrived Kleinblittersdorf Norde de Guerre 1500.

MR 27 February 1945

27 February - Departed Kleinblittersdorf Norde de Guerre 2200 for Bubingen Norde de Guerre. Arrived Bubingen Norde de Guerre 2220.

MR 5 March 1945

3 March - Advanced from Bubingen Norde de Guerre to Hetschallment Norde de Guerre to engage the enemy. One officer wounded in action, 9 EM killed in action, 14 EM wounded in action, morale excellent.

4 March - Continued battle with enemy. One officer wounded in action, 4 EM killed in action, 16 EM wounded in action, morale excellent.

5 March - Battle continued with enemy. One EM killed in action, 7 EM wounded in action, morale excellent.

MR 6 March 1945

6 March - Battle with enemy at Hetschallment Norde de Guerre terminated with two officers wounded in action, 1 EM killed in action, 2 EM wounded in action. Company relieved of position by Company L, 253d Infantry. Company departed Hetschallment Norde de Guerre 2000 for Bubingen Norde de Guerre. Arrived Bubingen Norde de Guerre 2130. Morale of troops EXCELLENT.

MR 8 March 1945

8 March - Departed Bubingen Norde de Guerre 1100 by foot for Kleinblittersdorf Norde de Guerre. Arrived Kleinblittersdorf Norde de Guerre 1130. Distance covered approximately 2 miles.

MR 11 March 1945

11 March - Departed Kleinblittersdorf Norde de Guerre 1500 by foot for Bubingen Norde de Guerre. Arrived Bubingen Norde de Guerre 1530.

MR 13 March 1945

13 March - Departed Bubingen Norde de Guerre 2100 for 1 mile north of Bubingen. Arrived 1 mile north of Bubingen Norde de Guerre 2200.

MR 17 March 1945

17 March - Departed 1 mile north of Bubingen Norde de Guerre 0600 for Ensheim Norde de Guerre. Arrived Bubingen enroute to Ensheim 0700. Departed 1400 for further movement to Ensheim. Arrived Ensheim Norde de Guerre 1630. Morale of men excellent. Weather fair and cool.

MR 22 March 1945

20 March - Departed Ensheim Norde de Guerre 0400 by foot for St. Ingbert Norde de Guerre. Arrived St. Ingbert Norde de Guerre 1600.

21 March - Departed St. Ingbert Norde de Guerre 1530 for Homberg Norde de Guerre by foot. Arrived Homberg Norde de Guerre 1830.

22 March - Departed Homberg Norde de Guerre 1400 by foot by road for Ludwigshal Norde de Guerre. Arrived Ludwigshal Norde de Guerre 1830.

MR 26 March 1945

25 March - Departed Ludwigshal Norde de Guerre by motor for Munchweiller Norde de Guerre. Arrived Munchweiller 1230.

MR 31 March 1945

28 March - Departed Munchweiller Norde de Guerre by motor for Viernheim Norde de Guerre. Arrived Viernheim Norde de Guerre 2230.

MR 1 April 1945

30 March - Departed Viernheim Norde de Guerre to engage enemy at Neckargemund Norde de Guerre. Captured objective at 1000 with 1 EM wounded.

MR 3 April 1945

3 April - Departed Neckargemund Norde de Guerre 0830 by motor for Hochftberg Norde de Guerre. Arrived Hochftberg 1530.

MR 7 April 1945

4 April - Departed Hochftberg Norde de Guerre 0830. Engaged enemy in battle at 1330 near Untergriesheim Norde de Guerre. Result of operation 5 prisoners taken--set up defense in Untergriesheim.

MR 9 April 1945

6 April - Departed Untergriesheim Norde de Guerre 0830 for Herbolsheim. Arrived Herbolsheim 1030. Engaged enemy in battle in woods NE of Herbolsheim. Result of engagement 6 prisoners taken, enemy dead unknown, our losses - 1 officer WIA - 2EM KIA - 9 EM WIA - advanced to Kressbach.

7 April - Departed Kressbach Norde de Guerre to engage enemy in woods one-fourth mile SE of town. Met heavy enemy small arms and mortar fire - withdrew to hill 1 mile NE of Kressbach - 6 EM KIA, 1 officer and 8 EM MIA.

8 April 1945 - Engage enemy Engage enemy in woods south of Kressbach. Result 10 prisoners taken - 15 enemy killed, our losses 2 EM KIA - 1 EM WIA.

MR 10 April 1945

9 April - Departed Kressbach Norde de Guerre 1530 - Arrived at and set up defenses 1 mile south of Ernstein Norde de Guerre.

MR 15 April 1945

13 April - Departed Ernstein Norde de Guerre 1600. Captured Burg Neuenstadt and Schwellbron Norde de Guerre with no resistance - 10 prisoners taken - Quartered at Schwellbron Norde de Guerre at 2400.

14 April - Departed Schwellbron Norde de Guerre by motor convoy 2145. Arrived at Neuenstein Norde de Guerre 2245.

15 April - Departed Neuenstein Norde de Guerre 0900 for further movement into Germany. Arrived at and dug in 1 mile west of Ob Steinbach Norde de Guerre 1800.

MR 19 April 1945

17 April - Departed Ob Steinbach Norde de Guerre Germany 0830. Arrived Buchelberg Norde de Guerre Germany 2200.

18 April - Departed Buchelberg Norde de Guerre 0830 by motor to Neuenkirchen. Attached to units of 10th Armored Division. Proceeded to Sittenhardt combing woods enroute. Met no resistance - captured 1 German. Arrived Sittenhardt 1230 and departed 2130 for Sanzenbach. Arrived Sanzenbach Norde de Guerre 2200. Set up defense.

MR 20 April 1945

19 April - Departed Sanzenbach Norde de Guerre by motor 0830. Arrived Hessenau 1600 and departed 1800 for Eichenau by foot. Arrived Eichenau Norde de Guerre 2000. Set up defense.

MR 25 April 1945

20 April - Departed Eichenan by foot 0400. Arrived at and captured Kirchberg at 0500. Met no resistance. Departed Kirchberg by foot 1245. Arrived at and captured Lobenhausen at 1545. Met no resistance. Engaged small enemy force on outskirts of Lobenhausen at 1615. 1 EM WIA, 6 enemy prisoners taken, 1 enemy wounded. Arrived at woods one-half mile east of Triensbach 2000. Met heavy resistance. Set up defensive positions. No casualties.

21 April 1945 - Departed Triensbach Norde de Guerre 1000 by motor for Grundelhardt taking Saurach-Maulach-Ober Spellbach and Grundelhardt enroute. Arrived 1900. No resistance.

22 April - Departed Grundelhardt by motor and foot for further movement into Germany. Arrived Hinterbuschelberg Norde de Guerre 2230.

23 April - Departed Hinterbuschelberg Norde de Guerre by foot for further movement into Germany. Arrived Hohenstadt Norde de Guerre 1300. Set up defenses.

24 April - Departed Hohenstadt Norde de Guerre 1100 via motor to Bohmenkirch. Continued by foot to Sohnstetten. Arrived Sohnstetten Norde de Guerre.

MR 30 April 1945

25 April - Departed Sohnstetten 1700 by motor for Gunzberg. Arrived 1 mile NW of Gunzberg 2000. Set up defense.

26 April - Departed Gunzberg 0930. Proceeded by foot to Harthausen. Met no resistance. Arrived Harthausen 1600.

27 April - Departed Harthausen 0700 by motor. Arrived Hiltonfingen 1210. Attached to 12 Armored Division. Distance covered 52 miles.

28 April - Departed Hiltonfingen 2130 by motor enroute to Tauberbischofsheim.

29 April - Arrived Tauberbischofsheim Norde de Guerre 1600 for rest and recuperation.

1ST PLATOON "C" COMPANY

253 INFANTRY - NOVEMBER 22, 1944

Zellner	14 Jan.	<u>Neunkirchen</u> - Killed
Kisner		Bieski
Murphy	16 Feb.	<u>Hanweiller</u> - Killed
Smith, J. K.		Santi
Gibeault		<u>Hanweiler</u> - Wounded
Arcinega		Zellner
Altberg		Kisner
Haffee		Smith, J. K.
Esneault		Gibeault
Vanette		Arcinega
Thomas		Altberg
Chavez		Haffee
Stidd		Esneault
Dunlap		Vanette
Santi		Thomas
Exum		Chavez
Perez		Stidd
Terman		Dunlap
Froberg	17 Feb.	<u>Sitterswald</u> - Wounded
Beck		Murphy
Goins		Exum
Warmoth	20 Feb.	<u>Auersmacher</u> - Wounded
Vosceles		Perez
Miller	25 Feb.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Wounded
Clarkson		Terman
Maughon	4 Mar.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Wounded
Noble		Froberg
Blair		Goins
Haggerty		Warmoth
Leckstrom		Miller
Page		<u>Bubingen</u> - Killed
Bieski		Beck
Cauthen		Vosceles
Murray	5 Mar.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Wounded
Sarosy		Clarkson
Mace	7 Apr.	<u>Kressbach</u> - Wounded
Myers		Maughon
Lang	8 Apr.	<u>Kressbach</u> - Killed
Langa		Noble
Madrak		Page
Stokes		Haggerty
Laska		Lockwood
Lockwood		<u>Kressbach</u> - Wounded
		Blair
		Leckstrom

1ST PLATOON "C" COMPANY - 253RD INFANTRY - 1945

REINFORCEMENTS

18 Feb.	Smith, J. E.	11 Apr.	Andriola	21 Feb.	<u>Auersmacher</u> - Wounded
	Backus		Sonneborn		Taft
	Bakes		Vieria	25 Feb.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Wounded
	Bell		Perez		Levitt
	Bennevento		Klocko	4 Mar.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Wounded
	Barcomb		Fay		Barcomb
	Burnside		Stahl		Callery
	Busko		DiMiglio		Dugan
	Butler		Doner	4 Mar.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Killed
	Callery				Butler
	Dugan			5 Mar.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Wounded
20 Feb.	Taft				Smith, J. E.
23 Feb.	Levitt				Burnside
	Anderson				Sporing
	Arries			6 Mar.	<u>Bubingen</u> - Wounded
26 Feb.	Sporing				Selby
	Selby			15 Mar.	<u>Fechingen</u> - Wounded
3 Mar.	Goldsmith				Johnson
	Danley				Early
	Barber				Aranda
	Crumley				Willingham
	Haas			8 Apr.	<u>Kressbach</u> - Wounded
	Hart				Hart
8 Mar.	Stoker				Bacon
12 Mar.	Auriccio				Carr
	Eliano			8 Apr.	<u>Kressbach</u> - Killed
	Caplan				Bell
	Bacon				Bennevento
	Coker				Goldsmith
	Johnson				Barber
	Earley				Crumley
	Hooks				Haas
	Carr				Auriccio
	Anderson, C.				Eliano
	Furst				Caplan
	McCune				Coker
	Godbee				Anderson, C.
	Griffin				Hooks
	Aranda				Furst
	Willingham				
	Barlow				

FROM
"STARS AND STRIPES"
MARCH 9, 1945

FLYING ROCKS, BAD AS SHRAPNEL
RIDDLED YANKS IN QUARRY FIGHT

By Ed Lawrence, Staff Correspondent

With the 63D DIV., March 8--The men in Charlie Company didn't even know who their company commander was. It was only four o'clock in the afternoon, but they had already had three that day.

They had just finished a 72-hour fight for the caves and arroyos of a huge limestone quarry gouged out of the hills just northeast of Bubingen.

"That's the worst fighting I ever saw," said S-Sgt. Frank West, of Kershaw, S.C. "Worse than towns."

S-Sgt. Henry Schmidt, of Milwaukee, who is 29, said he was the "granddaddy" of four 19-year-olds in the group. They all looked older. The strain of the last three days was marked in the dirty-pallor of their faces.

Sunday Afternoon

They got into the quarry Sunday Afternoon. After laboring up a long wooded slope, they sprinted across 50 feet of unbroken skyline toward the pits. A Jerry machine gun blazed away from a hole in the rocks until the platoon on the left nailed the gunner.

At the brink of the pits a 40 ft. sheer drop confronted them. "We went down fast," said Pvt. William Leonard, of Boston. "If we'd stopped to think, we never would have tried it. I don't know why we didn't break our necks."

Pfc. Salvatore Panico, of Brooklyn, joined in the conversation and they told how the Germans had lined up their guns along the crooked alleys of the quarry so that bullets ricocheted from the limestone walls and no one knew where they would hit. The doughboys sneaked over the cliffs from rock to rock, dodging lead and flying splinters of stone.

"You could throw a million dollars' worth of artillery at them and it wouldn't do any good," Leonard said. "They were dug deep into the stone beds, and you either had to score direct hits with mortars or else dig them out, one by one, with rifles."

Jerry Artillery

On the other hand, artillery was the Germans' deadliest weapon against the

advancing Yanks in their exposed positions. Loose rock formations of the quarry quadrupled the deadliness of the shells.

"The way rocks were flying around, I'll bet they caused more casualties than shrapnel," said S-Sgt. John P. Collins, of Detroit. "After every barrage, the air was filled with powdered stone and the clatter of small landslides."

Some of the Germans hid in caverns that twisted far back into the hillside. Yanks rolled grenades in on them, and those who were still alive surrendered.

