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The
Story
of the
Century

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THE
STORY
OF THE
CENTURY



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Territory covered by
the 100th Infantry Division
in
FRANCE and GERMANY

Legend

Roads ——— Rivers ———

Important Towns in the
Division's History

Scale 0 10 20

1945





The Story of the Century

100



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*To the Citizen-Soldiers of the 100th Infantry
Division who, loving Life, wedded Death
so that Freedom could remain immortal.*

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Foreword

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It may seem a paradox to the uninitiated, but the soldier, by choice or the dictates of his draft board, is a confirmed pacifist. Only the psychopath, the incurable romanticist, and the criminally ambitious consider war as a desirable state. Any child who has heard the whine of an artillery shell fired in his direction, would not have to pass an opinion. His shudder would be answer enough.

War, to the soldier, is no juvenile game of "Cops and Robbers." It is mud, cold, and the pain of bleeding flesh. It is the clammy sweat which comes with touching hands with death. It is hunger and diarrhea and the gnawing frustration of living from day to day. Peculiarly, the soldier hasn't even the all-consuming hate the civilian feels for the enemy. He kills impersonally under the dictates of self-preservation. Politics and economics are furthest from his mind. Only the enemy, his firepower, the weather and hunger are real. And the soldier is a realist.

Knowing these things, it is all the more remarkable that men in combat can rise to such heights of self sacrifice. Fear, generated by the motive of self preservation, is one of the most powerful impulses of all living creatures. Yet, trained to understand what a machine gun can do, having seen the dangers of shrapnel, terrified by the thought of mines, the infantryman will move forward in a single-handed attack on a machine gun section or hold in the defense against what he knows must be certain death.

It is not enough to say that he does so because of a confirmed belief in a political philosophy or because of "national" characteristics. It goes deeper than the length of his nose or the color of his hair. The Germans fought almost as well in defense of Heilbronn as we did in attacking that strongpoint. No Centuryman who faced the enemy during their counter-offensive at Bitche, can accuse them of cowardice. The British had their defense of London; the Russians, their Stalingrad; the Japs, their banzai charge; the Norwegians, Poles, Dutch, and French, their seemingly hopeless resistance. The fact that the American army, made up of descendants of every race and nationality on earth, fought so well, is proof that such is not the answer. The Germans were as firmly convinced that they were in the right as we were that they were in the wrong.

What, then, is the answer? In part, our success can be attributed to materiel superiority. Getting there "fustest with the mostest" goes a long

way toward winning battles. But, during the German counteroffensive at Bitche, when the enemy had the "mostest" by four divisions against our one, the men of the 100th held until even the enemy was forced to murmur words of praise. At Heilbronn, where the Krauts had every advantage of terrain and the numerical odds were even, we crossed the Neckar River and beat them to a pulp. Even as green troops, we stormed the enemy's seemingly impregnable positions in the Vosges Mountains and shattered their defenses, the first time in military history such a feat had been accomplished.

For our answer, therefore, we must turn to a nebulous something which we know Americans possess, but which cannot be defined. It is something which has its roots in freedom, in better living, in uninhibited conscience, inherent ingenuity and initiative, and the vibrant heart-beat of a young nation which does not know the meaning of defeat.

In these attributes, we find the reasons for our success in arms. It is not a matter of heroics. No one is a hero when bullets begin to fly. Yesterday, Joe Smith was a grocery clerk who would not touch a rifle on a bet. Today, Joe Smith pulls the pin from a grenade with his teeth and rushes a machine gun position. You don't learn that in training. The Army warns against such senseless action. But that's the way wars are won. Until some guy named Joe pulls a grenade pin and starts knocking out machine guns, the best strategy in military history cannot succeed.

This intangible, which military men call "morale," was unusually prevalent throughout the 100th Division. But morale is an American attribute, not a divisional monopoly. Throughout this combat diary there has been no effort made to "color" the actions of the 100th Division. The fight the Centurymen made stands on the record. The contentions of other divisions that they fought so well because their personnel were men from Texas or New Jersey or Georgia or New York, is blind sectionalism. The 100th, made up of men from almost every State in the nation, fought courageously because they were Americans who knew no other way. There were moments when victory seemed far away, when subordinate units were temporarily hurled back by the enemy, when overall military strategy dictated our going over to the defensive. These, too, have been set down accurately. A division can be as glorious in containing an enemy offensive as in winning a victory. But, as a whole, the 100th, fighting over appalling terrain against a wily and well-equipped foe, never failed to gain an assigned objective.

The *Story of the Century* is the epic of a civilian division which, for a brief moment in history, "came, saw, and overcame," and then retired from the scene. But the small part it played in this greatest of all global wars, like the men who fell in our cause, can never really die.



WITHERS A. BURRESS, MAJ. GEN., U.S.A.
Commanding Officer, 100th Infantry Division

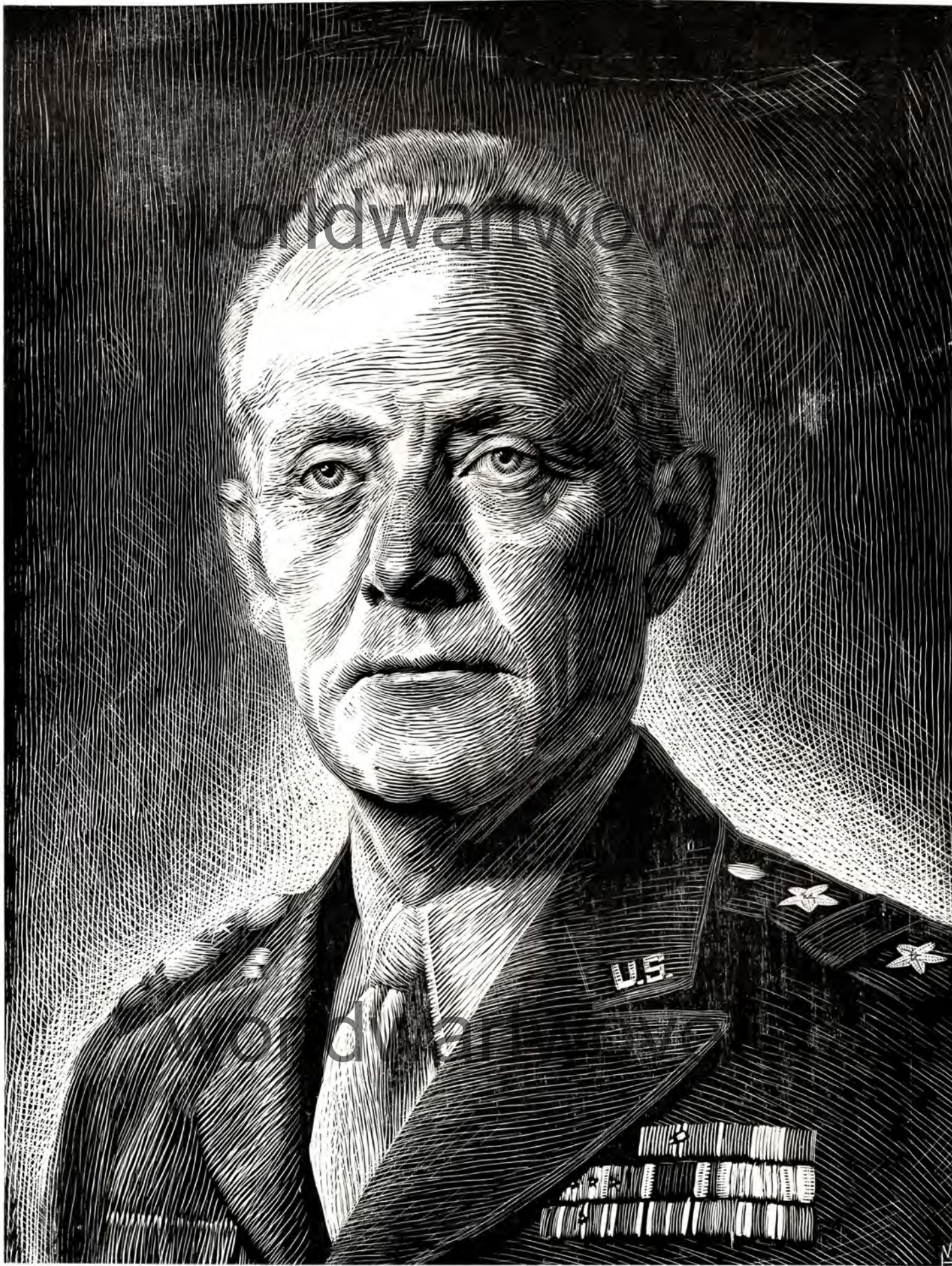
A veteran of 30 years service, Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burress piloted the Century Division from activation until 22 September 1945, when he left the 100th to take command of the VI Corps.

Born in Richmond, Virginia, on 24 November 1894, Gen. Burress matriculated in the Virginia Military Institute from which he graduated in 1914 with the degree of Bachelor of Science. He was commissioned in the Regular Army as a second lieutenant of Infantry on 30 November 1916.

With the advent of World War I, Gen. Burress was assigned to the 23rd Infantry, Second Division, with which unit he served as regimental operations officer. He participated in five major engagements: the Troyon Sector, Chateau Thierry, the Aisne-Marne Offensive, the Pont-a-Mousson Sector, and the St. Mihiel Offensive. He returned from France on 2 November 1919 with the permanent rank of captain.

Between wars, Gen. Burress occupied school and command posts throughout the United States including his VMI *alma mater* where he was Professor of Military Science and Tactics. On 29 October 1941, he became Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. He left this important post upon assignment to the Puerto Rican Department early in 1942.

Gen. Burress guided the 100th through the difficult Vosges Mountains campaign; the initial assault on Bitche; the 100th's great winter defense before that Maginot bastion; the final capture of the Bitche fortress; the bitter, 9-day assault against Heilbronn, which resulted in the 100th's most brilliant victory; and the surge southward to Stuttgart.





ANDREW C. TYCHSEN, BRIG. GEN., U.S.A.

Assistant Commander and Commander, 100th Infantry Division

Like Gen. Burrell, Brig. Gen. Andrew C. Tychsen is a veteran of 30 years Army service. Assigned to the 100th Division as commanding officer of the 399th Infantry Regiment upon activation of the division, Gen. Tychsen was appointed assistant division commander in January 1945. He became commanding officer of the Century in September 1945, upon Gen. Burrell's assignment to VI Corps. He retained that post until January 1946 when the 100th was inactivated.

Gen. Tychsen was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on 27 June 1893. Enlisting as a private in the First Minnesota Infantry in April 1914, he rose through the ranks to 1st Sergeant and saw action on the Mexican border.

Leaving the First Infantry, Gen. Tychsen entered the First Officers Training Camp at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, on 25 March 1917 and was commissioned a captain in August of that year. Upon graduation he was assigned to the 88th Division and served on the French front as a machine gun company commander and battalion commander from July 1918 to July 1919, seeing action at Belfort, Epinal, Verdun and the Meuse.

Shortly after his return to the States in 1919, Gen. Tychsen entered the Regular Army as a captain and served in various school and command posts throughout the United States and Hawaii until World War II. In 1935 he entered the Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and upon graduation was assigned to the Sixth Infantry, Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. He was then placed in command of the Organized Reserves at Camden, New Jersey.





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WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

To the Officers and Soldiers of the 100th Infantry Division:

Recently I was transferred so suddenly out of the European Theater that it was impossible to visit the veteran fighting units still there, to say a personal goodbye. I am delighted with the opportunity given me by the Editor of the Divisional History to send to the men of the Century Division both a farewell and my best wishes for their future success and prosperity.

From its first entry into battle the Division performed in the style of trained Americans - there is no higher praise. Its record is a proud one. It was never stopped by cold, by mud, by hardships, or by the enemy! For this it had to pay a price and I hope that you will let me stand with you in sad salute to your comrades who will never return. I trust that through the pages of your history the relatives of the fallen will find some comfort in the pride that their loved ones belonged to such a splendid Division.

Good luck and best wishes to the Century!

Dwight D. Eisenhower

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MARIUS N. TRIMQUE '46



The STORY OF THE CENTURY

There is nothing soul-stirring about Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. No snow-capped mountains hover majestically in the background. There are no poetic, willow-bordered, trout-filled brooks, nor lambs gamboling in lush pastures. There isn't even a picturesque row of East Side pushcarts to break the monotony of sand, scrub-oak, slash pine and tar-papered troop hutments. Ft. Jackson's chief claims to fame are chiggers in the summertime and the history-making fact that the 100th Infantry Division was born there on 15 November 1942.

In reality, the story of the Century was begun three months earlier, on 15 August. First signs of life in the embryo division were the War Department appointments of Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burrell as division commander; Col. Maurice L. Miller as assistant division commander, and Col. Theodore E. Buechler as Divarty commander. Both Col. Miller and Col. Buechler were later elevated to the rank of brigadier general.

By the end of August, all 100th Division cadre officers, including company and battery commanders, had been designated. Colonels William E. Ellis, Robinson E. Duff, and Andrew C. Tychsen were appointed commanders of the 397th, 398th, and 399th Infantry Regiments, respectively. Cadre officers were then dis-

patched to Army schools for special and refresher training courses designed to equip them for the intricate work which lay ahead.

With schooling completed, cadre officers reported to their stations at Ft. Jackson early in October. They were followed by more than 400 "filler" officer personnel drawn principally from Officer Candidate Schools.

The potential Century privates, who were then sweating out pre-induction examinations, would have enjoyed the next six weeks between 15 October and 30 November. In mid-October, the NCO cadre, consisting primarily of men from the 76th Infantry Division with trickles from replacement training centers, schools and other units, 1,500 men in all, added brain, bone, and sinew to the fighting machine struggling to crack its shell. The privates who joined the 100th later would have stared unbelievably at the astounding sight of sergeants drawing KP, pulling guard, cleaning latrines while they nurtured the as yet unborn division.

And then, on 15 November 1942, the day of parturition arrived. Maj. Gen. William H. Simpson, XII Corps commander, delivered an address in which he stressed the severe trials which lay in the path of the Century Division, and clairvoyantly predicted the im-



portant role it would play in helping to win the war. The 100th Division colors passed from the hands of Maj. Gen. Emil F. Reinhardt, commander of the 76th Infantry Division, to Gen. Burrell. The band played martial tunes. Officers smiled and shook hands. The assembled NCOs sighed and went back to latrine duty and nursing the new-born infant.

But something more than speeches or bands or latrine duty had happened. The Century Division was no longer an embryo. It was no longer anything as impersonal as an "It" or a "They." The 100th had been born. A living, breathing, pulsating entity had been created out of the heart and will of a united nation. From now on, "It" or "They" would not suffice. From 15 November 1942, it was "We." *We* fighting men of the Century.

Officers and an enlisted cadre had successfully completed the organizational groundwork when the recruits who were to form the fighting men of the Century began to arrive in December. If the Axis leaders could have seen us in quartermaster-creased overcoats as we filed from the troop train and struggled to form some semblance of four ranks, it probably would have taken an atom bomb to convince them that they could conceivably lose World War II. The little green shop-tags were still on our clothing. Unbraided caps were perched at any angle which pleased the ego of the wearer. We didn't even come to attention when the "brass" passed for inspection.

The German High Command would have laughed uproariously at that. Why, even a child in Germany knows that you click your heels when a General pauses to ask you a question. We merely fidgeted and cursed our draft boards. Fighting men! All we knew about the Army was that we had to salute everyone, especially Pfc's, ate a seven-course meal out of one plate, re-

ceived inoculations for every disease known to God and man, and waited for hours in lines reminiscent of Saturday nights at the neighborhood movie. We didn't even know we were to be part of the newly activated 100th Infantry Division.

Soldiers! We weren't soldiers. We were salesmen from New York; farmers from the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama; mechanics from New Jersey; clerks from the New England States; mill workers from Pennsylvania and Delaware. We were plumbers, architects, writers, stenographers, stevedores, artists, printers, musicians, craps-shooters, lawyers—you name them and we have them. Except soldiers.

Herr Goebbels had scornfully summed us up by calling us "ice-cream eaters." He was correct. He could have also called us T-bone steak eaters, milk drinkers, easy-chair sitters, radio listeners, automobile riders, six-zoot-suits-in-the-wardrobe wearers. We had toiled and dodged the Finance Company for those things and wanted to enjoy them. There's no percentage in trading the warmth of a woman's caress for the scowl of a 1st sergeant or a steam heated room for a foxhole.

That was what Hitler and Tojo had relied upon when they started the war. But the Axis psychologists had slipped up on one very important point. We loved the life we had and weren't going to sit idly by while some predatory gang snatched that life from us. When gunmen start shooting-up the neighboring county, it's time to call out the posse lest your own home meet the same fate. Perhaps we didn't know much about standing at attention. Americans are taught to pay that respect to God and their country. We hate lines and regimentation and caste systems. It gripes us to be ordered around. But illiterate or college graduate, our free way of life had taught us to think, and

we knew why we were standing along that railroad track in Fort Jackson; although anyone of us would unhesitatingly have told you that he didn't like it. So we waited in line while the "brass" inspected and asked pointed questions, listened unenthusiastically to the blaring "welcome" band, cursed the Axis through the medium of our draft boards, and when the order was given, marched to the long column of trucks which waited to carry us to temporary hutments pending assignment to regular units.

The excellent planning which preceded our arrival as recruits began paying dividends the next morning. Within 24 hours, we had learned how to make up an army cot, hospital style, had been taught to salute officers and not to "Sir" non-coms, heard our first batch of rumors in the latrine, found out that we were to be soldiers in the 100th Infantry Division, had been informed that Major General Withers A. Burress was our division commander and had received our initial dose of close order drill.

By mid-afternoon, men began trickling off to their various assigned units. The departure was moist as we took leave of friends we had made on the trip to Fort Jackson from the induction centers. But in the excitement and expectancy as to what lay ahead we lost much of the nostalgia which had been hanging over us. It probably would be stretching the point to say that we had found a home, but we certainly were no longer "Orphans of the Storm." Co. "G" was going to be a wonderful outfit. Chests expanded despite ourselves when cadremen told us Co. "M" was armed with heavy weapons. Big guns, Garands, 50 calibre MGs wire, radio, mechanics, drivers of the famous jeep and 10 wheelers, stuff we had read about in novels and newspapers and seen in newsreels. Now we were part of it, sharing in the big picture. Flags were not waving, bands were not playing, orators were not telling us why we must fight. Yet it was there, the first spark of an *esprit de corps* which in the

months and years to come was to grow into a conflagration which left the Nazis wondering what it was that the Century Division had which they didn't.

While the division increased to full strength we laid around getting our feet wet—soaked, would be a better word for it. Every training class was conducted in the open, and it soon became evident why the plaintive tune, "Carolina Moon Keep Shining," was written. During the entire two weeks we never saw the moon or the sun, either. All we saw was rain. Between rain-drops, however, we absorbed such interesting things as the organization of an Infantry Division, fundamentals of close-order drill, military courtesy and discipline, and the hazards of backtalking to your first sergeant.

Christmas Eve the 399th Infantry Regiment gathered on the huge, sandy drill-field, later dubbed the Dust Bowl, to sing Christmas carols and listen to Sgt. Kenny Gardner croon "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." Company commanders had ordered a 100% turnout and, surprising enough, they got it. Even those of us who hated Gardner's singing obliged by marching to the drill-field while the first sergeants remained behind to search the barracks for stragglers. The program was supposed to act as a morale builder, but it made everyone feel depressed. It was our first Christmas away from home. The greatest soldier show ever assembled couldn't have helped our morale. If only we could have faced Hitler's best division that night, the brawl at Heilbronn would have looked like a ping-pong match in comparison. On that night of peace on earth, good will toward men, the first spark of the instinct to kill our enemies was kindled in our breasts.

Then, on 28 December, we plunged into what the War Department designated as the first phase of its Mobilization Training Program, or basic training. For thirteen weeks we ran obstacle courses, tumbled in sawdust pits, hiked long, weary miles, learned how





to fire our principle weapons, were taught to care for our equipment. Palms and soles blistered and caloused. Waistlines streamlined. "My aching back" became an army catchism with meaning.

We also learned to sing. Some amateur psychologist in Second Army Headquarters, undoubtedly prodded by a bucking Public Relations Officer, conceived the idea that we would train better if we sang. In all probability this inspiration was plagiarism from Walt Disney's seven dwarfs who whistled while they worked. But whistling wasn't good enough for us. We had to sing. No one felt like singing after marching fifteen miles. In those basic training days we were lucky to have the strength to walk after that distance. But being the 100th Division, we sang louder, longer and with more gusto than any other outfit in the United States Army. We sang old-time favorites, popular ballads and ribald parodies composed by company wits. We were hailed in the press of the nation as the "Singing Division." We didn't know then that we were destined to make even the Jerries change their tune.

Basic training serves two purposes. It hardens the body of the recruit so that he can withstand every possible rigor of combat, and it schools the newly inducted soldier in the particular task assigned him. The global conflict, in which we were to play such an important role, posed problems never faced by any army in history. The mechanized fighting force our country was building had changed tactical conceptions and tenets. Where World War I divisions had moved fifty yards, we had to be prepared to move fifty miles. Climate ranged from tropical to arctic, jungle to desert. Rapid movement increased the danger of encirclement and magnified logistic enigmas. To maintain contact and the fighting efficiency of widely scat-

tered forces, technicians skilled in radio, telegraph and telephone operation were needed. Overworked supply and transport vehicles required expert mechanics, welders, drivers. Engineering difficulties were swelled to include building of bridges and roads capable of supporting tanks and heavy guns, to use bull-dozers and angle-dozers. Medical battalion men had to be trained to perform first-aid on the field of battle. Blood plasma. Posit fuses. Radar. Rocket guns. It was a technical war. We began to specialize.

Through it all, like an unbroken thread in a multi-colored tapestry, ran the basic design of soldiering. Despite guns and planes and tanks, the rifle was still the primary weapon of offense and defense. Three weeks after the start of basic training, we had our first test of range firing. The 397th Infantry Regiment led the division to Leesburg Range. Leesburg, sixteen miles from Fort Jackson, is a sandy stretch of wasteland on which no self-respecting palm tree would be found dead. Compared to Leesburg, the Sahara is a blooming Paradise. The men soon dubbed the windswept mountain top "Siberia." It was a misnomer. Siberia never gets that cold.

Days were spent to the full. Revielle was at 0530. By 0700, we had eaten breakfast, made certain our six-man pyramidal tents would pass inspection, and marched out to the firing range where we waited for the tardy winter dawn to permit firing. With the exception of one hour for lunch, we remained on the range until dusk made it impossible to see the "five" on the targets. When we weren't shooting, we were in the huge pits calling shots, pulling targets, marking scores. The flag is up. The flag is waving. The flag is down. Maggies drawers. Dry runs. A "four" at five o'clock. Many of us who had never held a rifle in our lives stared in wonder as the white "five" disk

peeped over the concrete abutments. We began to talk like soldiers. By the time our week was up, we began to feel like soldiers.

A computation of unit small arms scores revealed that 87.2% of the division's personnel had qualified in firing the M-1. Highest unit score was made by the 325th Engineers, with 96.4% of the battalion's men qualifying.

Range firing had just been completed when XII Corps called for a command inspection. Before dawn, we were pitching pup tents and laying out our equipment as the manual directed. Naturally, it rained. It always rained when we had command inspections.

Just seven weeks after the start of basic training, on 13 February, the first division review was held on Ancrum Ferry Field. An involuntary thrill of pride swept over us as we saw the massed might of the Century stretched out in formation over nearly a half-mile of parade ground. The review, held in honor of South Carolina's governor, Olin D. Johnston, proved how far we had come in our efforts to become an irresistible fighting force. Seven weeks ago we didn't know how to form four ranks. Now we marched and pivoted on a twenty-man parade front.

Special Service activities gained momentum. A division tabloid newspaper, the *Century Sentinel*, made its appearance. The lead story was devoted to the ranger training planned in the division. Intra-unit athletic competition was stressed. Following an informal booking elimination, sixteen men were chosen by the Division Special Service staff to represent the Century at Charlotte, N. C., in the annual Golden Gloves Tournament. The 100th finished third in the standings with two 397th Infantrymen, Pvt. Joseph A. DeMatteo, bantamweight, and Pvt. Carlo M. Litz, welterweight, reaching the finals.

We won our first championship on 27 February when the 399th's 3rd Battalion defeated the 52nd Medical Battalion, 39-25, for the Post basketball crown.

Two Soldier's Medals, the first in the long list of awards for heroism to be garnered by Centurymen in the years which followed, were presented. Capt. Marvin H. McCracken of the 325th Medical Battalion was cited for rescue work at the scene of a bus accident, and S. Sgt. Walter L. Bull of Co. A 399th Infantry, for heroic action during a train wreck.

On 27 March 1943, basic training ended and we looked forward to our first furlough and the second phase of training which was to begin the following

week. Furlough time is always a cause for excitement in the Army. But the tenseness and pounding heart which accompanies the citizen soldier on his initial extended pass, like a schoolboy's first date, is a sensation which can never be regained on subsequent leaves. Pride in uniform had never meant so much. The 100th Division patch took on a new significance. We sweated-out furlough rosters like a father awaiting news of his first-born. The Post tailor did a rushing business formfitting shirts to streamlined waists. VD lectures. Train tickets. Reservations. Home. I'm to be a gunner. I'm in the engineers. The quartermaster feeds and clothes the troops, Mom. Better, the best, "prima." In those three months pride in outfit had mysteriously crept into our hearts and marrow. Among ourselves we griped about "chicken." But to outsiders and especially men from other divisions, the Century Division was above reproach. We had learned to train together. Over the horizon waited the day when we could show how well we could fight together.



We sweated-out furlough rosters like a father awaiting news of his first-born.

Second Phase of Training

"What are the bugles blowin' for?" said
Files-on-Parade.

"To turn you out, to turn you out," the
Colour Sergeant said.

—KIPLING—Danny Deever.

The second phase of our training, designed to weld individual soldiers into fighting teams of platoons, companies, batteries and battalions, got off to a flying start. Tired and caked with Carolina dust, we had returned from our first week of field exercises on 10 April. We rushed into our hutments, dropped our packs, and dashed for the showers. It was Saturday and the capital city of Columbia, three miles from Ft. Jackson, beckoned. The day was fair, and the beer would be cold. On Main Street, blondes, brunettes, and red-heads would be displaying their spring crop of nylons. There's something about a woman in the spring. The war seemed very far away at that moment. Some of us had wives waiting anxiously after a week of separation. Fiancees were taking extraordinary pains with lip rouge and coiffure. There were dances and movies at the USO clubs. To hell with chow. The idea was to take off before the 1st Sergeant got any ideas about details. This was one week-end we were going to make the most of.

And then it happened. As if to remind us that soldiering is a very serious business, came the notice that all passes were cancelled for the week-end. No one knew the reason for the order, but everyone ran to the latrine to find out. Rumors flew thick and fast. We were to be alerted for immediate shipment overseas. We were to act as a special attack force. That Ranger training had been for a purpose! As usual, the bloodied heads of the brass were battered by cries of "chicken."



We didn't know that the general, himself, had learned only a few hours earlier that we were to act as security for President Roosevelt while he inspected military installations in South Carolina en route to his conference with President Comacho in Mexico. The importance of secrecy covering President Roosevelt's itinerary was stressed by the general at a hasty meeting of unit commanders and special and general staff officers. By Sunday evening, plans had been completed.

Our mission was to guard all the Atlantic Coast Line tracks running through South Carolina, from the extreme northern border of the State at Dillon, to the southern boundary at the Savannah River town of Chatham. In all, 252 miles of track were to be patrolled, including the 24-mile spur from Yemassee to the Marine base on Parris Island. Special attention was to be paid to tunnels, culverts, bridges and defiles, as well as straightaways during the three day period on which we were to stand guard.

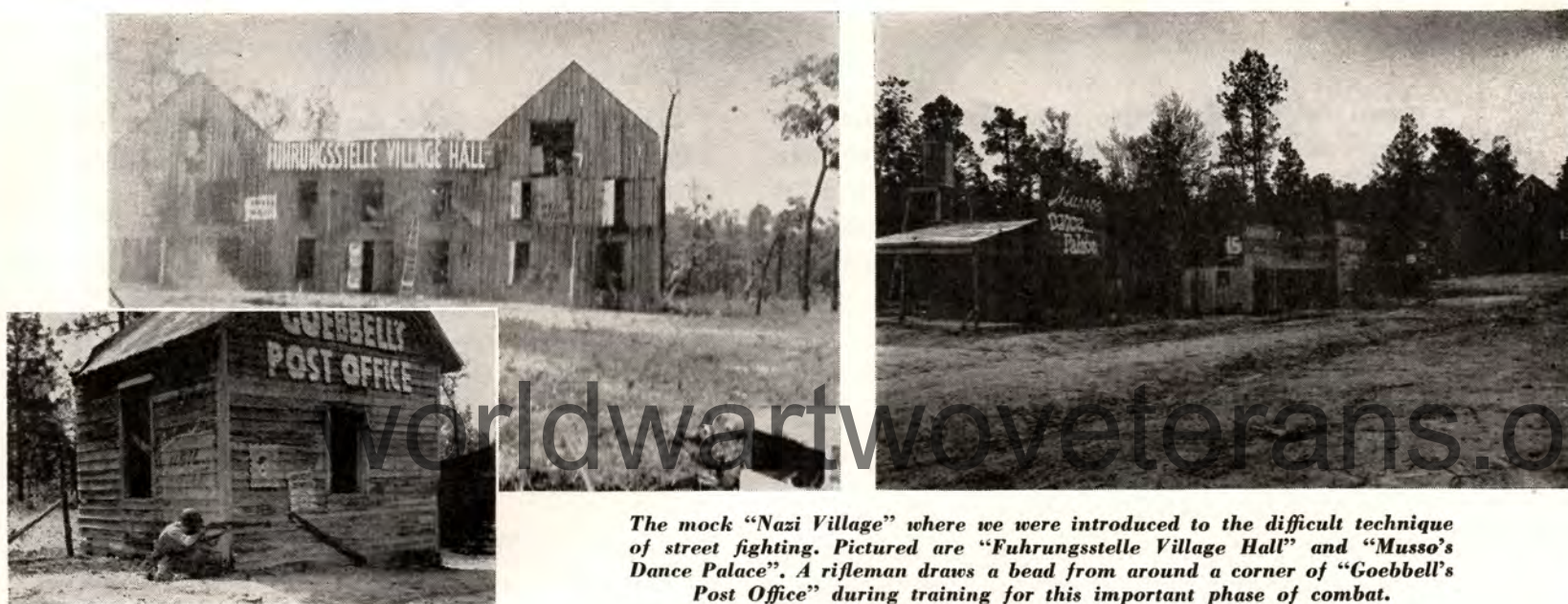
The division quartermaster arranged for the collection of food and fuel from military bases near the defense sector. Reconnaissance parties of officers traveled to the areas to which they were assigned and inspected them for bivouac positions and vital defense points. Artillery units, without field pieces, were assigned to co-operate with the infantry regiments.

Early Monday morning, carried by trucks, we began moving from Ft. Jackson toward previously designated positions along the ACL railroad. By Tuesday evening, all was in readiness through the division's defense zone.

At 1000 hours on Wednesday morning, a ten-car train rolled into the junction of Yemassee. Shades were drawn over all windows in the last car. While the train was being shifted from the main line to the Parris Island spur, a small, black Scotch Terrier bounded from the carefully curtained Pullman. That was the tip a couple of our division MP's, standing nearby, needed. They immediately recognized the dog as the President's Scottie, Falla.

But to most of us, the purpose of our mission was still a mystery. Switching completed, the train continued to Port Royal and Parris Island where the President inspected the Marine base. Then, the President's train returned over the Yemassee spur and, our all-important task successfully concluded, we returned to Ft. Jackson.

Training shifted into high gear. During basic we had sweated perspiration. Now we sweated blood. The effort of college football teams to get in shape seems



The mock "Nazi Village" where we were introduced to the difficult technique of street fighting. Pictured are "Führungsstelle Village Hall" and "Musso's Dance Palace". A rifleman draws a bead from around a corner of "Goebbels Post Office" during training for this important phase of combat.

pathetic compared to the regimen laid down for us as we raised our sights on the XII Corps physical fitness tests scheduled for June. We still were not ready for an Axis inspection, but the laughter of the Fascist bigwigs wouldn't have been nearly as scornful as on that December night when we lined up along the railroad tracks.

We did push-ups and burpees until we fell flat on our faces. Some of us vomited as we ran 300 yards in 45 seconds; stepped through the burpee; carried a soldier pig-a-back for a 75-yard run; alternately crept, ran and crawled over a zig-zag course for another 75 yards and paced off a four-mile fast march in 50 minutes with full field pack. We persisted until we didn't vomit. You can't spill your guts when they've turned to iron.

On the day of the Corps tests, twenty companies were chosen at random to represent the division. The Corps brass was elated with the results. We felt pretty good about it, also. General Burress commended us on our "excellent showing," unit commanders complimented company commanders, company commanders passed on the compliment to us, and we complimented each other on the welcome news that the ordeal was over.

The training tempo continued to increase. By the end of June, most of us were capable of marching 25 miles with full field pack in eight hours.

Innovations, such as the much publicized Infiltration Course, were added. Designed to impress us with the importance of hugging the ground when crawling toward an enemy position, the Infiltration Course afforded us our first experience in advancing under "live" machine gun fire. We weren't very confident of our chances for survival as we jumped from a trench and inched across 75 yards of shell-pocked

ground laced with barbed apron wire while machine gun bullets whizzed only 36 inches over our heads. A couple of enterprising Philadelphia lawyers probably could have increased their income considerably if they were on hand to make up last wills and testaments.

Our introduction to the difficult art of street fighting was made when we stormed a simulated "Nazi Village." A dozen frame buildings, all bearing the names of infamous German establishments and laid out to pattern a street in a Kraut town, had been constructed by our 325th Engineers. The object of this training was to demonstrate and practice the advance down a street lined with houses and reach the last building while taking advantage of maximum cover. In squad strength, we stormed the town, scouted the Jerry structures for snipers, blasted dummy figures with rifle fire and continued our advance until we had captured our objective, the Führungsstelle Village Hall.

We now were spending one week in every month in the field. We learned to dig slit trenches and fill them in when we left the area. Camouflage discipline was stressed. Sanitation, eating in the dark, cleaning of mess kits, covering of garbage pits, how to wash underwear and socks in a helmet were sweated and cussed over. We learned many other expedients considered necessary to living outdoors in combat, most of which were promptly discarded when the bullets really began to fly. But it was nice knowing them, anyway.

While the Infantry regiments studied defensive and offensive deployment and disposition of platoons, companies and battalions, those of us in the Field Artillery busied ourselves with the tactical use of the big guns. We learned how and where to set them up for

rapid and effective employment. Weary hours were spent on camouflaging our vital support weapons against enemy air and ground observation. We became adept in the use of fire control instruments.

As members of the hard-hitting Combat Engineers, we became skilled in the important function of providing drinking water for the entire division by filtering water from lakes and ponds. We spent three weeks on the Wateree River building bridges and engaging in many other activities.

At this point in our training, important shifts in our personnel occurred. Previously unforeseen requirements and revisions in the draft structure, which became necessary as our country grasped the cudgel of war more firmly, were responsible for the changes.

From a peak of 16,000 men at the beginning of the year, our enlisted strength had dropped to 12,300 by



the close of the second period of training. Largest number of men to leave the division, either by transfer or discharge, came from the ranks of over-age soldiers. Of those who left, 793 were discharged outright and 242 were placed in the Enlisted Reserve Corps. Transfers to the Air Corps, Airborne Paratroopers, and combat units already advanced in training, accounted for an additional 978 men. Development of the Army Specialized Training Program drained 505 men from our ranks. All other causes such as dependency, military ineptitude, physical disability and death took a toll of 1092 of our original number.

While these changes were taking place in our ranks, officers also were being shifted. Among General Staff Officers, Maj. Paul S. Reinecke, Jr., became G-2; Maj. Kenneth E. Eckland moved up a notch to the G-3 post; and Lt. Col. Robert M. Stegmaier, formerly division quartermaster, was shifted to G-4.

Fanned by the strong wind of fellowship, the grow-ink flame of *esprit de corps* was reflected in our athletic endeavors. Center of attention was our baseball club. Boxing also held the spotlight. Softball aroused keen interdivisional interest.

In the field of the drama, the Century made a lasting impression upon us as well as civilians with the presentation of Maxwell Anderson's war play, *Eve of St. Mark*.

With the end of June and the close of the second phase of our training, we readied ourselves for the large field operations of the third period. This was to be a test of our individual ability as a soldier and our effectiveness in major tactical operations.

3rd and Pre-maneuver Phase

Independence Day, 1943, will be long remembered by those of us who were in the Division Military Police. In effect, it was a 32-man platoon from our Century stalwarts which carried out our first foreign mission. Assigned the duty of guarding Italian prisoners en route to camps in the U. S. from Africa, our beloved MPs, blue arm-bands and all, left Ft. Jackson on 4 July and embarked for Casa Blanca on 13 July aboard the *S.S. Mariposa* out of Newport News, Va. Landing in Casa Blanca, our Century MPs, under command of Lt. Charles T. Housam, boarded a Liberty Ship on 22 July and with seven additional MP detachments efficiently transported some 3,500 Italian war prisoners to Boston harbor. The platoon made a second trip to Africa on 4 September. This time they disembarked at Oran where they put in two weeks of guard duty in the town of Mostagamen, 100 miles east of the seaport, before setting sail for the States on 16 October with 400 Jerries whom they delivered at Newport News after an uneventful crossing.

But while our MPs were winning Theatre Ribbons, we weren't sitting idly by waiting for news reports. With the sweltering heat of mid-July came our first unbroken two-week period in the field and our initial experience in operating as regimental combat teams. It also marked our introduction to the Carolina chigger. No one relished either the problems or the chiggers. But by the time the RCT exercises were over, we had taken one more giant stride toward becoming a unified fighting machine.

From 19 to 30 July we sweated on long marches, deployed through thick woods, and learned to make one canteen of water last for a day's drinking and washing. With the temperature in the 90's, however, we didn't do much washing.

In contrast to previous small unit problems, all of us—engineers, artillery, medics, quartermaster, ordnance, and infantry—joined hands in the common effort. Slowly, the realization dawned that a rifle com-



Some of the citizens of Chester and Winnsboro cheered on friend and foe, and even took sides.

pany, no matter how expertly trained, required the support of the artillery; that the artillery was useless without infantry; that neither could operate effectively without the engineers, and that all elements were dependent upon the quartermaster, ordnance, and medical detachment.

By 23 August, after six RCT problems, we were ready to begin training as a division. Some seven months had passed since we had officially launched our military careers with basic training. We had worked hard and adapted ourselves with the ingenuity and initiative inherent to Americans. Yet—seven precious months had elapsed before we could even begin to maneuver as a unified division. What a perfect answer to those who contend that an army can be built overnight while they sit smugly in a fool's paradise of industrial strength.

The mock "Battle of South Carolina," as these Division or "D" exercises were termed, was divided into six phases and was "fought" from 23 August to 1 September, and from 22 to 30 September. Even the brass began roughing it. Division Hq left their elaborate CPs and began working in trucks and march-command setups. When that happens, training is getting serious. As if to add emphasis to the importance

of these exercises, Lt. Gen. Lloyd R. Fredendall, Second Army CG, paid us a visit during one day of the exercises and Maj. Gen. William H. Simpson, XII Corps commander, remained in the field for most of the period.

By the time the six "D" problems had been completed, we had ranged over the entire northern half of South Carolina with the main "battleground" centered between the towns of Winnsboro and Chester. As usual in exercises of this type, the "enemy" forces lost every engagement. In the first three "battles," we moved 60 miles by motor to soundly trounce the numerically inferior Sixth Cavalry. In the three concluding exercises, we designated successive regiments from the division as a hostile force. We attacked and defended. We walked seemingly endless miles cross-country. We thrilled the gaping citizens who lined the streets of Chester and Winnsboro to cheer on friend and foe as we shot-up the town with blanks. Some of the civilians even took sides and hid the defenders in their homes. To them it was good, clean fun. To us it was hard work with time out to cast appreciative glances at the southern belles between "shots."

The real stuff wasn't falling on Winnsboro and Chester. Soldiering is fun when casualties are hypo-



thetical, when the scream of the wounded is only the wolf-cry of a GI, when direct hits are decided by an umpire, and dead men walk back to chow. It was that way in Italy, Germany, and Japan when the Axis was maneuvering its legions and defying the world. Perhaps some day, predatory nations will forget parades and remember the stench of death. Perhaps.

But we had one more notch in our training rifles by the time the "D" exercises were completed. We had corrected many natural errors in the complicated business of working as a unified division. The quartermaster had overcome the stupendous task of distributing 150,000 gallons of gasoline and 1,500,000 pounds of foodstuffs while the division was on the march. We had learned the meaning of envelopment and tested the salt of opposition. We had cut our molars.

Between problems we attended an aerial show at Ancrum Ferry Field in which we were taught recognition of bombers and fighters through sight and hearing. The 325th Medical Battalion and unit aid-men treated simulated casualties in a week-long demonstration witnessed by the entire division. A spectacular training feature was an attack upon Hill 20, a fortified height on the Ft. Jackson reservation, by our infantry battalions with the support of our artillery and a devastating B-25 bombing attack. Live ammunition was used by all elements.

The War Department now added iron spikes to our heavily mailed fists with the addition of three Cannon Cos. to our T/O. Armed with 105 mm infantry howitzers, the Cannoneers were to prove a welcome asset when we entered combat.

We knew we were getting good when the brass began bringing visitors to Ft. Jackson. During the "D" exercises, a Brazilian military mission of 56 officers had tagged along to study American methods of training. They were followed by the Brazilian minister of war, Maj. Gen. Dutra, who was formally welcomed with a 19-gun salute fired by Battery C, 374th F A Battalion. Flanked by numerous American and Brazilian generals and escorted by the 100th Recon. Troop, the visitors toured the post while the 397th Infantry acted as guard of honor.

The ebb and flow of enlisted personnel in and out of the division continued. During the three months between July and September, approximately 1000 men left the Century, primarily as fillers for divisions more advanced in training or alerted for shipment overseas. This number brought total discharges and transfers to 4,736 in the 10½ months since activation.

Seeking to profit by the adage concerning "all work and no play," we won the Post baseball and softball championships when the 397th Infantry beat the Reception Center nine and the 325th Engineers trounced the 74th General Hospital delegation. Both these teams were chosen to bear the Century banner after an inter-division tournament.

Since no division is complete without a sweetheart, we selected Miss Catherine Ryan (of Brooklyn, naturally) as the "Girl of the Century." Miss Ryan, best girl of Pfc Dan Linehan, 397th Infantryman, was chosen from among hundreds of contenders in a *Century Sentinel*-sponsored contest.

But not even a beauty contest could detract from the fever of expectancy with which we greeted the news, late in October, that we were to engage in large scale maneuvers in Tennessee.

In the midst of preparations, our first major change in command occurred when Gen. Buechler, Divarty Commander, was transferred to a Corps post on the West Coast. His place was filled by Brig. Gen. John B. Murphy, who had been combat commander of the 7th Armored Division. A West Point graduate, Gen. Murphy brought to the Century Division the experience of 25 years with all types of field artillery.

On 8 November, we began to move by truck from Ft. Jackson to the Tennessee maneuver area. The 399th Infantry combat team led the division from the camp which had been our home for an entire year. CT-7 followed and on 15 November, exactly one year after activation, the 398th Infantry, last element of the division, passed through the Post's main gate with its indelible memories and rolled into the unpredictable future.

Two night stops were made en route, the first at Athens, Georgia, and the second at historic Ft. Oglethorpe. Ft. Oglethorpe, site of one of the great engagements of the war between the States, had been



converted into a WAC training camp, and the lady soldiers played hostess at a dance staged in our honor.

Some five hundred back-breaking miles from Ft. Jackson we arrived in the Tennessee maneuver area and had our first experience with hogs, mud, and cold which belied the warm hearts of the mountaineers.

Tennessee Maneuvers

How it pours, pours, pours,

In a never-ending sheet!

How it drives beneath the doors!

How it soaks the passer's feet.

—ROSSITER JOHNSON—*Rhyme of the Rain.*

In many respects our winter maneuvers in Tennessee were more than another period of training. They were a turning point in our innate psychology and opened upon startling conceptions as to what was important in the appreciation of living. True, we had exercises—eight of them. We practiced at holding operations, defended bridgeheads, forded hissing, rain-swollen streams and rivers, hiked more than 60 miles through cross-country mud in three days, demolished and constructed ponton bridges, ferried support weapons across the Cumberland River, advanced over rugged mountains and retreated back again.

As officers, we supposedly learned a great deal about tactical maneuver. The Benning School of thought was the Bible and it was a rash junior officer who had the temerity to question the tenets of the "Good Book." Errors were made, of course, but if the answer was the Benning solution, everything was fine. It wasn't until we faced the Jerries in the man-trap of the Vosges that we left Benning in Georgia and began to fit the cart to the wheel.

As soldiers, we knew only that from 17 November 1943, when we arrived in the maneuver area, until

11 January 1944, the end of the winter exercises, we were constantly cold, wet, and utterly miserable. In retrospect, it seems unbelievable that the human body could endure such hardships. That we did, with only a relatively small percentage falling ill from exposure, is a commentary on the training we had received during the past year. Even the hardy Tennessee mountaineers shook their heads in wonder and hospitably invited us in for coffee as we sloshed past their hill-side homes.

Making a million dollars, getting ahead in the world, suddenly lost its importance. An easy chair by the fire; a sturdy roof which fought off wind and rain; a warm, soft bed; a home-cooked meal; dry clothes; a good book; a woman's caress—these became the important things in life. You can't eat a million dollars, and they don't compare to a cedar log when it comes to building a fire.

We matured mentally as we hardened physically. In man's timeless battle with the elements, we discovered the necessity for teamwork and companionship. Two men huddled in a pup-tent found warmth from each other's bodies. Four shoulders to a wheel loosed a mired jeep. When covered fires were finally permitted late in December, one man to chop wood, another to carry kindling and feed the blaze, meant life-giving warmth and at least partially dried clothes. Rugged individualism, born in steamheated homes and nurtured on Dagwood sandwiches, expired on the rocky, wind-swept hills of Tennessee.

Confidence in ourselves as individuals, pride in our own platoon or section, remained as steadfast as ever. But we broadened our views. A platoon didn't mean very much by itself in the 15,000 square mile maneuver area. We understood that, when we were halted at some unfordable stream and were forced to wait there until our engineers anchored a ponton bridge to the far bank. Time and again, we lost contact with



Headquarters until our Signal Co. re-established communications.

We gained new respect for the medical aid-man who dogged our steps and patched sprains and blisters when most of us were too tired to move. The QM Co. meant food and gasoline; if they failed, we failed. Tanks were still "Oil Cans." We glibed, "The Infantry makes the holes for the tanks to break through." But they had guns and mobility, and a couple of 75s give a soldier a comfortable feeling even if they aren't leading the attack. We continued to scoff at the Air



Christmas dinner, like Thanksgiving, was eaten in the rain.

Corps. To us, sinking in mud, drenched by rain, they were the "Chosen Ones," the fair-haired boys of the army, sleeping in warm barracks, eating out of plates. Sure, it took the Infantry to hold territory, but the drone of the bombers' engines and the growl of the fighters as they dived to strafe an enemy column, blended into a sweet symphony of confidence.

At 2100 hours of 21 November 1943, with the Century designated as part of the Blue forces, the "Battle of Tennessee" officially began although contact was not established until the following morning when our 100th Ren. Tp. skirmished with Red reconnaissance elements in the village of Hurricane. Gen. Miller acted as our commander in the absence of Gen. Burress who had assumed the post of XI Corps CG.

Teamed with the 14th Armored Div., we pushed toward Doaks Crossroads, south of Lebanon, while the 14th Armored attempted to encircle the "enemy" from the rear. The Red forces, consisting mainly of the 35th Infantry Div. and the 3rd Cavalry Group, fought well. But after four days of battling over the

rough terrain, the Blues were well on the road to victory when the problem was called to a halt.

The rains hadn't come as yet, and if you didn't mind the sound of your teeth chattering in the icy mornings, conditions were not too difficult. The magnificent cedar groves which covered the area north of Lebanon lent a picnic touch. There was the thrill of pageantry in the green flags of the umpires and the flapping red and white banners of the opposing forces. Everyone played Boy Scout and went patrolling for prisoners. Brilliant and hair-brained maneuvers were executed by the smaller units. The Benning theories were expounded. Fort Leavenworth classrooms were magic-carpeted to the banks of the Cumberland. Whole companies were surrounded. Tank platoons were wiped out. The hills echoed to cries of victors and vanquished. "You're captured!" "I'm not!" "You're dead!" "We're not!" "One man can't storm a machine gun position!" "Why not?"

Why not? We were told why not. When we got into combat, we knew why not. The Book warned against it. The Germans couldn't understand it. It is doubtful whether anyone could explain it. But we did it anyway. Wars are won that way.

Problem O-2 put us in pursuit of an out-numbered enemy. Contact was made in the vicinity of the town of Holloway, and a flanking movement to the right resulted in a breakthrough of the Red's lines. The problem ended with the Blues, spear-headed by Centurymen, closing in on the Red's final defense positions at Leeville.

The Century was encamped just west of Lebanon on Sunday, 5 December, when word was received from Corps Hq. that Problem O-3 was to begin at 0800 hours the following morning. Although we once again carried the Blue banner, our strength was reduced when CT-399 was attached to the Red forces, led by the 35th Div. This gave the enemy a numerical advantage of four combat teams to our two at the jump-off. But as our drive against the rail center of Carthage, 15 miles to the east, ran into stiff opposition we were reinforced by the 87th Infantry and the 14th Armored Divs.

Four types of strategic maneuver were engaged in during this four-day problem: a withdrawal under cover of darkness, when the enemy counter-attacked to gain high ground; a night attack to recapture these important terrain features; a meeting with the 87th Div., sent up from the south to strengthen our lines; and an attack against well emplaced enemy defenses



The Medics learned their vital duties by doctoring simulated casualties.



Message Center jeeps delivered operations instructions over almost impassable roads.

near Cedar Grove, where the problem was halted by Director Headquarters.

What a boon it would have been if Director Headquarters could have halted the rain as easily. The seemingly endless downpour became a nightmare of a sadistic Aquarius. It was as if every drop of water from the seven seas had been pumped into a huge garden hose and showered over us in changing sprays. Tiny rivulets swelled to raging torrents, brown with eroded topsoil. The Great Smokies, lashed by storms, cowered behind impenetrable fog banks. Giant firs and cedars ducked the wild blows of the wind and crashed in defeat. Even the earth, pummeled to chocolate pudding, clung quivering to the wheels of our vehicles as if seeking protection beneath the sheltering frames.

Day after day, the rain continued. Steel rusted. Clothes mildewed on our bodies. Plodding, jaded legs sank shin-deep in mud. Mud. We wallowed in it by day and slept in it at night. Raincoats were as wet inside as out. Waterproof tents absorbed moisture until they buckled and collapsed, dragging tent-pegs with them. Walking 50 yards to chow became a major operation, yet we struggled fifty miles across trail-less hillsides to complete a maneuver.

As autumn turned to winter, temperatures dropped to below zero adding hail and snow to our difficulties. But the rain never stopped for any length of time. Now, however, it froze, stiffening wet clothes, forming ice-blocks around our feet, searing faces raw. Still, we continued with our assignments while hardened Tennesseans watched in awe and wondered what could beat such courage. We wondered also. Wondered when the rains would end. Wondered what beds and fire-

sides felt like. Wondered if combat would be anything like this. The Germans wondered even more when they met us in the rain-swept Vosges. They didn't know we had wintered in Tennessee.

For the first time in months of training, the fourth problem placed us in a position requiring the defense of a bridgehead. Carrying the Red banner under command of Gen. Burress, we deployed along the south bank of the rain-swollen Cumberland River on a general line between Hunters Point-Bellwood-Rome. Our mission was to delay the advance of the numerically superior Blues while covering the extrication of threatened supplies by a Red Corps utilizing the railroad at Hartsville on the north side of the Cumberland River. Conducting a difficult withdrawing action in sub-freezing weather, we succeeded in holding the enemy at bay while our supplies were moved to safety. Then, falling back slowly across the unfordable Cumberland, we "blew" every bridge and established a strong defense line along the north bank. We were

Brilliant and hair-brained maneuvers were executed by the smaller units.



preparing to fight off an expected enemy ferry crossing, when the problem was terminated at 1100 hours of 15 December.

Problem O-5, also fought along the banks of the Cumberland River, saddled us with the mission of defending a portion of that swift-flowing waterway against an enemy who outnumbered us four to one. For the second time, we were the main body of a Red force with Gen. Burrell at the helm. Although the problem was a difficult one for all elements, the work of our 325th Combat Engineers and attached engineer units held the spotlight.

The exercise had barely got under way when the Blues, under cover of our own smoke screen, succeeded in capturing intact the vital Hunters Point bridge which our engineers had prepared for demolition. The span was later destroyed by aerial bombardment, but before this could be accomplished, the Blues had pushed strong elements across the Cumberland. This exploitation resulted in heavy engagements as the enemy sought to expand their bridgehead and we battled to contain and isolate them from further reinforcement. Here again, the engineers displayed excellent ability in constructing and demolishing light ponton bridges and erecting obstacles in the paths of the advancing Blues.

The engagement was concluded on Wednesday so that we could prepare for the Christmas week-end. For most of us it was our second Christmas away from home and the determined efforts of the Special Service sections to dispel the gloom with Christmas carols and recordings of "Silent Night," sung by Bing Crosby, fell miserably flat. The 399th had telephoned a New York manufacturer several weeks earlier for war-rationed tree ornaments and had labored half the day

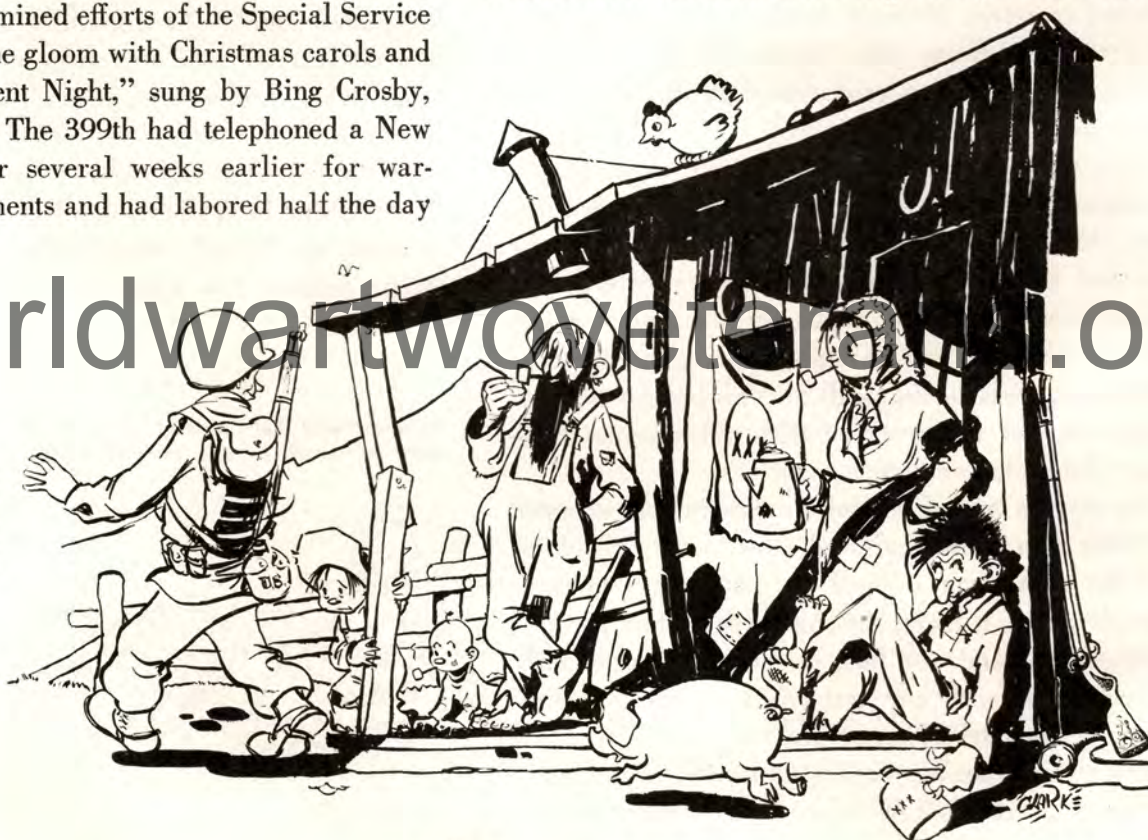
in the freezing rain to decorate a young fir. Next morning the gayly bedecked tree was lying in the mud, the broken tinsel and glass balls scattered pathetically around it.

Christmas dinner, like Thanksgiving, was eaten in the rain. We were a bedraggled and disconsolate lot as we sought a flat rock on which to rest our mess kits. We had turkey and all the trimmings, just as the newspapers said we would. But even turkey gravy doesn't taste very good when thinned with rain water. We did have some fun spearing tidbits lying on the bottom of the water-covered mess. It was like looking for prizes in a Cracker Jack box.

Returning to cross-country fighting in problem O-6, we teamed with another Blue division in pushing a Red force from Lebanon to the outskirts of Carthage, some 30 miles east. Pouncing upon the outnumbered Reds, we advanced in two columns and succeeded in smashing a hole through the center of the enemy line. This breakthrough enabled our attached armor to advance to the objective of Carthage and complete the annihilation of the enemy.

As if to prove the adage that there is never a dull moment in the Army, some higher headquarters eager-beaver with a malaria psychosis, stimulated, no doubt, by an overheated radiator, decided Problem O-6 was the ideal moment for training us in defense against Mme. Anopheles. No self-respecting mosquito would have been found dead in the frigid temperature which

Even the hardy Tennessee Mountaineers shook their heads in wonder and hospitably invited us in for coffee.



prevailed in Tennessee during December. But the inhabitants were treated to the rare privilege of watching us slog through the snow with mosquito nets over our heads. We also slept with mosquito bars draped over our tents. The practice, however, did serve a purpose. We learned how to tie a mosquito net around our heads. That, incidentally, was the last time we ever used mosquito nets or bars. *Mme. Anopheles* probably realized the futility of attacking a body of men so well prepared.

In official language, the seventh problem of Tennessee maneuvers was Operation O-7, Phase 4. To us, it was the third time we had been ordered to cross the rampaging Cumberland River under almost impossible conditions of rain, mud, and flood. Again part of a Blue force with Gen. Burrell in command, we teamed with the 35th Infantry and 14th Armored Divs. and made assault-boat crossings of the Cumberland near Woods Ferry after pushing south from our assembly area near Westmoreland. Armored elements poured over the river via a heavy ponton bridge. We were in position to capture the Corps objective of Bairds Mill and Holloway, against only light resistance from the numerically inferior Reds, when the problem was ended by Director Headquarters.

Announcement that Problem O-8 would be the last of the Tennessee maneuvers resulted in an explosive GI sigh of relief which shook the Great Smokies to their foundations. The exercise, involving an exhausting cross-country advance southward from the vicinity of Carthage to the outskirts of Murfreesboro, was completed in a spirit of insouciance which only the smell of home and shelter could induce after a campaign in the wilderness.

Furloughs began before we moved from the maneuver area. Those of us who left from the field didn't mind the fact that there probably wasn't a clean set of ODs in the entire Division. We shaved and showered, threw some extra clothing into a duffle bag and took off like a BAB for the railroad station in Nashville.

The rest of us remained in the woods for four additional days while the Division knotted the loose ends which are prerequisite to a major movement. Then, on 15 January 1944, advance Division elements entrucked for our new home at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. One overnight stop was made on the border of Tennessee and a second halt was called at Shelby, North Carolina. The reception afforded us during our one-night stay in Shelby will long be remembered by Centurymen as one of the most spontaneous display of patriotism and appreciation ever experienced by the





Mme. Anopheles probably realized the futility of attacking a body of men so well prepared.



soldiers of the 100th. Every resident opened his doors and heart wide to us. A dance was given in our honor. Bathing facilities were offered and home-cooked meals were dispensed with a bountiful hand. Even the "damn Yankees" were invited, and in Dixieland, brother, that's patriotism.

Post Maneuver Period

*Let us praise, if we can, the vertical man,
Though we honor none but the horizontal one.*

—W. H. AUDEN.

There is much to be said for pursuing the luxuries of life. It is, after all, the basis of human endeavor and is encouraged as much in socialist as in capitalist society. The direction and aggressiveness of such pursuit varies, of course, with the individual. In one, it may take the form of empire; in another, a castle on a hill; in a third, a modest home with a refrigerator on which all installments have been paid. With us, coming from the wilds of Tennessee to the sand dunes of Fort Bragg, it was an Army cot which became one of the most desirable and important things in life—a simple Army cot with a lumpy mattress and probably a few tension springs missing. Caked with the dust of our 500-mile journey, the mud of Tennessee still clinging to boots and clothing, we rushed into the snug, double-decker barracks, dropped our packs and sprawled across the folding beds with the joyous abandon of ducks on a pond. Tired eyes closed in ecstasy. Muscles which had bruised against rocks for almost three months, relaxed like kneaded dough. A lean buttock stuck into the air in a characteristic posture. Knees touched stomachs. Bodies curled into balls or lay flat like corpses in a mortuary. Faces pressed into grey-striped pillows. Displaying the usual irrepressible American curiosity, a GI shouted happily

as he discovered the barracks' central heating system. From the latrine came the sound of running water and the off-key singing of some few mundane souls who placed cleanliness before godliness. But most of us remained immobile on our cots and said nothing. There is neither time nor inclination to converse in Paradise. Ecstasy defies words.

Despite the elusiveness of the comforts of life, however, man easily becomes accustomed to them. Within a few weeks the novelty of sleeping in a dry, warm barracks complete with latrines and showers had worn off, and we were griping.

The soft-drinks weren't cold. The beer was flat. Fayetteville was too far from the Post. The bus service was lousy. We couldn't find suitable quarters for



our wives in town. We didn't care a hoot that Fort Bragg was settled by Scots in 1729 and that it had a long and hallowed military history. We decided that anyone who would settle in such a wasteland with only sand hills and scrub-oak to break 28 miles of monotony, was beyond sympathy. Besides, we didn't like our mess sergeant.

You just can't stop Americans from griping. It is as much an institution with us as apple pie à la mode and is probably the reason why we have the best



As soldiers, all we knew was that we were constantly cold, wet, and utterly miserable.

plumbing system in the world. There must be GIs in Heaven today who are griping because the golden gates squeak every time St. Peter opens them for a new arrival. We were in the swing of garrison life again.

Precious little time was wasted in instituting a new training schedule. With the Division no longer a member of Second Army and now operating under XIII Corps, directly under the War Department, we began a training period designed to review the lessons of Ft. Jackson. The first five weeks were spent in completion of qualification, familiarization, and transition firing on Bragg ranges. A prominent spot in the program, attended by all members of the Division, was devoted to an extensive course in the laying, detection, and removal of mines.

Unquestionably our most spectacular training demonstration at Fort Bragg, was the massed infantry-artillery attack exercises with live ammunition which were witnessed by War Department officials and representatives of the nation's Press. These exhibitions accomplished the dual purpose of giving us the "feel" of maneuvering under close artillery support while affording the public, through the medium of the press, an insight as to how ground operations were conducted.

The demonstrations, staged on three occasions in the Gaddys Mountain area, utilized the 399th and 397th Regiments as infantry with artillery fire being laid down by the combined Division Artillery and XIII Corps big guns. Undersecretary of War Robert P. Paterson and a party of 28 publishers and editors of leading newspapers and magazines were present at the first demonstration on 3 March. Less than two weeks later, on 14 March, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and a party of War Department brass witnessed the same exhibition. The demonstration was

repeated a third time on 15 April for the benefit of 40 more representatives of the press, radio, magazines, and newsreels.

We were all pretty tired of Gaddy's Mountain after three sweaty assaults, but the War Department Bureau of Public Relations was very happy about the publicity, the press was overawed, and the brass was impressed by our training efficiency. The Associated Press writer, for example, declared the Division to be trained to a pinpoint of perfection and stated that physical training left even "spectators out of breath." He had no idea how little breath we had to spare by the time we had reached our objective.

Sandwiched between this triple-decker ground power display, was the award of the first Expert Infantryman's Badge in Army history to the 399th's T. Sgt. Walter L. Bull. The badge was pinned on Sgt. Bull by Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, Army Ground Forces commander, at a picturesque division review held 29 March. Sgt. Bull had won this singular honor following successful completion of difficult physical and combat-course tests in competition with a selected number of our outstanding Infantrymen. In the months which followed prior to our leaving Ft. Bragg, similar tests were conducted throughout the 100th's infantry regiments and numerous other Centurymen qualified for the award. The medal added just the right dash of color to our uniforms. Besides, it was worth five dollars extra in our pay envelopes.

Off-duty hours were spent in pursuit of the usual recreational facilities which are part and parcel of an Army Post. There were motion picture theaters, Post Exchanges, and the inevitable Service Club at which we could dance, read, play checkers, or relax with a cherry sundae and half a Southern-fried chicken in passive resistance to overbearing mess sergeants.

Sports, as usual, received our enthusiastic support.



In a strange finish to a touch-football tournament which had begun in Ft. Jackson, reached the semi-finals in Tennessee, and was completed at Ft. Bragg, an aggressive 375th FA team defeated the 397th Infantry, 12-0, to snare the championship.

A Division boxing championship tournament was held in the Post Field House; the finals, on 14 April, were witnessed by numerous civilian newspaper reporters. Lt. Col. Larry S. MacPhail, assistant in the office of the Undersecretary of War, and general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers in civilian life, presented awards to the Century champions.

Basketball was a sports feature throughout the winter months with a powerful 397th "five" winding up the season on 10 March by out-playing the title-holding 399th Infantry, 39-30.

The early Southland spring hastened competition in baseball, softball, and golf. Opening league baseball game was played on 30 April against the Post's 55th FA Bn. with all the fanfare of a major league classic. Gen. Burress, at bat for the opening pitch, with post commander Gen. Kennedy in the box, clouted a slashing single over second base. The 100th won 8-5 behind the fireball hurling of Sgt. Bill Grant.

Important as a morale factor were the newspapers of the Division. The *Century Sentinel*, which had published throughout maneuvers, resumed its faithful reporting of division activities. Two unit papers, the 100th Signal Company *Guidon* and the 399th Infantry's *Powder Horn* also made their appearance. The *Powder Horn*, like the *Sentinel*, had maintained publication in the maneuver area, printing in Nashville. The 398th's *On the Alert* was resurrected after an eight months lapse.

Because of the demand for replacements on the fighting fronts, large numbers of Centurymen who had

been with the Division since activation were transferred to Army Ground Forces Replacement Depots for overseas duty. Six hundred of these men left the 100th on 4 March. This loss was more than balanced on 31 March, however, when 4,000 "fillers" from the disbanded ASTP became members of our division.

The preponderance of these "college boys" had had little more than basic training, and even this rudimentary knowledge had been negated by the fact that they had been engaged in specialized study for almost a year. Many of the "Quiz Kids" were frightened and a bit overawed at joining what they considered a "Veteran" division. Some few were somewhat resentful at the interruption of their studies. The most part, though, were bright, young men willing to learn and eager to make the grade.

Old-timers in the Century spent long and tedious hours teaching the recruits how to roll packs, pitch tents, and perform other fundamentals of soldiering. In order to bridge the gap between our advanced training stage and that of the former ASTP's special training battalions were formed within the regiments. Two thousand of the newcomers left the Division as overseas replacements two weeks after arrival, but those who remained proved themselves capable soldiers as well as students, and within a few months they were marching and training with the best of us.

Officer transfers and big order shipments also hit the commissioned grades. Strength of officer personal dropped from 921 in January 1944 to 648 at the end of April. Largest shipment occurred on 24 April when 120 officers left the Century for an overseas replacement depot.

Most important of the staff changes during the period were the appointment of Lt. Col. Byron C. De La Mater as division Adjutant General and Lt. Col.



Walter E. Moses as acting division Chief of Staff. Col. Moses replaced Col. Larry Zimmerman who died suddenly on 30 January.

With the end of April, the first phase of our post maneuver training came to a close. Seventeen months had passed since we had joined the Century Division at Ft. Jackson, and fostered by the constant drain of division personnel for replacements, rumor grew that the 100th would never be sent overseas. "We'll never go over as a division," fretted the gossips. "This is a 4-F outfit." We didn't know that five months later we would be boarding a boat for Marseilles. Several crack German divisions would have been worrying overtime also if they could have foreseen how those "4Fs" would fight.

Supplemental Training Period

The second phase of our post maneuver training, extending over a period from 1 May to 26 August, served little purpose for those of us who had been members of the 100th since activation. After seventeen months of close order drill, squad problems, "D" exercises and maneuvers, we were as well trained as we ever would be. What knowledge we lacked could not be picked from the bones of obsolete bayonet drill.

It could only be found in the cries of the wounded, the concussion of 88's, and the tenseness which walks hand in hand with a night patrol behind enemy lines.

Insofar as newcomers to the Century were concerned, this review of training was quite necessary. Most of the replacements had had little more than basic training and in the cases of those of us who had recently joined the 100th from ASTP, even such elementary instruction was often found to be lacking.

But old Centurymen didn't like the Supplemental Training Period. To us, learning how to sight an M-1 at that late stage was like coaching a Cape Cod fisherman on how to row a boat across a pond. Hadn't we sweated through a Carolina summer and survived a Tennessee winter? Hadn't we stormed Gaddys Mountain under live ammunition, fired for record three times, lived in the wilderness, marched 25 miles in eight hours? What kind of chicken was this?

Then, there was this business of replacements. It isn't very conducive to good morale to see your outfit torn asunder platoon by platoon. Oh, the new "kids" were okay, but they had a long way to go. Somehow, they weren't the old gang—best bunch of fighting men who ever pulled on a service shoe. We swelled with pride as letters from former Centurymen began trickling back from the fighting fronts.

"Heard from Johnny Sloan today. He's in Italy."

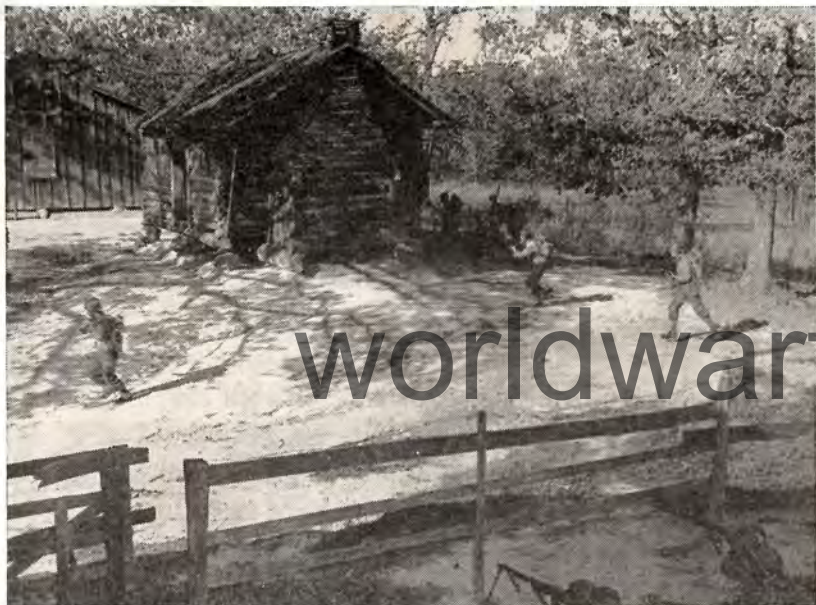
"Joe Gluck's in England. He made Sergeant in the paratroops."

"You remember Tony Parella? Landed in Normandy on D-day. Was hit in the leg. He says—"

"Where d'yu think Bob Clark is? The poor bastard wound up on New Guinea. Doin' awright, though. Got the DSC."

Of course, he was doing all right. They all were doing all right. None of us expected anything else. They had come from the 100th, hadn't they? They had trained with us, sweated with us, double-dated with us, got drunk with us. It takes more than training to build a fighting division. It takes the kind of





Review in storming fortified positions paid dividends later.



The stubby 105 mm Infantry cannon proved a potent weapon.

friendship which will make a man risk his life so that his friend can live. It takes confidence and loyalty and devotion—and time.

In our own way, those of us who continued with the 100th at Bragg, were doing all right, too. We were doing the job the War Department had temporarily assigned us. Our efforts were holding wide the flood-gates through which streamed the trained replacements necessary to maintain our fighting efficiency on the world's battlefronts. Between January 1943 and August 1944, for example, we sent 14,636 Century-trained enlisted men and 1,460 officers to replacement depots—the equivalent of a full division of enlisted men and sufficient officer personnel to staff two divisions.

At the same time, with the 100th kept more or less up to strength through the medium of "fillers" from ASTP, the Air Corps, Coast Artillery, AAA, and other arms of the Service which had suffered fewer casualties than anticipated, we continued to weld a division which would be prepared to take the field at a moment's notice. This was a period in which all emphasis was placed upon the Infantry. After considerable vacillation as to the effectiveness of the Infantryman in modern war, it was suddenly discovered that Air Corps bombings, while effective, could not smash resistance or hold territory. Armored units played an important part in the attack, but were impotent in defensive situations and vulnerable without support of the Infantry. Almost belatedly, came the call for the human, self-propelled secret weapon—the miniature fighting machine composed of 96 cents worth of chemicals—which could fire an M-1, throw a grenade, make a machine gun spit, climb a mountain, endure weather, ford streams, lay mines, hold ground and conquer

steel with flesh. The mud-slogger was finally coming into his own.

Key Century officers were also affected by the speed up in our war strategy. Col. Mark McClure, chief of staff since activation, was transferred to the 95th Div. where he became Divarty commander. His post was filled by Col. Richard G. Prather who had been assistant commandant of the Armored School at Fort Knox.

Lt. Col. Jack Mallepell replaced Maj. John A. Allgair as commander of the 325th Engineer Bn.

Lt. Col. Clifton H. Forbush, G-1, left to join Fourth Army Hq. He was succeeded by Maj. William V. Rawlings, former assistant G-3.

Col. Edwin E. Keatly assumed command of the 398th Infantry after Col. Robinson E. Duff left the 100th to become assistant division commander of the 10th Light Div.

Lt. Col. Horace W. Whitly was appointed 325th Medical Bn. CO and Division Surgeon, replacing Lt. Col. Don S. Wenger.

Lt. Col. Paul S. Reinecke, Jr., G-2, who had left the 100th late in February for observer duty in the G-2 section of the Fifth Army in Italy, returned to the Century after an absence of three months. Col. Reinecke had seen action in southern Italy and on the Anzio beachhead.

Dotting the entire four-month Supplemental Training Period was a host of special missions and formations in which we all took part. First of these occurred on 18 May when 20 representatives of the Allied and neutral press witnessed a massed attack demonstration staged by the 398th RCT which poured 110 tons of ammunition into assumed enemy positions. Present at this and other combat previews were writers from



We were taught close co-ordination with supporting armor.



The engineers learned their intricate job the hard way.

Australia, Canada, England, China, Russia, French Africa, and Switzerland.

During the last week in May, a special command post exercise was held at A.P. Hill Military Reservation, 15 miles from Fredericksburg, Virginia. Participating in this rehearsal of field administration was the Century Division Headquarters and those of the 78th Div., 13th Airborne Div., and the entire XIII Corps Hq. Representatives of the 100th travelled by truck convoy with a stop en route at Camp Lee, Va. Regular combat procedure in communications, handling of messages, and other forms of battle operation were maintained. "Breaks" in the problem were permitted over the first week-end and on the following Thursday, enabling Century personnel to visit Washington, some 60 miles north of the reservation.

Less than a month later, we were accorded our greatest honor since activation when a composite battalion of Centurymen was chosen to represent the Army Ground Forces in a celebration marking the nation's first Infantry Day. Commanded by Lt. Col. John King of the 397th Infantry, the battalion traveled to New York City and was billeted at Camp Shanks. The event, planned to fall on the initiation of the Fifth War Loan Drive, was publicized with Bond rallies at Times Square and throughout New York's five boroughs. With the 100th Division band in the van, the 1,200 picked Centurymen marched up Fifth Avenue from 40th to 82nd Streets on Sunday, 11 June, followed by token forces from the Navy and Auxiliary units.

On 15 June, Infantry Day, the battalion paraded up lower Broadway to City Hall where they were greeted by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. Most of the Centurymen returned to Ft. Bragg toward the latter

part of June, but a special platoon remained in New York an additional four weeks to act as an honor guard at daily retreat ceremonies held at Radio City.

Meantime, those of us who were not parading in New York were doing our bit for the 5th War Loan in the area around Ft. Bragg. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 399th Infantry, combined to push the sale of bonds in Fayetteville by marching down the main streets of the town and forming in front of the historic Market House where addresses were delivered by Army and Naval officers as well as civilian celebrities.

Troops of the 3rd Battalion 397th Infantry, journeyed to Wilson, N. C., while a fourth ceremony, involving a reinforced company from the 398th Infantry, was held in the town of Clinton.

On the morning of Infantry Day, the division formed on the 398th's drill field for appropriate observance. Five Soldier's Medals were presented. Four awards were won by enlisted men of the 398th Infantry for heroism in rescuing five men from a burning plane. The fifth award was pinned on Lt. Sam F. Dunlap of the 397th Infantry for his part in extricating two officers and ten soldiers from a dangerous swamp at Ft. Jackson.

Although primarily intended as a period of review, even veteran Centurymen profitably absorbed training innovations of this supplemental phase. A program of "water training" at Myrtle Beach, S. C., which was to teach us swimming and beach landing, was abandoned because of the pressure of other required instruction after the Artillery and 325th Engineer Battalion had completed the course.

During July and August, every Infantry combat platoon in the division underwent firing tests to determine its proficiency in various categories of combat



Century jeeps pass in review during Infantry Day parade in New York.



7th War Loan gets plug from 100th Division band at Radio City rink.

operation. This series of small unit problems tested the tactics, leadership, and fire efficiency of rifle, heavy machine gun, weapons, mortar, antitank, and cannon platoons. Stiff grading requirements were deliberately established so that borderline units would receive failing grades and be forced to repeat the tests. Highest score in rifle platoon efficiency was 89.0 percent, made by Co. G 397th Infantry; in weapons platoon, Co. B 399th Infantry, 92.6; in machine gun, Co. H 397th Infantry, 90.4; and in 57mm antitank fire, the 398th Infantry with 87.2.

One week in July was devoted to regimental combat team problems designed to iron out possible wrinkles in artillery-infantry liaison and coordination. Divided into four phases, the exercises entailed a daylight shuttle movement to an assembly area, a night blackout assembly, a night movement to relieve a front line unit, and a morning attack supported by all arms.

Dovetailing these varied training pursuits were detailed instruction and practical work on both Allied and enemy mines and booby traps; sniper fire with rifles equipped with telescopic sights; practice in firing the potent 57mm antitank gun; and coordinated infantry-artillery-tank exercises.

We continued to maintain our reputation as a "show" division when we played host to 60 executives of North Carolina textile concerns who "soldiered" with us for three days. The businessmen, 42-inch waistlines and all, arrived at Ft. Bragg on 11 July. Although no reason for this visit was announced in the Division or, so far as is known, to the cotton industrialists, a War Department official had advised several days earlier that cotton production had fallen off. The OPA, accordingly, had lifted the ceiling price on cotton textiles and the War Department feared that this

increase might influence the flow of badly needed cotton goods from Army channels to civilian outlets. The cotton textile bigwigs were thereupon invited to visit with us and see for themselves the good use to which the product of their looms was being put.

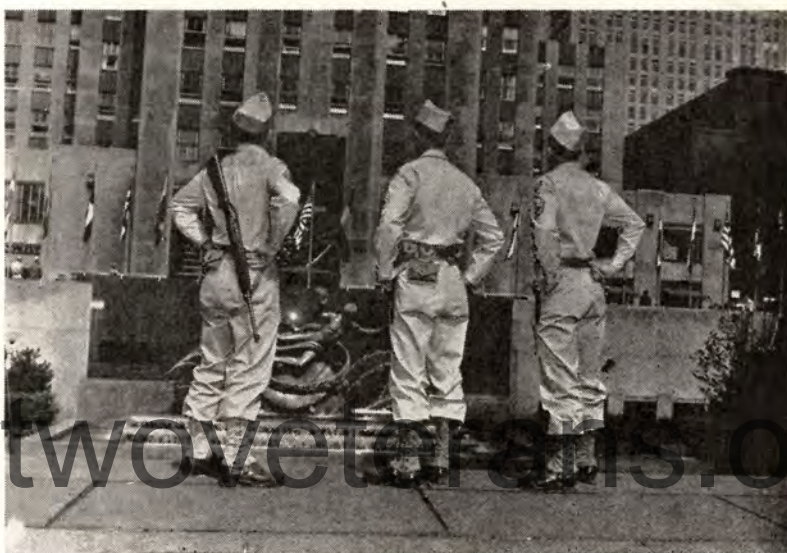
The whole affair smacked of a salesmen's convention in Omaha, but we dressed the industrialists in fatigues, fed them Army chow, demonstrated hand-to-hand combat, bazooka firing, etc., permitted them to purchase in our PX, and showed them as good a time as our facilities would permit. They, in turn, gave us a preview of what the Volksturm would look like.

The Philadelphia transit strike caused the 100th to be assigned its fourth important mission outside of training. Faced by a walkout of some 5,000 workers in defiance of a government order to maintain transportation facilities because of the wartime emergency, Washington called upon the Century to aid in operating street cars, subways and busses so that war workers could get to their jobs. The order arrived during the afternoon of August 5th, and by midnight 113 Centurymen, mostly former auto mechanics, servicemen, brakemen and conductors, under command of Capt. W. H. Hanson, 399th Infantry, had entrained for Philadelphia. Upon arrival in the City of Brotherly Love, however, the 100th Div. transportation specialists found that the union had ordered all men back to work with operation guaranteed to resume at 0001 Monday, 7 August. Nevertheless, the special force of Centurymen set up in the Philadelphia Cargo Port of Embarkation, ready for any emergency.

The 100th transport specialists remained in Philadelphia for two weeks before the danger was past. On 18 August, the detachment returned to Ft. Bragg, having responded to our government's call on ten-hour notice, although fortunately, no action was necessary.



Lucy Munroe sings national anthem while Gen. Miller presents arms.



Soldiers of Century take time out to rubber at wonders of Gotham.

In the interim, a long-awaited call finally came to the Century Division. On 10 August 1944, we were alerted for shipment to the European Theater of Operations. Most of us did not know of the history-making event until several days later. But with the official announcement that we would soon be facing the enemy in quarterless combat, a feeling of tenseness and urgency swept over us. Last minute training assumed added importance. We found ourselves taking new interest in the members of our platoon, section and battery—appraising ourselves as fighting men, weighing potentialities and probable reactions in combat.

The stakes were high, but what we saw made the gamble worth while. With older Centurymen acting as a cadre, replacements who had filled the ranks of the 100th were ready. Four months had made a great difference in the capabilities of these men. Under the expert and devoted tutelage of experienced NCO's, the "kids" had hardened physically and mentally. They had brought youth and intelligence to our division; factors which when added to the confidence and knowledge of those of us who had been carefully trained for almost two years, made a combination which would be hard to beat.

Our assurance grew with the issue of new clothing and equipment. Strangely, on the eve of our departure, we found ourselves calm and resolute—more annoyed with the interminable inspections than the fighting qualities of the enemy, more concerned with the restriction of personal items to five pounds than with our prospects for returning in one piece.

One day after our alert, Lt. Gen. Ben Lear, AGF commander, who had succeeded Lt. Gen. McNair, killed several weeks before in France, spent two days inspecting the Century. Characteristically, Gen. Lear was publicly non-committal as to his impressions. But

whatever the good general thought did not bother the rank and file of Centurymen overmuch. We were ready and we knew it.

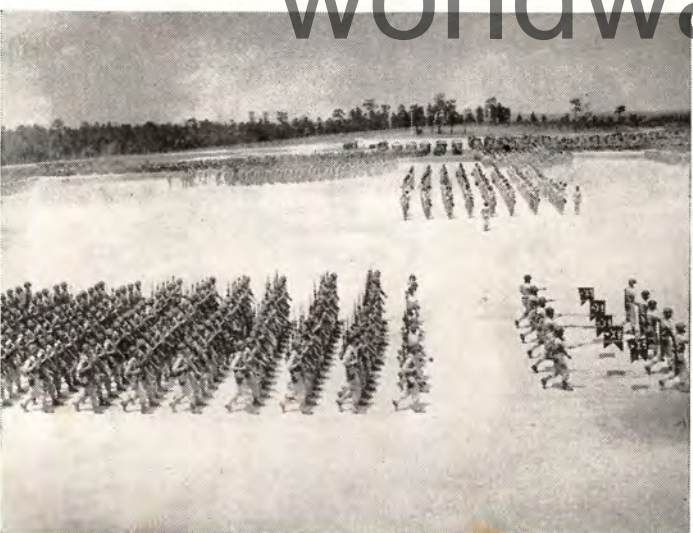
Last minute preparations rushed to conclusion. Unit dance bands, which had entertained us for the past four months and had staged a thrilling "Battle of Music" in which the 399th Infantry band won the judges acclaim as best in the division, packed their instruments. The *Century Sentinel* and unit newspapers closed shop. Lids were nailed on the seemingly endless rows of crates stamped TAT. There was the last minute exodus of wives bound for home, the clinging embrace of lovers, and we intrepidly awaited the order to move out.

Our Advance Detachment left Ft. Bragg for the New York Port of Embarkation on 20 September 1944. Four days later, to the accompaniment of martial strains from the 100th Division band, first elements of the Century, carrying full field packs and horseshoe rolls, boarded the long line of waiting Pullmans and flopped onto prearranged seats. For several moments the inspiring tunes which had paced our steps on uncounted reviews across the drill fields of Bragg and Jackson were drowned in the cacophony





Maintaining our reputation as a "show division," the 100th struts in last states-side review. Take a good look, West Point, here's marching we defy anyone to surpass.



of grunts and curses as we shifted duffle bags in an effort to make ourselves comfortable. Then, noses and foreheads pressed to windows, we watched Ft. Bragg hide behind a curve in the railroad. By 30 September, all units had closed into our Staging Area at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

Kilmer, Marseilles, and Front

*Our battle is more full of names than yours,
Our men more perfect in the use of arms,
Our armour all as strong, our cause the best;
Then reason will our hearts should be as good.*
—Henry IV.

If the point system of discharge had functioned as efficiently and speedily as our final processing at Camp Kilmer, even a Congressman up for re-election would have had nothing to say. He barely would have had time to gasp before we were bound for the ETO.

There was an atmosphere of urgency about the huge Staging Area which quickened the beat of our hearts even as we stumbled from the Pullmans and, burdened by our equipment, lined up on the long, cement platform. A full-tilt drive against time could be sensed in the officious bustling of the Transportation Corps officers, seen in the camouflaged buildings, felt in the damp breeze which hurdled the Atlantic and seemed to whisper, "Hurry, your friends are dying. They need you in the fight."

The double-decker barracks were something of a surprise. Many of us had expected to live in tents. But we did not spend much time day-dreaming. Kilmer operated on a 24-hour basis and there was no overtime for night work. Reveille was before daylight and lectures, inspections, and last minute preparations generally continued until long after dark.

Rumors soon began flying thick and fast when it was learned that the sailing orders of the Advance Party, which had preceded us to the POE, had been changed at the zero hour. Although our original destination was not generally known in the Division, the plan had been for us to land in England.

Because of a revision in strategy, however, our division was suddenly ordered to Marseilles. At 2241 hours of 26 September, therefore, a small advance detachment consisting of nine officers (Gen. Miller, Col. De Lange, Lt. Col. Reinecke, Jr., Lt. Col. Eckland, Lt. Col. Stegmaier, Lt. Col. De La Mater, Lt. Col.

Training in use of the flame-thrower and all-important rifle grenade put final polish on combat preparations at Ft. Bragg. Top, a hit mushrooms like an atom bomb.

Kemble, Jr., Lt. Col. Walker and 1st Lt. Hudson) took off from the New York Port of Aerial Embarkation, La Guardia Field, for Marseilles, France. The air route followed on the 6191-mile flight was via Newfoundland, the Azores, Casablanca, Oran, Algiers, Naples, and Corsica to Marseilles. The trip consumed 33 hours and 58 minutes. An American transport carried the party as far as Naples where they boarded a British plane for the balance of the flight to Marignane Field, Marseilles. The remainder of the original advance party rejoined the Division at Camp Kilmer on September 27.

The interminable clothing inspections which were interrupted when we left Ft. Bragg were resumed at Kilmer the day after our arrival. Re-hash lectures were conducted on safeguarding military information and instructions were disseminated on our rights under the Geneva Convention in the event we were taken prisoner. No one mentioned that the Nazis weren't adhering to many phases of that humane agreement.

Abandon Ship Drill was a highlight in our final preparations. Realistic "props" had been set up to represent a transport, complete with a water-filled moat on which floated an actual life-boat. The idea was for us to clamber safely down a cargo net and into the boat without taking a bath. This exercise was followed by an engrossing lecture on how to survive a shipwreck by means of the ingenious and compact emergency equipment stored on a life-raft. The balance of the day was taken up with immunization "shots" and a long hike to a field where we were instructed on how to board the trains which were to carry us to the POE.

The telephone operators received little respite during our brief stay at Kilmer. We waited in patient queues while the co-operative employees made every effort to reach our loved ones for what they and we knew would be our last conversation with wives, mothers, and sweethearts for months to come.

All Centurymen will remember the day of the great "physical" examination at Kilmer. Separated into companies, we trooped into a long, one-story shack bare of furnishings with the exception of a partition which divided the structure into dressing and examination rooms. In the examination room, several medical officers sat waiting. A medic non-com stuck his head into the dressing room.

"You will strip down to your shoes," he ordered.





"As soon as you are ready, you will file past the medical officers and do as you are told. And make it snappy!"

We removed our clothes as quickly as possible and began to pass before the board of review. By the time the first ten of us had entered the examination room, we were running. So help us God, we were running! The examination reminded one of the antics of a football player warming up. We stooped over, straightened up, stuck our tongues out, and began dressing again. Two men failed to pass. One had found the time to stick his tongue out all the way and was diagnosed as suffering from a case of hemorrhoids. The second, was inadvertently discovered to have a hole through his head.

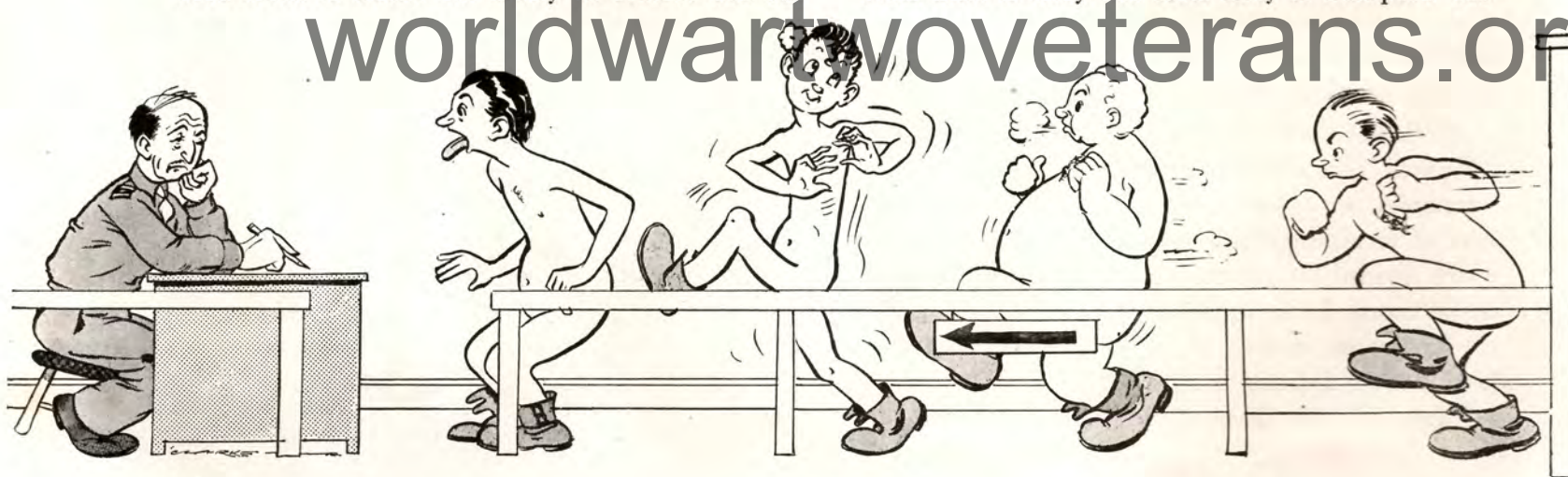
Issue and instruction in use of the light-weight gas mask and distribution to all personnel of two extra blankets, a mattress-cover shroud, four pairs of ski-socks, and one pair of shoe-packs, gave rise to our last rumor on home soil. We were certain we were destined to make a beach landing on Norway.

Twelve-hour passes to nearby New York City were permitted until 0600 of 3 October when the division was alerted, and all passes and telephone calls from camp were terminated. Every possible measure had been taken to insure our safety in combat and our

eventual victory. Well trained, toughened physically and mentally for a kind of hell which would have made the devil wince, we were ready to take the best our enemies had to offer. The rest was in the hands of God and a nebulous phantom termed Luck.

Late in the afternoon of 5 October, the entire division, comprising 762 officers, 44 warrant officers, and 13,189 enlisted men, began the exodus from Camp Kilmer. The first part of our trip was comparatively easy. Our duffle bags had been transported by truck to waiting trains and all we had to carry was a 70-pound pack with horse-shoe roll, rifle, overcoat, cartridge belt, and steel helmet. It was upon arriving at the rail terminus in Jersey City, that our troubles began. We were now confronted with the problem of walking approximately one-quarter of a mile to the Communipaw Avenue ferry slip with a duffle bag weighing in excess of 100 pounds in addition to our initial load.

Knees buckling, sweat pouring down spines and faces in tiny rivulets, we staggered toward the ferry under loads which in many cases were heavier than their bearers. How unfortunate for the peace of the world that Germans had not been equipped by American standards and been forced to walk that last mile from train to ferry and from ferry to transport. The





Innovation of the Infiltration Course gave us our first taste of what it feels like to advance under fire. A couple of enterprising Philadelphia lawyers could have increased their income considerably making up last wills and testaments.

Nazi Superman myth would soon have dissolved into a caldron of perspiration. Before we had reached the ferry most of us deeply regretted that extra five pounds of personal equipment we had crammed into our duffle bags.

The ferry-ride across the Hudson to the New York bank was of about thirty minutes duration, and we worshipped every second of it. By the time we had tied up at the slip in mid-town Manhattan, we had regained sufficient strength to lift our equipment and totter forward. Ashore, we were greeted by a band and a long flight of stairs which led to the pier. The band was bad but the stairs were worse. Somehow, we managed to climb to the pier and reach the end of the dock where we lined up according to the numbers chalked on our helmets, dropped our duffle bags, and waited the signal to board ship.

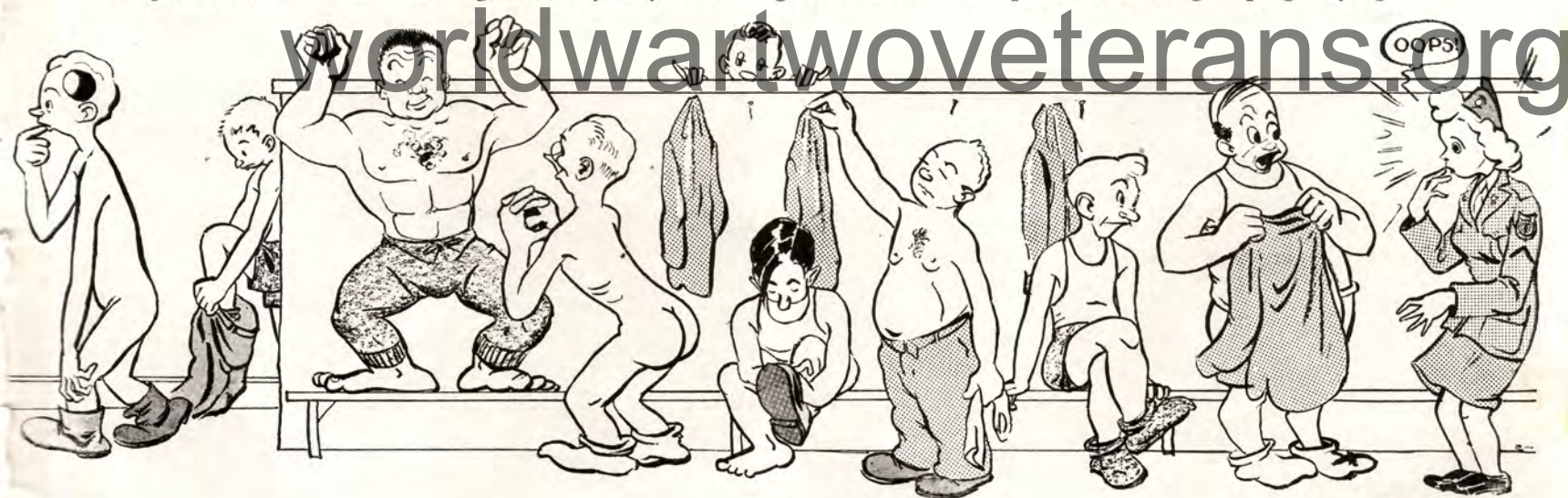
The Red Cross workers were there, of course, dispensing the inevitable coffee and doughnuts. Trim and neat in their well-tailored uniforms, they rushed back and forth with fresh pots of coffee in that officious and business-like manner women will adopt at such moments. They thought they understood how we felt, but they didn't. Not even a woman can understand the complex emotions of men leaving a country they love

without knowing whether or not they will return. Sooner or later the ladies in field-grey would expend their supply of doughnuts. Then, they would go home.

Slowly, we began filing up the gangplank, onto the steel main deck, and down into the holds which had been converted into sleeping quarters by the simple expedient of erecting tiers of iron frames over which strips of canvas had been roped. We have no doubt that the designer of those "beds" was a patriot to the core and that his object was to crowd as many troops as possible into available bottoms. But there must either have been a sadistic streak in his character, or an error in his figures relative to the necessary space between bunks. Sleeping on one's back for fifteen nights with a canvas-covered butt pressing into one's face is not very conducive to restful slumber, effortless breathing, or morale.

For the first night, at least, the hard, hammock-like bunks didn't bother us too much. We were so exhausted that we could have slept on rocks. We had expected to find ourselves on the high seas next morning, but we awoke to discover that we were still in port.

The fact that we were ordered to remain below, however, warned us that we soon would be leaving the great harbor. We spent the time gossiping, trying





vainly to stack our equipment so that we would have enough space to move through the aisles sideways, and straining our ears and senses for the first sign that our ship was moving.

At last, with a display of power which sent vibrations through every steel plate from bow to stern, the giant screws began turning. Like an enraged herd of bulls preparing to charge a foe, the great ships snorted, backed from the pier into mid-stream, and headed toward the mouth of the Hudson.

With the precision of well-trained soldiers, the 11 ships comprising our convoy, fell into pre-arranged positions. One destroyer and four destroyer escorts, joined us with the unexpectedness of legerdemain, and at 0930 hours of 6 October, we passed Miss Liberty and headed for the open sea and the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles.

Troops of the 100th Division occupied four transports, the *George Washington*, *George Gordon*, *Mc-*

Andrews and *Mooremac Moon*. Major units carried on the seven remaining ships were the 103rd Infantry Division and the Advance Party for the 14th Armored Division.

By the time permission was granted for us to come up on deck, some Centurymen were feeling the first nausea of seasickness. The sea was comparatively calm, however, and most of us were too excited by the limitless expanse of grey-blue water to give much thought to our stomachs. We had seen this scene a thousand times in moving pictures and Sunday roto-gravure supplements: the sleek, grey destroyers, their outlines broken by camouflage, zig-zagging through the mist; the perfect marine composition of the evenly spaced transports; the worrying blimp and hawk-eyed PBYS. Now we were part of it. A chill of pride crept up and down our spines as we lined the rail and watched the unchanging scene. Despite bottomless seas, submarine wolf packs, and the gibes of tyrants, we were adding our weight toward the achievement of victory. Even the cynics and the pessimists smiled. Here, before us, was only an iota of the power of America.

Chow was an experience. Those of us who could eat, lined up around the deck twice daily and descended the almost vertical, ladder-like steps to the kitchen where meal tickets were punched and our mess-kits were filled.

The interesting part about eating aboard ship was that one could never be quite certain whether or not he would reach the tables with half a meal or none at all. This suspense was generally made worse for those of us aboard the smaller transports where the problem of retaining what food we swallowed soon became a major one.

The days were spent leisurely and details were not too numerous if one could find a comfortable place to hide. Both deck and rail space were at a premium, the latter for obvious reasons. French and German classes



were conducted daily. Entertainment was furnished by unit bands, soldier actors, boxing matches and the thrill which comes with holding four aces. Gambling was forbidden, but it is remarkable what an excellent medium of exchange match-sticks will make. Moving pictures were shown every night, and for the price of a seven-course meal at the Waldorf one could generally talk a crew member into supplying a Spam sandwich for a midnight snack.

We were six days out of New York when the hurricane hit us. Described by veteran sailors as the worst storm in 17 years, we battled the mountainous seas for 24 hours before being forced to change course and run with the gale. At one point, the 8,000-ton *McAndrews* came within five degrees of capsizing and later that night narrowly missed colliding with the 26,000-ton *Washington*. The storm raged for 48 hours before spending itself. By the time it was over, the retching of the sick had almost drowned the roar of the sea. Even those of us blessed with gyroscope stomachs didn't eat very much. With all ports and hatches necessarily sealed against the furious waves, and no one permitted on deck, the air in the holds soon became foul and stagnant. On the smaller ships, men prayed unashamedly as the sea swallowed us and then spewed us up again like feathers swirling in a cataract. Then, as suddenly as it had descended upon us, the hurricane gave up the fight, leaving only a trail of excited, grey-green water to mark its passing. The clouds parted to reveal a patch of blue, like a shirt-sleeve peeking through a worn, grey cloak. Hatches were opened and we rushed on deck. For the first time since we had left port, we began to feel like veteran sailors.

As if realizing they had been bested, the weather remained clear and the sea calm for the next four days. Time passed slowly. We were kept informed of world events by daily mimeographed newspapers, published aboard most of the transports. The unchanging panorama of ships and heaving sea, became unbearably



Sleeping on one's back for 15 nights with a canvas-covered butt pressing into one's face is not very conducive to restful slumber.

monotonous. Even the excitement of dodging the "men with the hose"—the sailors on cleanup detail who indiscriminately soaked decks and unwary passengers—lost its humor. We began to gripe about rifle inspections, gas mask drill, physical training. We chafed at the close quarters, the long chow-lines, the difficulty of making soap lather in the salt water showers.

And then, on the afternoon of the twelfth day, with one shouted word, we forgot salt water, forgot griping, forgot even the war and seasickness. Dead ahead, rising out of the sea like a huge, white fog-bank, was land. Land! For a moment, at least, we were explorers. We were Columbus, Balboa and Magellan. We were Hudson, Drake and Vespucci, adventurers discovering the Old World anew. Shouting, cheering, singing, and shaking each other's hand, we lined the rails and peered through the mist for the first clear sight of the shoreline.

Like a colossal frieze molded before our eyes by a giant, invisible hand, the formidable cliffs of the African coast took shape and color. Signaling orders, the destroyers closed in, and we glided past the ancient



city of Tangiers and sailed proudly into the narrow waters of the Strait of Gibraltar. Hugging the coast of Africa, we watched the lights of Ceuta blink a cheerful welcome to starboard. From the Spanish shore, the electric bulbs of a tiny fishing village twinkled like grounded yellow stars, and as night hid the European coastline, mighty Gibraltar loomed defiantly out of the darkness.

We continued to sail eastward through the night to a point off Algiers before turning north toward France. A high wind, which whipped the sea into bumpy whitecaps, caused even those of us with strong stomachs to experience sensations of nausea. The calm, blue Mediterranean can become most inconsiderate of travel posters and Chamber of Commerce advertisements, as Odysseus and Centurymen found out. Retching was in order again.

Word soon spread that we would reach Marseilles the following morning, 20 October. The eventful day dawned warm and clear. The gale had subsided, and a brilliant sun combined with a brisk breeze to turn the spray into myriads of aquamarines and send them skipping over the foam.

In mid-morning, gulls, the harbingers of land, began circling over our masts, diving to snatch bits of garbage from the sea. Huge masses of refuse floated past. Fishing boats and other small craft bobbed

around us like buoys. To port, a white hospital ship headed westward toward the ocean and home. We wondered about the occupants of that mercy ship, wondered what suffering it enclosed, what heroic stories its mangled cargo could tell. Wondered which of us would go home that way, too.

And then, with the queer, sliding sensation of sailing from an ocean into the still water of a lake, we were in the magnificent harbor of Marseilles. A pilot boat, flying the Free French flag and looking ludicrously tiny in comparison with our transport, tied up alongside us. The pilot came aboard while the crew, smiling and waving toil-worn hands, exchanged cheerful repartee with those of us who could speak French.

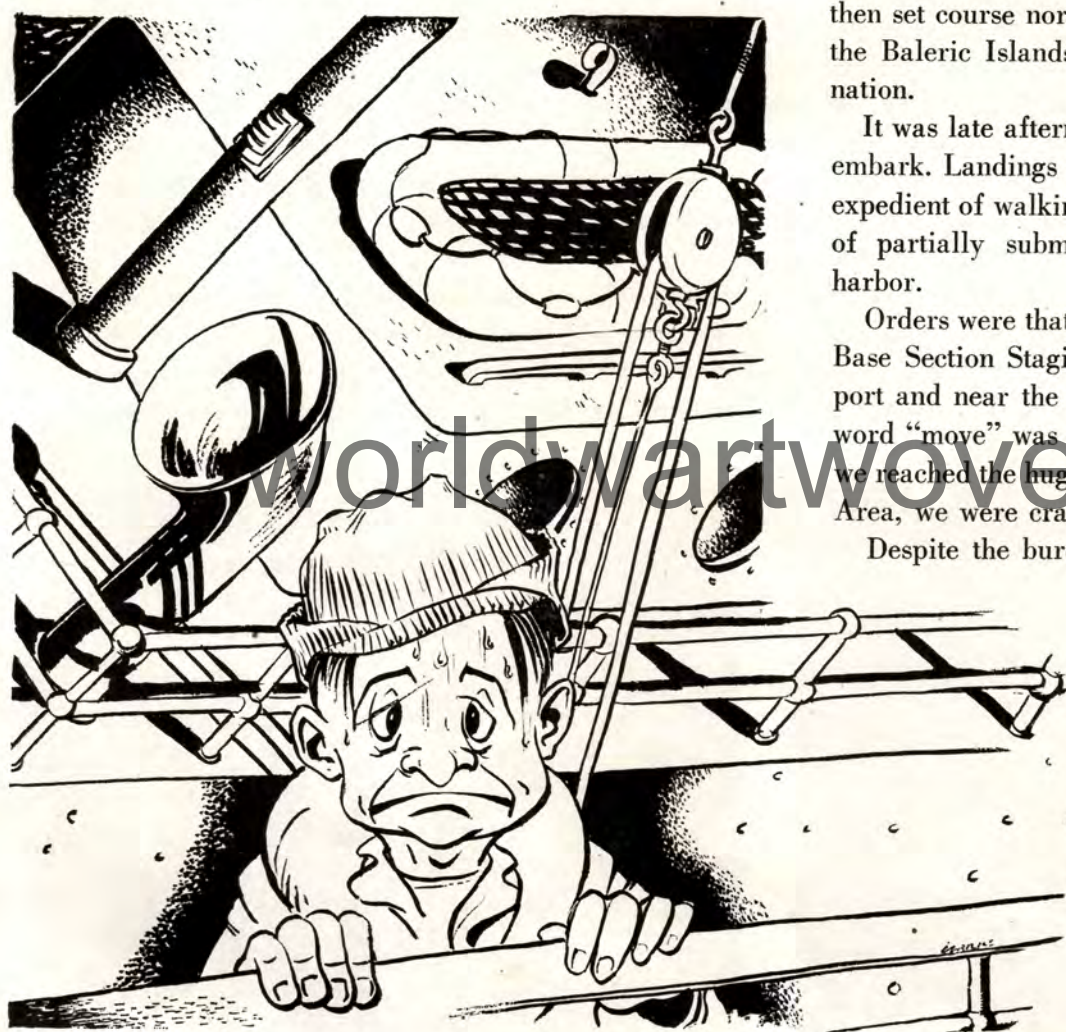
Slowly, the transports began moving in single file through a fairyland of tiny rock islets which spotted the harbor like giant stalagmites of white, blue and purple. Port facilities had been completely destroyed and we dropped anchor some distance off shore. Our 15-day voyage was over.

The general course of the convoy had been southeast for the first day out of New York, then due east, passing 180 miles south of the Azores to a point 70 miles off the coast of Casablanca. From here, we had turned north, sailed past Tangiers and thence eastward into the Mediterranean, continuing along the coast of Africa until we had reached Algiers. The convoy had then set course north again, passed south and east of the Balearic Islands, and, finally, reached our destination.

It was late afternoon before word was given to disembark. Landings were made by LCIs or the simple expedient of walking across planks laid over the hulls of partially submerged ships which cluttered the harbor.

Orders were that we move immediately to the Delta Base Section Staging Area, some 12 miles from the port and near the town of Septemes. The use of the word "move" was a deceitful misnomer. By the time we reached the huge plateau designated as the Staging Area, we were crawling.

Despite the burden of full-field packs with horse-



The calm, blue Mediterranean can become most inconsiderate of travel posters and Chamber of Commerce advertisements, as Odysseus and Centurymen found out.



shoe rolls, overcoats, helmets, rifles and cartridge belts the first few miles of the "Death March of Marseilles" were interesting to the point of causing us to forget the uphill road. The cosmopolitan aspect of the great city, accentuated by the colorful uniforms of colonial troops, caused even sophisticated New Yorkers to gape in wonder. There were picturesque, beaded curtained bars patronized by turbaned Gurkhas and red-fezzed Sengalese. Dirty little children dogged our steps begging "cigarette pour papa" or "chung-gum." Charcoal-burning automobiles coughed up the steep, cobblestone streets to be overtaken by careening, bell-clanging triple trolley cars crammed to bursting with civilians. Like soldiers the world over, we commented upon the women, taking note of their green, blue, orange and white tinted hair, whistling softly when we passed a girl with a pretty face or trim figure, comparing them generally with American girls.

But a man even loses interest in women after he has walked ten miles up the side of a mountain with 85 pounds of equipment on his shoulders. It was dark now. From the harbor came the hum of a plane followed by the staccato pump of ack-ack. Those were the first shots we had heard fired at an enemy. The war was very real now. Flat-footed, we plodded forward on legs which had turned into knotted rubber bands. Men began to drop back. "Breaks" came more frequently.

Finally, after marching approximately twelve miles, we left the road and cut cross-country over plowed fields. Just as it seemed we could not take another step, the order to break ranks was given. We had come to the end of the long march. Loosening our packs, we

dropped to the cold, wet ground. Those of us who had the ambition, opened K-rations, which we ate cold. Then, rolling ourselves in our blankets, and with the earth for a pillow, we shut our eyes to the stars.

We awoke next morning cold and wet from a rain which had fallen during the night. With the efficiency which comes from long months of training in the field, we pitched our pup-tents and began getting our area in order. Ours was the first full division arriving from the States to occupy the DBS Area, and facilities consisted of a series of plowed fields which, after several days of continuous rain and the pressure of thousands of GI boots, soon turned into shin-deep mud. Despite these handicaps, we made a satisfactory impression when Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, commander of the 6th Army Group, conducted a tour of inspection on 23 October.

Practice firing was instituted almost immediately, and this time there was a new ring to the reports of rifles and machine guns—new and reassuring. Oceans no longer separated us from the enemy. It was good to know we were ready.

The command to proceed northward came sooner than most had expected. On the morning of 29 October, with our transportation T/O bolstered by vehicles from the veteran 3rd and 45th Divisions, the 399th Infantry Combat Team began moving from the Staging Area by motor convoy toward the Seventh Army sector. The route of march followed the centuries-old invasion path up the valley of the Rhone River with overnight stops at Valence and Dijon.

Three days and some 500 miles from Marseilles,





Religious services were conducted on the rain-swept Delta Base hilltop.



Centurymen polish up their "shootin' arns" while awaiting the order to move up.



Removing protective cosmolene from heavy weapons after disembarking in France.

the 399th detrucked at the French hamlet of Fremi-fontaine in the foothills of the Vosges Mountains. Wearily, the 399ers dragged their equipment from the vehicles which had carried them on the last leg of their journey to the front lines, and waited patiently in the gathering darkness for the command to bivouac.

In the blacked-out village and surrounding woods, the men spoke in whispers, jumped at the sound of an approaching friend. We were so "green," we expected an attack momentarily even though we were five miles from the front lines. No one griped and even the customary wise-cracks and horseplay were lacking. There was no need for a command to dig-in. Security guards were posted and the 399ers rolled themselves in their blankets. Through the night, the big guns echoed loudly, illuminating the sky like flashes of heat lightning, while we conjectured as to whether the shells were "coming in" or "going out." But youth and tired bodies can overcome even the boom of death. The roar of the artillery soon blended into a lullabye.

The Vosges Mountains Campaign

That I may truly say with the hook-nosed fellow of Rome, I came, I saw, and overcame. —Henry IV.

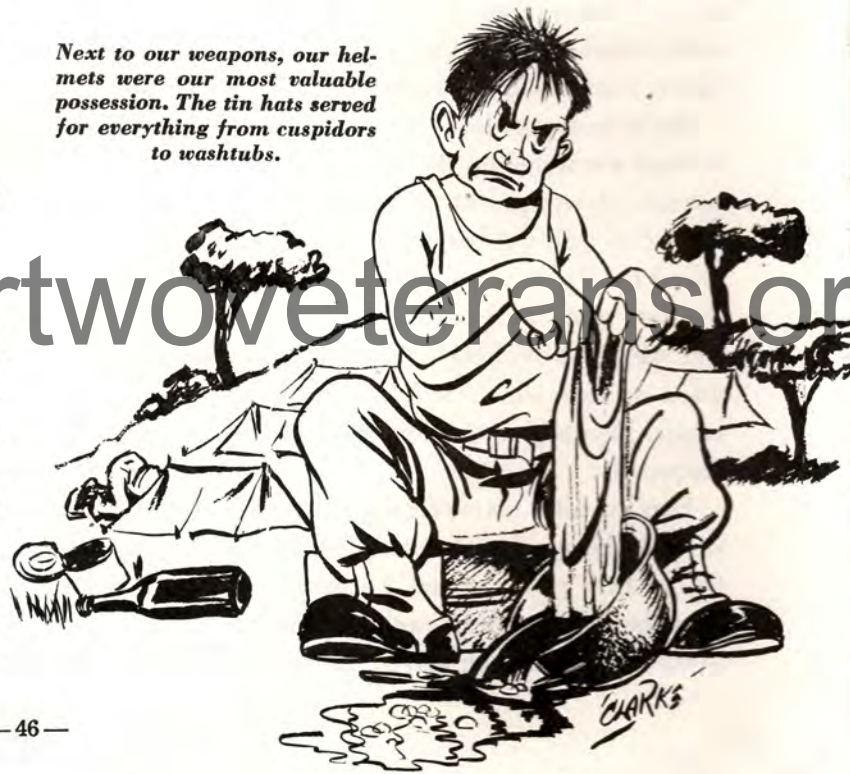
Long before dawn, the cooks were scurrying about, lighting gasoline stoves, preparing breakfast. Almost imperceptibly, like a tarantula stretching one of its multitudinous legs at a time, the regiment came to life. There was no sound of bugles calling reveille, no snarling 1st Sergeants, no "goofing off" while others did the work. This was 1 November, the day of our date with Destiny. A change comes over men at such a time; a change as miraculous as the transformation of a pumpkin into a gilded coach, with results even

more inspiring. For here was the miracle of the fellowship of man come true. There is neither time nor inclination to give thought to a man's antecedents or position in society when life is at stake. Foxholes are considerably more important.

The sun came up like a flaming red rocket, an unusual sight this time of year in the rain-swept Vosges foothills. Key officers and men who knew, expected the 399th to remain in this forward bivouac area until 3 November when relief of the 45th Inf. Div. was to be initiated. Orders from Seventh Army and VI Corps, under which the Century Division was to operate, had read with the usual official dryness: "Relief of 45th Inf. Div. by 100th Inf. Div. will be initiated on 3 November and completed not later than 9 November."

During the afternoon of 1 November, however, less than 24 hours after the 399th had arrived at Fremi-

Next to our weapons, our helmets were our most valuable possession. The tin hats served for everything from cuspidors to washtubs.





Hot towels and pretty manicurists were sadly lacking in this tonsorial parlor.



A couple of Centurymen demonstrate the delicate technique of helmet laundering.



There was a new ring to the reports of rifles and MGs—new and reassuring.

fontaine, orders were suddenly received from VI Corps instructing the 399th to move up immediately and begin relief of the battered 45th's 179th Inf. Regt. A hurried staff meeting was summoned by Col. Andrew C. Tychsen, 399th commander and veteran of 32 years military service. Excess equipment was gathered and stored. Last minute checks were made of weapons. And then, as the afternoon shadows began lengthening over the fields surrounding the Alsatian hamlet, a convoy of two and a half ton trucks moved out carrying the first regiment of Centurymen eastward into World War II and the opening engagement of the Vosges Mountains campaign.

The first combat experience of the 100th Division divides itself into two phases: the initial period from 1 to 12 November was, except for the action of the 399th Inf., a time of moving into position and of intermittent contact with the enemy; the second period of two weeks, following this preparation, saw the Century Division in force spearhead the attack along the whole Seventh Army front in a drive which snapped the hinge of the enemy's defense, forced him to abandon his intended "Winter Line," and sent him reeling back for more than 35 miles to Strasbourg.

The situation on the Seventh Army's front was none too promising for a sensational breakthrough in early November. The veteran 3rd and 45th Divs. were badly in need of reinforcements. Having battled northward from the Mediterranean coast of France, the Seventh had turned its attack eastward where it was forced to pause at the hitherto impenetrable barrier of the Vosges mountains which blocked the drive to the Rhine. Winter comes early in this region, and the snow and ice which soon was to carpet the treacherous mountain trails would have given pause to Hanni-

bal. The enemy had chosen his defensive terrain well, and had settled back in this mountain fastness secure in the belief that what had never before been accomplished in history would not meet with success now.

The sector which we were taking over from the 45th was probably among the worst for offensive operations on the entire Western Front. Extending from Baccarat on the left, through St. Benoit and St. Remy to the southeast, it encompassed a terrain heavily forested with ground which rose sharply to the east and included the formidable Meurthe River. Baccarat, straddling the Meurthe, had earlier been captured by the French. Its bridge, seized intact, was the only usable one across the river in this area. The remainder of the division front, though roughly parallel to the river, was still some distance to the west of it.

It was into this difficult strategic situation that the well-trained but battle-green Centurymen moved forward toward dusk of 1 November. At 1711 hours, Btry. B of the 925th F A Battalion, located near the town of Houssaras, and attached to the 160th F A Battalion of the 45th Div., fired the first round to be sent against the enemy by the 100th Div. That shot, hurled through the dimness of the late afternoon, was fired for registration of one of the battery's pieces. It was a sound which in the months to come was to be heard in a terrifying crescendo by the enemy.

During the next few days, Combat Team 9 was to establish a number of "Division Firsts": first to enter actual front-line positions, first to send patrols into enemy territory, first to make small-arms contact with the enemy, first to take a prisoner of war, first to stage an attack, first to take an enemy-held town—and first of a different sort—first to suffer casualties. For the initial days of November, therefore, the "Story of the

SUMMARY OF TACTICAL OPERATIONS IN THE VOSGES CAMPAIGN From November 9 to 24, 1944



Century” in combat is the story of CT-9 which entered the line while the rest of us moved up from Marseilles.

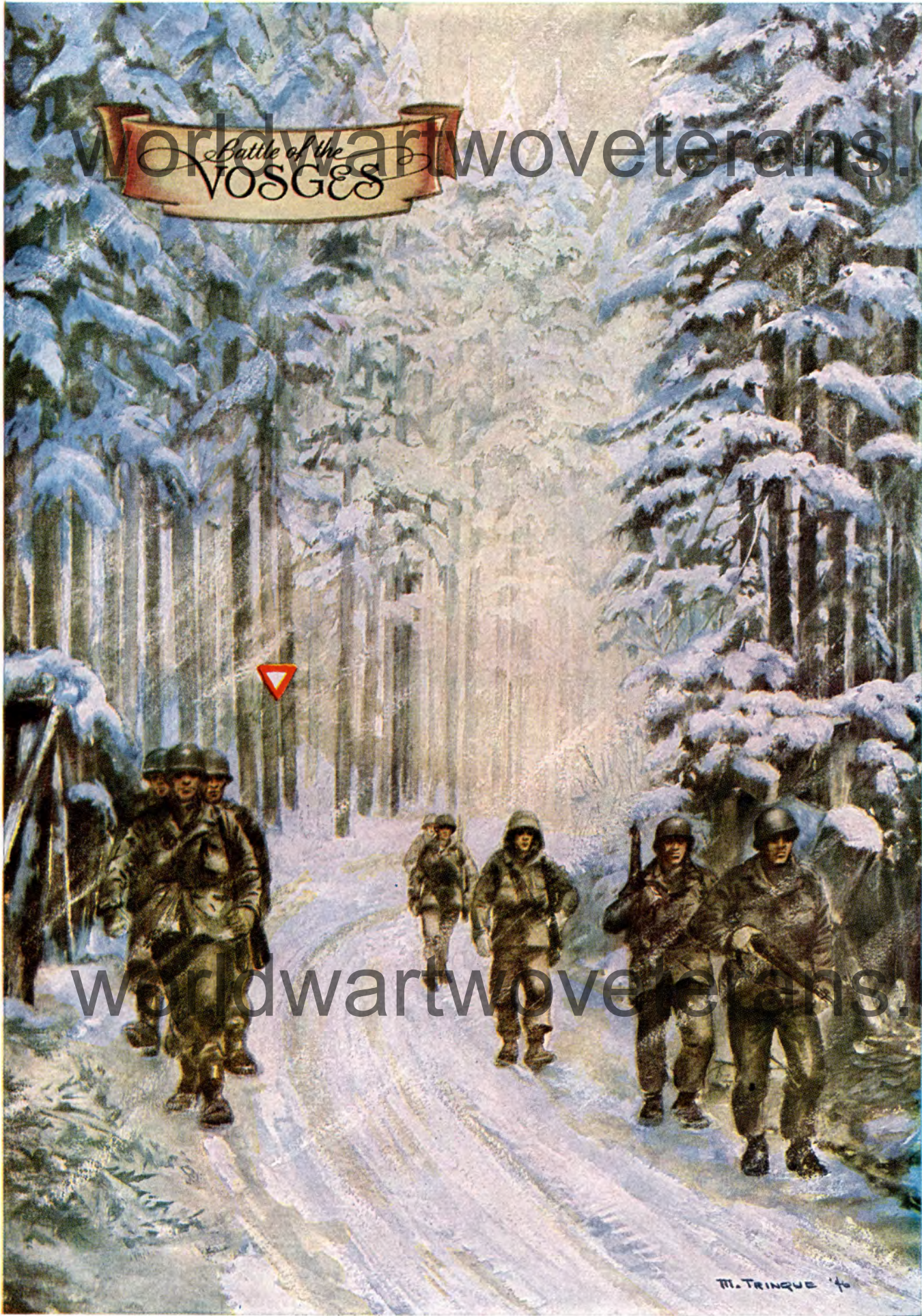
Operating under command of the 45th Div., the 399th began relief of the 179th Inf. Regt. in earnest at 0800 of 2 November. By 1910 hours, the 179th had completely withdrawn, and with command of the sector officially given over to Col. Andrew C. Tychsen, the Centurymen were on their own. Attached to the 399th were six tanks of Co. B 191st TD Battalion, two tank destroyers of Co. C 645th TD Battalion, two platoons of Co. C 83rd Chemical Battalion, and Co. C of the 325th Engineers. The 925th F A Battalion was officially attached on 3 November. This unit, together with the 898th AAA, completed the fighting strength of Combat Team-9.

The regimental front stretched from northwest to southeast through dense woods, the eastern end of the Forêt de St. Benoit. In front lay La Salle, at the head of an open valley split by a road leading north to St. Remy, two miles away. On this first day, no one tried to start a fight. The Centurymen wanted a few precious hours to adjust minds and bodies to the reality of front line combat. A contact patrol from the 3rd Battalion found Co. I 157th Inf., 45th Div., to the north, and a patrol from the 1st Battalion made contact with Co.

G 15th Inf., 3rd Div., to the south. With the 2nd Battalion in reserve, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were finding that enemy mortar shells burst without warning unless a man learns to recognize the soft cough of the mortar tube clearing its throat. One tank destroyer in support of the 3rd Battalion was knocked out when an enemy mortar shell scored a direct hit on its engine.

The 3rd day of November 1944 was the first day of actual combat for the 399th Inf. and for any unit of the division. Co. L sent out a combat patrol to look for the enemy to the front of the 3rd Battalion. As the patrol was going up Hill 416.9 a mile east of St. Remy, it approached a group of 14 men digging in on the slope. The patrol was less than 50 yards away when they suddenly realized that these were Germans digging in. The Co. L men opened fire, and immediately all hell broke loose as the enemy spattered the area with heavy fire from entrenched and strongly fortified positions. After a fire fight which lasted an hour, probably the longest hour in the lives of these soldiers, the Co. L patrol withdrew, minus three men. Later, with the aid of supporting weapons, the company was able to recover two of their casualties.

Co. B also sent out a patrol which returned at 0930 without having run into the enemy. The 1st Battalion



worldwartwoveterans.org

worldwartwoveterans.org



A tired dogface relaxes with a cigaret on a mountain of bedrolls after baptism of fire.



Soldiers of 399th Inf. enter La Salle, first European town to fall to troops of the 100th.

then began an advance, with Co. B and Co. C making a two-company front and Co. A in reserve. When the battalion had reached the edge of La Salle without meeting the enemy, Co. B entered the town at 1800 hours and organized defense positions for the night. Some hours later, near midnight, a German patrol was caught just to the north of the town. The leader and two enlisted men were killed before the patrol could withdraw.

Late in the morning of 4 November, the attack was renewed with the 1st Battalion pushing out of La Salle and heading northward through the open terrain toward St. Remy. Co. C took up a defense position to hold the road leading west from La Salle while Co. B moved off to spearhead the continued drive, with the other battalion units following.

Shortly after the battalion had crossed the IP, the enemy opened up with terrific artillery, mortar and small arms, creating great confusion. Informed of the hesitancy of the battle-green Centurymen, Lt. Col. Elery M. Zehner, battalion commander, who had been directing operations from his CP in La Salle, moved up to the forward elements of his command and began to reorganize the shaken units. Then, in full view of both his troops and the enemy, he stood up and began walking forward, waving for his men to follow. His tactics brought instant response, and the attack moved forward once more. The colonel remained at the head of his troops throughout the engagement and was among the first to enter St. Remy later that evening.

A regular army sergeant of the veteran 3rd Inf. Div., watching the progress of our initial attack from an observation post, saw part of this action. He did not see the efforts put forth by Col. Zehner in urging

the Centurymen forward. But he was so impressed by the courage of the 399ers in advancing through the intense enemy fire, that he wrote a commendatory report in which he expressed the hope that such a unit would continue to fight alongside the 3rd Div. for the remainder of the war. As he put it, "when the attack came, everything went ahead." He added that he and his comrades "looked on in admiration at the manner in which the attack was conducted and the technique employed."

While the battalion was advancing, Co. C was having troubles of its own at the La Salle road. Several groups of enemy had been bypassed as the battalion pushed on, and a well camouflaged machine gun began to harass the attacking troops, inflicting heavy casualties. 2nd Lt. Paul F. Lose was at the foot of Hill 372 with the 2nd Platoon, when the enemy opened fire. Lt. Lose began crawling forward over the muddy terrain, trying to work to the outer edge of the field of fire. After getting within ten yards of the position, the lieutenant rose in full view of the enemy and opened fire with his carbine, killing four of the Germans and forcing the rest to surrender.

The 399th entered St. Remy in force that evening and the regimental CP followed. But it was a hazardous position, because the enemy had withdrawn to the surrounding hills and was pouring mortar and machine gun fire into all sections of the town.

That night, the position of the regiment looked something like this: The 1st Battalion was holding the town's northern network of roads; the 3rd Battalion was located in the northwest section of town, and the 2nd Battalion was being held in reserve.

Some time during the night the rain stopped and



A panorama of the tiny village of La Salle as it appeared to the Centurymen driving toward their initial objective from the west.

5 November dawned cold but clear, giving the enemy perfect observation to lob his artillery and mortar shells into choice spots. Despite this hazard, most of the day was spent clearing roadblocks and mines from the area to the east of St. Remy. But late in the afternoon, the 1st Battalion 399th again jumped off on the attack; this time to the east. In the face of stiff enemy resistance, the 399ers gained ground south of the main highway leading to Etival. We were beginning to understand the ways of battle.

On the same day, the 925th F A Battalion moved up to Lorraine to continue its support of the Infantry and received its first counterbattery fire. The artillery battalion also suffered its first casualties when two men in Battery A were injured by a muzzle burst.

The 397th Inf., encamped in St. Helene, where most of the men were billeted in houses with the CP in the Catholic rectory, left these comforts on 5 November to move northeast to Baccarat, 21 kilometers away. There, the 3rd Battalion was the first unit of the regiment to go into line when part of its troops began the relief of the 179th Infantry of the 45th Division, the same regiment which the 399th had relieved in the Forêt de St. Benoit three days earlier.

The 398th Inf. was also moving into line, taking positions to the south of the 397th and northeast of St. Benoit. The 1st Battalion of the 398th was attached to the 157th Inf., 45th Div., and took over the foxholes of the 2nd Battalion of that outfit. For Co. A of the 398th, these positions were near the Bois de Repy while Co. C was on high ground just to the west of Raon L'Etape.

During the afternoon of 5 November, rain began to fall again, a rain which was to continue almost unceasingly for a week and then turn to snow. The men of the 1st Battalion 399th had made their short advance in the attack east from St. Remy and had dug in

for the night. Some of the foxholes were shallow and nearly all were without cover. But shallow or deep, covered or uncovered, they soon began to fill with cold, muddy water.

Mortar shelling from high ground to the east and north of St. Remy continued throughout the night and through the morning of 6 November. Then, just after noon, Co. I of the 399th resumed the attack to the northeast of St. Remy, intending to drive the enemy from his heights and make the town secure. This attack moved forward in an area to the north or left of the place where the 1st Battalion had made its advance the day before. Faced by resistance from the start, Co. I pushed doggedly forward through the woods and into a clearing. Here enemy mortar and machine gun fire was so intense that Co. I held up the advance and called for fire from Cannon Co. Accurate marksmanship with the stubby 105s broke enemy resistance but not before a number of Co. I men, including the Company Commander, had been wounded. The advance then continued until Co. I reached its objective, the little settlement of Pajaille, in mid-afternoon.

Meanwhile, in its sector, just to the south of the 3rd Battalion, the 1st Battalion had worked out a command liaison with the adjacent unit of the 3rd Div., so that the two units—1st Battalion 399th Inf. and 2nd Battalion 15th Inf.—could make a joint attack on Hill 372, one kilometer east of St. Remy, which gave the enemy clear fields of fire and observation. So long as the enemy held this hill he would continue to inflict heavy casualties on our troops and make it impossible either to hold St. Remy or to advance to the east. By moving through the 15th Inf. sector, Co. A of the 399th was able to attack to the northeast against this strongpoint. The assault ran into resistance as soon as the troops reached the woods at the foot of the hill, but Co. A, pushing forward in the chilly rain and against



A supporting tank takes time out to make a few hasty repairs during a lull in the fighting.



Mud on the Vosges Mountains trails was reminiscent of our maneuvers in Tennessee.



A platoon of 399ers prepares to hold some hard-won ground after two days of combat.

very heavy fire from enemy 88s, was finally successful in taking the objective.

Unable to continue to the north, Co. C turned east along the road leading out of St. Remy, attacking where Co. A had been held to a small advance the previous day. Enemy resistance was not too strong but a number of well placed machine guns were slowing progress.

Pfc. Charles W. Hoak was moving forward with the point squad of Co. C when a concealed machine gun opened fire and forced the entire company to take cover. Hoak didn't even bother to crouch. He began moving towards the enemy position firing his rifle from the hip, trying to drive the machine gunner away from the gun's sights. Once his rifle jammed and Hoak fell to the ground as though seriously wounded. Deceived, the enemy gunner directed attention to other company positions, while Hoak calmly repaired his jammed rifle as he lay on the rain soaked ground. Then, leaping to his feet, he renewed his one man charge on the enemy position. This time his fire was accurate enough to drive the gunner from the trigger, and soon Hoak was standing over the machine gun prodding the enemy squad from its position.

Co. A having cleared resistance along the right flank at Hill 372, Co. C now was able to move forward. Attacking along both sides of an angle or wedge, the two companies established contact during the morning. In the late afternoon, the 1st Battalion made contact with Co. I of the 399th's 3rd Battalion to the left, completing control of high ground.

The day's operations not only had secured the high ground commanding St. Remy, but had broken the stalemate on this portion of the Vosges Mountains front and readied the stage for the major push which was

to come. Seventeen prisoners were captured in the assault on this difficult position.

On the 6th day of November, other Century units began to move into the lines. The 397th Inf. Regt. took up positions north and west of the remainder of the division when its 3rd Battalion completed relief of the 179th Inf. near Baccarat. The regiment's 1st Battalion went into reserve south of the Meurthe River preparatory to relieving part of the 180th Inf., 45th Div. This move would bring it into line with the 398th Inf. to the south.

The 398th, which on the preceding day had moved its Co. C and Co. A into positions on the Raon L'Etape and Bois de Repy line, now moved other units into combat sectors. Co. D, with its support weapons, moved up toward Raon L'Etape, and Co. B completed the battalion front by taking positions near Rochers de Faucon Pierre, on the Plateau des Leches. Here, in the afternoon, Co. B encountered the enemy for the first time, but suffered no casualties. The 3rd Battalion of





Looking southeast toward Etival. Enemy control of high ground didn't make liberation of this French town any too easy for the hard-fighting doughs.



the 398th also moved up to front line positions near St. Barbe where it was attached to the 180th Inf., 45th Div., on line with the 1st Battalion of its own regiment to the right.

The third consecutive day of rain, 7 November, was a day on which our units continued to shift into positions preparatory for the attack that was soon to begin along the whole Seventh Army front. The only combat action took place when the 1st Battalion of the 398th Inf. moved eastward with Co. C in advance and Co. A in support to take the greater part of the forward ridge of Rochers de Faucon Pierre on the Plateau des Leches. The advance met small enemy patrols but had no casualties. During the day, Cannon Co. of the 398th moved forward from St. Gorgon to an area 6 kilometers southwest of Raon L'Etape, relieved Cannon Co. of the 180th Inf., and fired its first round of the war at 1642. Anti-tank Co. of the 398th also moved up and, relieving Anti-tank Co. of the 180th Inf., dug in around St. Benoit. Finally, 2nd Battalion 398th Inf. moved to an assembly area two and a half miles northeast of St. Benoit along the highway between Ramber-villers and Raon L'Etape. Combat Team-8, of the old training days, was not yet complete, however, for the 171st F A Battalion was firing the direct support mis-

sions for the regiment; the 375th F A Battalion of Combat Team-8, was as yet charged only with supporting fires for the other artillery.

At 1000, the 397th Inf. assumed command of their sector from the 179th Inf. In front of the 1st and 3rd Battalions the enemy seemed to have no front lines but were seen preparing delaying positions and laying mines. These units of the 397th had no combat contact with the Krauts though a 14-man security patrol from the 3rd Battalion was fired on by an automatic weapon and one man was killed. Co. A of the 325th Engr. Battalion reconnoitered the regimental area and improved roads. The 374th F A Battalion fired more than one hundred missions against enemy troops and emplacements. Combat Team 7 was in action.

Flushed with its success of the previous day, the 399th Inf. was also engaged in non-combat movement on 7 November. The regiment began a shift to the left, the 3rd Battalion 399th, relieving the 3rd Battalion of the 157th Inf. which had been dug in on the left flank of the regiment. On the right flank of the 399th sector, the 1st Battalion had been partly relieved in its positions above St. Remy by the 2nd Battalion 15th Inf., at day's end.

On 8 November, the fourth day of unceasing rain, the 397th sector was quiet, although the 374th F A Battalion harassed the enemy holding the town of Clairrupt, with intermittent artillery fire.

For the other two regiments, however, 8 November was somewhat rougher. The 1st Battalion 398th Inf. attacked from the forward ridge of Rochers de Faucon Pierre in an attempt to dislodge the enemy from a ridge to the northeast. Co. C led the assault with Co. A in support and Co. B and Co. D in rear areas. The attack began early in the morning, but after satisfactory initial progress was finally abandoned when Co. C came under severe enemy artillery fire and suffered numerous casualties. Co. C finally withdrew,



Chow was always an occasion, especially when the C-rations were served warm. The doughs seldom had the opportunity to bunch-up this way.

leaving Co. A in covering positions. The 2nd Battalion 398th Inf., having moved up the day before, now relieved the 1st Battalion 180th Inf. and took positions about five kilometers southwest of Raon L'Étape along the highway between that town and Rambervillers to the south and west. All three battalions of the 398th were now on line in a solid front with the 1st Battalion on the right, 2nd Battalion in the center and 3rd Battalion on the left, northwest of the highway. With this front completed, the 398th was relieved of attachment to the 45th Div. and Col. Nelson I. Fooks assumed command of the regiment at 2000 hours. Only addition of the 375th F A Battalion was now necessary to bring CT-8 up to full fighting strength.

The 375th F A Battalion, in fact, was on its way to its assigned position in the regimental sector when the Artillerymen were engaged in a premature fire-fight with the enemy. While the battalion was in the vicinity of Thiaville, several vehicles in the convoy became separated and were immediately pounced upon by the enemy. Cpl. Robert L. Ethridge, a member of a howitzer section, was riding on a prime mover, one of the lost vehicles, when the enemy suddenly opened fire with a machine gun concealed behind a roadblock. Cpl. Ethridge leaped to the machine gun mounted on his own truck, and began returning fire from his uncovered position. While other members of Ethridge's squad ran for cover, he heroically continued firing, delaying the enemy attack while his squad withdrew. A mortar shell fragment struck him in the face, knocking him from the truck. But he was back at the trigger of his gun before anyone could reach him, continuing his accurate fire. Ordering the remainder of his squad to withdraw, Cpl. Ethridge remained at his gun until fatally wounded by enemy counterfire.

Sgt. Lawrence M. Walsh, also a member of the 375th F A, ran into trouble that day when the truck transporting his howitzer section brushed with the enemy. Walsh and his squad were seated in the back of a prime mover when the Germans opened fire, cutting off escape from the rear of the truck. Slitting the canvas covering down the side, he began moving his men through the hole. Once outside the truck, he led them to the cover of a road block, but almost immediately enemy mortar fire was zeroed in on the spot. Before the men could change position, two were killed and two seriously wounded. Sgt. Walsh ordered his men to a nearby house. But finding that one of the wounded men was unable to walk, Walsh carried the injured soldier and at the same time directed the others to safety.

In the 399th Inf. sector to the south, combat operations were reduced because troops were shifted. Only the 3rd Battalion of the 399th, operating under the 157th Inf., maintained active contact with the enemy. Attacking the Germans sheltered in the buildings of Ste. Odile, the battalion took 14 prisoners against artillery and mortar fire. The attempt to shift the 1st Battalion from reserve positions in St. Remy to a new reserve location was delayed from morning until afternoon by the rainy weather and heavy mortar and artillery fire from new enemy positions above St. Remy. Co. B could not be removed from positions in the rain-soaked fields until after dark when one platoon was relieved by a platoon from Co. K and the rest of Co. B was withdrawn. Pending change of command of the sector to the 100th Div., the 2nd Battalion was attached to the 157th Inf. and for the first time elements of the 2nd Battalion entered the line when Co. E with a platoon from Co. F and one from Co. G relieved the 1st Battalion of 157th Inf. The rest of the 2nd Battalion remained in reserve.



Fighting it out from behind the shelter of a muddy embankment.

Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burress assumed command from the 45th Division on 9 November and the Century Division became a fighting unit in its own right. The division CP was moved from Padoux to Rambervillers and, with the exception of a slight bit of shifting, the 100th was ready for its part in the Seventh Army attack scheduled to begin in a few days.

Plans called for the Centurymen to throw a left hook into the enemy on his own side of the river, in the Baccarat area. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 397th Inf., already in the Baccarat vicinity, took up positions on the high ground to the north and northeast of the town, while the 1st Battalion remained in reserve. The regiment reported that, in spite of the lull on the sector, the enemy apparently had no front line though he might possibly have laid mines and brought up replacements.

The "left hook" had to be powerful, so the 399th was shifted to the Baccarat sector where, combined with the 397th, a two regiment attack could be made, while the 398th took over the 399th positions on the right flank of the division. But the defense line on the 398th front was stretched thin for the 1st Battalion had relieved two battalions of the 399th. Co. B and a platoon of Co. A, therefore, filled the two-battalion gap while Co. C and the rest of Co. A held a saddle position in the Bois de Repy. To further plug the hole, the Intelligence and Rcn. Platoon and the rest of the regiment extended to the left along the ridge of Rochers de Faucon Pierre and northward across the highway between Rambervillers and Raon L'Etape. Late that evening, the 375th F A Battalion moved into position to give direct support and complete the combat team.



This was in the early days before we discarded excess equipment.

Because the 398th Inf. was soon to be the only regiment of the division south of the Meurthe, it needed help to hold the long front which ran from Baccarat southeast to a point beyond Raon L'Etape. The 100th Cav. Rcn. Troop, which had moved to Bazein on 7 November and later cleared mined areas around Thiaville, was thereupon attached to the 398th Inf. where it could patrol the front between the left flank of the regiment and Baccarat when the drive began on 12 November.

There was little activity with the enemy on 10 November. The troops welcomed the lull, for a mixture of rain and snow continued to soak the ground and add to the discomfort of the muddy foxholes. Most of the day's activity was taken up with the final shifting of troops in preparation for the offensive of 12 November. The 397th Inf. readjusted its lines slightly in the area north and east of Baccarat and north of Bertrichamps, while the 399th Inf., minus its 2nd Battalion, crossed the Meurthe river at Baccarat. There the 399th took up positions on the left flank of the 397th and outposted a line between Meriviller and Gramont, to the northeast of Baccarat, as the left element of the division with the 147th Recon. Squadron on its left.

The only combat action of the day was on the right flank of the division where the 1st Battalion 398th pushed in an easterly direction into the town of Pajaille. The attack was made to divert the Germans' attention from Baccarat where the big drive was to come, and at the same time test the strength of enemy troops in the Pajaille area.

The 1st Battalion had a great deal of trouble in this attack. But all casualties were caused by artillery,



Mass was held in the woods when the enemy permitted us the time.



A wire team crawls forward during the assault on St. Remy.

mortar fire and mines, giving evidence that the enemy was withdrawing.

It was in this heavily mined area that two division doctors, Capt. Robert R. Moylan and Maj. John K. Webb, demonstrated the courage to which soldiers the world over tip their hats. The captain was searching for a location for the clearing station, when he found an engineer who had been injured by a mine. Capt. Moylan walked through the mined area and administered first aid to the soldier. Then, with the assistance of his driver, he carried the wounded engineer to the ambulance. As he was about to leave, a second man stepped on a mine and suffered serious foot injuries. The captain returned through the field and brought the second soldier back to the ambulance.

In another sector, Maj. Webb had a similar experience. He was dressing the wounds of a soldier who had stepped on a mine when his own aid man set off a second mine. The explosion knocked the major to the ground, but did not injure him. He was up immediately, and returning to the soldier, dressed his wounds and courageously helped both men to a safe area.

On Armistice Day, just 26 years to the minute after the armistice of the first World War, at 1111, 11 November, the division opened its new CP in Ste. Barbe, to which it had moved from Rambervillers. There was little activity as the rain and snow continued. The 1st and 2nd Battalions 397th moved through Baccarat to the north side of the Meurthe so that both regiments were in positions which flanked the German front. The 399th continued to hold the Meriviller-Bertrichamps road and advanced to secure the Veney-Bertrichamps highway. In the 398th area to the south,

the 1st Battalion held a line through Etival and running north and south of the town, while the 2nd Battalion advanced to bring its line abreast of the 1st Battalion. The 374th F A Battalion continued to fire propaganda shells into the towns to the division front.

From PWs it was learned that enemy forces opposing us were the German 16th Inf. Div., the 21st Panzer (Armored) Div., and the 361st Inf. Div. The units of these divisions which were in the 100th Div. sector had a total strength of about 1,200 men. There was also the 708th Volksgrenadier (People's Infantry) Division. Its cadre were experienced soldiers from the 708th Inf. Div. who had fought in Normandy on D-Day. In September, they had been withdrawn to be reorganized, filled with new men, and trained in Slovakia. They had marched by foot from the German border and arrived in line just before 12 November. Its strength on our Div. sector was about 2,000 men, but it was committed piecemeal. Two Mountain Battalions, having a combined strength of about 300 men, were so badly mauled by the attack that they had to be withdrawn a few days after it began. One unit which faced us during the entire time that it was in this sector, was the 1417th Fortress Battalion of 500 men who were formerly air force ground personnel.

The Seventh Army front, spearheaded by the Century Division, flared into action at 0900 on 12 November. It was the opening of the full scale attack to drive the Germans from their Winter Line in the Vosges Mountains. The 398th Inf. and the 100th Ren. Troop took up their positions to hold the 20 kilometer line west and south of the Meurthe river between Baccarat and a point south of Etival. They were to throw



Scenes in Raon L'Etape following liberation. Pictured are the town square, a quiet street, the soldiers' monument, and a blasted church.

.50-cal. MG fire into Raon L'Etape to trick the enemy into thinking the attack was against that town from across the river to the west.

Instead the attack was coming from the north along the east side of the river. The 397th and 399th, each with a two battalion front, were attacking from their positions on the high ground north and east of Baccarat. The division's immediate objective was the group of hills which commanded the supply and communications center of Raon L'Etape from the east. This was the left hook that the division had been selected to throw into the enemy on his own side of the river.

The 399th, on the left, was to move south from positions near Meriviller and Veney and take the high ground just southwest of Neufmaisons. This was a blocking action which gave the regiment control of the road leading south into Raon L'Etape. One battalion of the 397th was to attack south beside the Meurthe and along the highway leading through Bertrichamp and Clairupt toward Raon L'Etape. The other battalion of the 397th was to attack eastward at first into the Forêt du Reclos and then south toward the objective.

With the 3rd Battalion and Co. B in division reserve, the other two battalions of the 399th attacked east and south. On the far left edge of the division zone was Co. C and next to it Co. A. The two companies quickly seized Veney, advanced to the foot of the hills southwest of Neufmaisons, and took the road net to the west of the town. The enemy, in prepared positions of trenches and log pillboxes, had cleared

lanes in the woods to get excellent fields of fire for his rifles and machine guns. By flanking these positions Cos. A and C forced the Germans to surrender or retreat, though enemy snipers remained in the area. By late afternoon the 1st Battalion of the 399th had taken its high ground. The 2nd Battalion of the 399th in its narrow sector to the right of the 1st Battalion had hardly got started in its attack in column of companies with Co. F in the lead and Cos. G and E following before it was slowed by a hail of fire from 88s and machine guns. At 1525, after a four-hour delay, Co. F, by fighting over soggy, densely wooded ground, was able to continue the attack and reached its objective, the high ground south of the 1st Battalion, three hours later. Co. G, fanning out to the right of Co. F, over-ran foxholes and dug-outs full of equipment which the enemy had hastily abandoned.

In the 397th Inf. sector, the attack, on this 12 November, also began at 0900. On the right, attacking southward along the river, was the 1st Battalion with Co. C nearest the river, Co. A on the left, and Co. B in support. With the 3rd Battalion in regimental reserve, the 2nd Battalion—Co. G on the right, Co. F on the left, and Co. E in support—attacked eastward into the Forêt du Reclos. Both attacks were met by enemy small arms fire and artillery, but the assaults were slowed more by the soggy ground, the steep slopes and the dense woods than by enemy action. At the end of day, Bertrichamps had been passed and 33 prisoners taken. Heavy barrages by the regimental Cannon Co. and by the 374th F A Battalion had been disastrous for the enemy. One company of the 748th Inf. of the 708th Volksgrenadier Div. had been reduced to 12 men and its company commander killed. The 397th suffered 12 men killed in action.



Sgt. Marion C. Fordham was one of the twelve that died that day, but his courage and fearlessness as he knocked out an enemy machine gun will long be remembered by those who fought with him.

Fordham was a squad leader in Co. A. His squad was working toward a strongly fortified enemy position to knock out a machine gun nest that was holding up the company advance. But clear fields of fire and perfect observation were making the advance difficult. In his efforts to bring the squad forward, Fordham was wounded. Instead of seeking help, he rose in plain view of the enemy and began charging the position by himself, firing his rifle as he advanced. Within throwing distance of the nest, the sergeant began hurling hand grenades into the enemy position. But as he heaved his last grenade the enemy gun continued to spray the field. With fixed bayonet, Fordham rushed the last yards into the enemy position and engaged the remaining members of the squad in hand to hand fighting. Fordham did silence that machine gun. But he gave his life in the effort.

Later in the day the 3rd Battalion 398th Inf. moved from south of the Meurthe into Baccarat to replace the 3rd Battalion 399th Inf. as division reserve.

The snow continued to fall, and the weather turned colder on 13 November, the second day of the attack. The 1st Battalion of the 397th, on the right side of the attacking front and next to the river, was supposed to attack at 0900 as it had done the previous day. Before this attack was started, the enemy launched a counter-attack supported by artillery. The Krauts were driven off by our artillery and mortar fire, but not before the entire regimental communications system had been disrupted.

The 2nd Battalion of the 397th began its attack at

0900 on schedule, but though it was attacking an enemy who was in defensive positions probably a kilometer in depth and running along a line of hills, the advance was slowed more by the weather and the terrain, which favored the enemy, than by the Germans.

The front was quiet for the 398th, but in the sector held by the 399th there was a small action which was a portent of what was to come. Co. G, advancing through the forest about a kilometer south of its positions of the night of 12 November, broke out of the woods into a clearing just to the west of Hill 409.9, about two miles south of Neufmaisons. The 1st and 3rd Platoons were in the lead with the 2nd and the Weapons Platoons in support. Just north of the hill stood a house, called Du Rouge Vetu, with perfect fields of fire and observation. As two scouts started to reconnoiter this house, intense mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire began to pour upon the two platoons in the clearing. The company was pinned down in a fire fight for more than an hour before a squad from the 2nd Platoon could move out of the woods and cover the withdrawal. Four officers, including the company CO, were wounded, and 25 men were wounded or killed in this fight.

It was dark before the company had reorganized in a safe position and dispatched litter teams to recover the wounded. The rescue squads made several valiant attempts to locate the helpless G Co. men, but the pitch blackness of the night and the blinding snow foiled every effort to locate the wounded soldiers.

Hope had virtually been abandoned when Capt. Thaddeus J. Koszarek, 399th chaplain, took matters into his own hands. Without a word to anyone, the chaplain left his tent and disappeared into the darkness. Guiding himself by a communications wire

which he knew had been strung to the vicinity of the G Co. debacle earlier in the day, Capt. Koszarek groped his way toward the front lines. Walking and crawling over the frozen ground, fully realizing that the slightest sound could mean death, he continued his search of the area forward of our front lines.

Hours later, the intrepid chaplain returned to the battalion CP, smiling and triumphant with the news that he had located the wounded men. Offering to act as guide to the litter bearers, Capt. Koszarek retraced his steps through the dangerous, mined area. Then, having assisted the medics in administering first aid, he led the party back to our lines and safety.

Following Co. G's encounter with the enemy, the 2nd Battalion 399th moved north to positions held by the 1st Battalion, while the latter turned south in an attempt to drive the tenacious enemy from Hill 409.9. With Co. B on the left and Co. C on the right, the 1st Battalion moved against the entrenched enemy, but were stopped cold by a withering fire from the well emplaced Kraut positions. At 2000, operations were halted for the night, while the 3rd Battalion 399th, having returned to the regiment from division reserve, prepared to join the assault the following morning.

Although the severe cold had abated somewhat, snow continued to carpet the forest on 14 November. Before us was a series of hills, thickly wooded and ideally suited for defense, where the enemy showed signs of making a determined stand. Discarded were his previous tactics of fighting delaying actions. The tiger was beginning to bare his fangs.

The hilly terrain blocking our path extended north and south adjacent to the road between Neufmaisons and Raon L'Etape, and then curved west to the north of Raon. On the north end of this line, in the area of the 399th Inf., high ground was to the east of the highway. Further south, below a junction of this road and

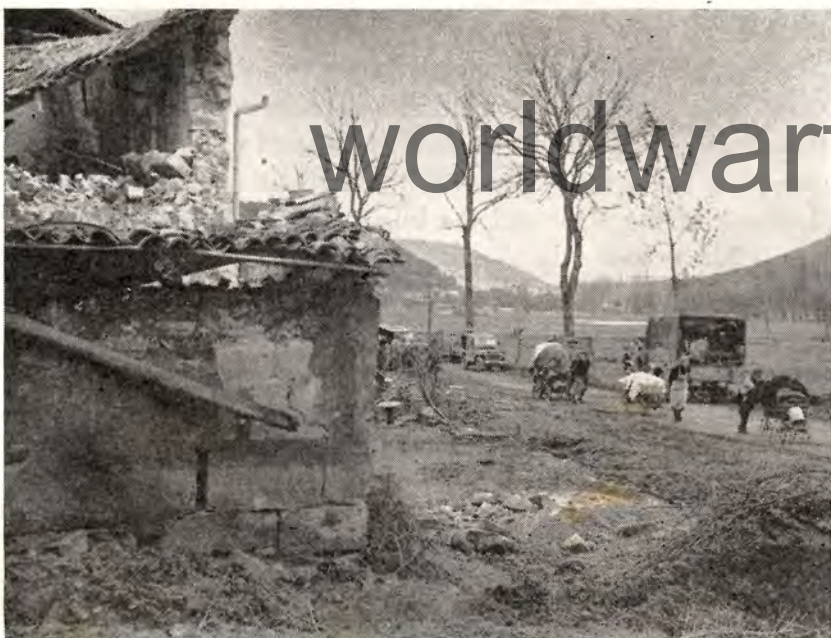
one leading northwest toward the town of Veney, the hill line crossed to the west side of the highway. Clearance of these latter hills was assigned to the 397th Inf.

To reduce these natural barriers, the 397th, on the third day of our attack, began a combined regimental assault for the first time since entering combat. For the 1st Battalion, on the right, and nearest the Meurthe river, it was also an attack on a three-company front. Attacking at 0900, Co. C was given the mission of securing the town of Clairupt on the road between Baccarat and Raon L'Etape. Troublesome anti-personnel and Teller minefields were encountered from the outset, and heroic work was done by Co. A of the 325th Engr. Battalion in clearing these hazards. Clairupt was finally entered after bitter fighting in which no quarter was asked and none given.

In the woods to the right or east of Clairupt, Cos. A and B of the 397th advanced against mortar and artillery fire, while the 2nd Battalion of the 397th, at the center of the regimental sector, remained where it had dug in on the previous day, holding their positions against sustained enemy fire.

On the 397th's right flank, the 3rd Battalion, having moved from regimental reserve the day before, began an assault due east against the entrenched enemy holding the line of hills west of the road from Neufmaisons to Raon L'Etape. Enemy resistance was formidable, and the battalion, attacking with full strength, with L, K, and I Cos. abreast, suffered heavy casualties. The bulk of these casualties were caused by artillery emplaced around Pexonne to the north of Neufmaisons and outside the division zone. From these positions the enemy had what amounted to enfilade fire, and the Krauts made the most of it. Two officers and 77 men of the 397th were wounded during the day, and 12 men were reported missing. Only one enemy was taken prisoner.

Refugees from Raon L'Etape filtering through our lines.



The center square of Raon L'Etape at the time of our attack.



For the 1st Battalion 399th, 14 November was a bitter day. In the area south of Neufmaisons, to the left and north of the sector where the 3rd Battalion 397th was attacking, the 1st Battalion 399th launched an attack after a fifteen minute light artillery preparation. Instead of attacking Hill 409.9 where Co. G had had such hard going the day before, however, Co. B and Co. C were to assault a higher hill to the west and north known as Hill 431.3. Capture of this hill would give the 399ers command of the lower, heavily fortified hill.

Plans called for the 3rd Battalion to move into positions just vacated by the 1st Battalion. After the 1st Battalion had captured Hill 431.3, the 3rd Battalion was to take over the hill and then move east more than a mile to hold a road junction as protection for the left flank of the 1st Battalion, which was to pursue the enemy southward.

Excellent as the strategy seemed, however, it didn't pan out. When Cos. B and C attempted to move forward, they were able to advance only 150 yards before the enemy's fierce defense of the hill made further movement impossible. At 1445, after five hours of struggling to break the enemy's grip, the companies withdrew 600 yards west of the Neufmaisons road to allow further artillery preparation against the hill. But this plan, too, was altered and the 1st Battalion moved back to its positions of the previous day.

Co. G of the 399th, still holding positions just west of the yellow stone house called Mon Frere du Rouge Vetu, was under constant enemy fire throughout the day. At 1530, the company withdrew to an area west of the Neufmaisons highway so that artillery could be placed on the house and known enemy strongpoints in the vicinity. After dark, one platoon of the company returned to the earlier positions so that control of the highway could be maintained.

The inspiring thing about this attack of the division on 14 November is not that we made a little progress, but that the assault could be attempted at all. An entire week of rain and snow had turned the earth into a mass of mud. The foot soldier could move only with greatest difficulty, and his slowness increased the danger to his life. It was almost impossible to move heavy artillery pieces forward. The supply situation threatened to bog down inextricably. The Infantry had been living on a diet of K-rations since the beginning of the attack and were suffering from diarrhoea and trench foot. Most of us, knowing these things, would have smiled a bit wryly at the suggestion that the Century Division was on the eve of an immensely successful attack. But within less than one week, the enemy had suffered one of his most telling defeats.

November 15, the second anniversary of the activation of the 100th Infantry Division, a day of cold and snow flurries, was fittingly celebrated by the division, for on that day we made the first break in the Germans' Winter Line in the Vosges Mountains. In the 397th Inf. sector while the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, to the left, held their positions before the Germans on the ridge of hills to the west of the Neufmaisons road, the 1st Battalion, on the right, completed the securing of Clairupt, the little town near the Meurthe between Bertrichamps and Raon L'Etape. In the 1st Battalion sector, too, the day was chiefly one of holding, for Cos. A and B, like the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, were suffering many casualties from enemy artillery concentrations. The two companies were also harassed during the night by enemy infiltration patrols which fired on carrying parties whether our men were bringing up supplies or removing wounded. At one point a group of stretcher bearers was pinned down by fire from an infiltrated patrol and held up until a patrol could be brought up to drive off the enemy. Co. C,

Site of division CP after capture of Raon, key to Vosges. Below, artist Trinquet's sketch of prisoners being questioned by MPs.





Wash drawing of du Rouge Vetu from the south on the road to Moyenmoutier. The hill on the left was heavily fortified by the Germans who resisted our advance fiercely.

however, made an advance beyond Clairupt. To the front of this area, the enemy held positions which were protected by wire and mine fields.

During the day the 397th's Regimental Cannon Co. fired 122 rounds of high explosive upon German emplacements for mortars and automatic weapons and upon communication lines. In the short space of three hours in the morning, the 374th F A Battalion threw 212 rounds at enemy emplacements. Co. A of the 325th Engrs. worked hard to keep roads and trails passable for supplies. While the 83rd Chemical Battalion fired smoke to blind any enemy observation from Thiaville, just across the river from Clairupt, the attached tank and tank-destroyer outfits fired shells into the hill mass north of Raon L'Etape. In the day's operations, the 397th captured 29 Germans but suffered the loss of eight men killed and four officers and 56 men wounded.

The action which meant that for the first time in history the Vosges Mountains were to be overrun by military force, however, occurred in the sector of the 399th Inf. on this snowy 15 November. There the big guns of VI Corps Artillery, the 155s of the 373rd F A Battalion, and the 105s of the 925th F A Battalion began, at 0920, to lay a murderous barrage on the enemy entrenched on Hills 431.3 and 409.9 in the area of du Rouge Vetu. This rolling barrage, lasting half an hour and lifting one hundred yards every four minutes, was to prepare the way for the attack of the 3rd Battalion 399th.

Fighting through the almost impenetrable Forêt du Grand Reclos, the 3rd Battalion swung around through the area which the 2nd Battalion 397th had taken over

from the 1st Battalion 399th, to attack the hill mass from the enemy's northwest flank. Now, with Co. I to the left and Co. K to the right, we began to make some progress. In spite of the artillery barrage, enemy counterfire was continuous and the troops had to move through barbed wire against deep entrenchments. But by 1120, after two hours of heart-breaking struggle, the two fighting companies had pushed 500 yards beyond the Neufmaisons-Raon L'Etape road. With Co. L of the 399th attacking simultaneously with a platoon of tanks against du Rouge Vetu from the north, the enemy began to crack. By noon, the 3rd Battalion had taken the hills and pushed on to Road Junction 429 to find that the enemy had abandoned the hill mass. Since these hills commanded the rest of the Ger-

Mud, heavily mined and rugged terrain, and a wily enemy defense made the fighting as tough as any on the Western Front.



*Scenes along road to victory. From top to bottom—
All that was left of the church at Etival; looking
south toward Raon L'Etape; one of the roads of
march leading from Baccarat to Raon L'Etape; an
air-conditioned farmhouse bedroom.*

man defense from the rear, the enemy was compelled to withdraw.

With the 3rd Battalion in its newly won positions to the east of the highway giving cover to the left flank, and the 2nd Battalion of the 397th in positions to the west of the highway, the 1st Battalion of the 399th was now able to knife southward along the road toward Raon L'Etape. Co. A moved out at 1330 and repulsed an enemy counterattack at the first road junction. Then Cos. B and C in a two company front, attacking along either side of the highway, moved south and ran into a thirty-five-minute fire fight at a road block. In the end the companies captured a platoon of mortars and carts as the enemy withdrew. The units went on south, though the 397th had not yet moved up to protect the right flank, to dig in for the night on high ground above the road running east from Raon L'Etape to Celles-sur-Plaine. The 399th had captured 28 prisoners and suffered 13 casualties.

November 16 was a day of tragedy and heroism. At 1100 Colonel William A. Ellis, who had been commanding officer of the 397th Infantry since its activation, was ambushed while visiting the area of the 1st Battalion and machine-gunned to death. The 1st Battalion of the 399th Inf. suffered rather severe losses but captured and held the hill mass called "Tete du Reclos."

Because the action of the 399th had flanked the positions of the enemy on the high ground north and east of Raon L'Etape—the ground which was the division objective—the way was now open for the 397th to continue its attack southward and take the area. All three battalions were to attack. The 1st and 3rd Battalions, with Cos. A, B, K, and L attacking, encountered little opposition and seized their parts of the division objective. The enemy was withdrawing his troops from positions north of Raon L'Etape to prepared positions on the north slope of the high ground south of the town and to prepared lines around La Trouche, a hamlet east of Raon on the road to Celles sur Plaine. From this road the enemy was firing self-propelled artillery. That the enemy had prepared positions on which to fall back is explained by the fact, learned from PWs, that two punitive battalions were now operating on the division front. These battalions were formed of Ger-



A battery of 105mm infantry howitzers spit at the enemy. These stubby, artillery midgets proved accurate and effective when close support of the infantry was called for. Easy maneuverability made them indispensable.

man soldier-prisoners being punished for military offenses. They did construction work at night on front-line defenses and only the non-coms in charge were armed. Because of intense mortar and artillery fire the 2nd Battalion of the 397th Inf. remained where it was and did not attack.

The hard fighting of 16 November took place as on the day before in the sector of the 399th Inf., the left flank of the division.

Here the 1st Battalion, with Co. A to the north, Co. B to the south, and Co. C in support, turned east from the hill positions which they had taken from the north to attack Hills 462.8 and 485.3. This hill mass, the Tête du Reclos, rose out of the valley of the Plaine river and commanded that valley and the highway running through it between Raon L'Etape to the west and Celles sur Plaine to the northeast. Attacking at 1115 the companies had moved east about half a mile to a road junction where they ran into a heavy mortar and artillery barrage. They called for artillery fire from the 925th F A Battalion and after that preparation moved to the forward slope of Hill 462.8 which they reached at 1430. The difficulties of the attack from this point forward were enormous. The enemy positions were logged-over foxholes with clear fields of fire, and the enemy had to be rooted one by one from these miniature forts. The task would have been hard in open country, but here the dense forest was made impenetrable by heavy undergrowth. The 1st Battalion could not attack up the road which led to the top of the hill because the Germans had every inch of it covered by fire. Instead the attack was made up a steep, almost impassable slope. Supplies of food and ammo had to be hand-carried, the carriers working forward on their bellies dragging marmite cans or struggling under packs.

As the attack progressed, the riflemen of Co. B were ambushed by enemy machine guns. The 2nd Platoon of Co. D had been supporting B Co. in their attack, but now the 1st Battalion heavy weapons company found itself to the rear and out of contact with the riflemen.

T. Sgt. Rudolph Steinman, in charge of the Weapons Platoon, was reassembling his squads for a drive toward B Co. to break up the ambush, when his own men were caught between a cross-fire of Kraut ma-



chine guns. Steinman had been a professional soldier for years, but there seemed little he could do. Co. B was in what seemed an impossible position, and now his own men were immobilized and unable to return the enemy's fire.

After several attempts to reorganize his platoon, Steinman finally moved a squad into a position from where harassing fire could be delivered upon the enemy. Then, ordering the squad to cover him, he began crawling toward the Jerry nests. He had not gone more than a few yards, however, when the Krauts spotted him and enemy machine gun slugs began digging up the soggy ground all around him.

But Steinman was too old a hand to freeze. Jumping to his feet, he leveled his carbine on the enemy position and firing as he ran, charged the nest frontally. Steinman was moving fast now. Firing his carbine as rapidly as he could pull the trigger, one round found its mark and the enemy gunner fell dead. Another Jerry made a weak attempt to man the gun, but after a few seconds dropped back to escape the blazing carbine. By this time, the enemy was so confused they began to surrender en masse to the fighting sergeant. Besides the gunner, whom he killed, Steinman took 16 prisoners before he paused for breath. His intrepid action broke up the German ambush and permitted his platoon to move to the aid of Co. B.

Co. A, meanwhile, was moving forward on the left flank when they, too, were ambushed by the enemy hiding in the thick woods. The hostile fire was so intense that, for a moment, it seemed as if the entire company faced annihilation. Sgt. Lucian A. Zarlenga and his squad of riflemen, who had been acting as flank guard, were caught in the direct line of fire. Instead of falling



back to cover, Zarlenga ordered an assault and led his men directly into the enemy field of fire. His squad followed him courageously and by the audacity of their attack succeeded in breaking the Kraut trap. Zarlenga, who had constantly exposed himself during the attack, however, suffered multiple wounds. He died before he could be removed from the scene of action.

By 1500 the companies had reached the crest of the hill where they began to dig in against the counter-attack they knew was sure to come. An hour later, the enemy rushed our newly won positions from the north and east. The Krauts attacked the 399ers furiously and soon bitter close-in fighting was raging in the gloom of encroaching night with opposing troops often intermingled in hand-to-hand combat. The fighting raged until after dark when the enemy finally withdrew having lost 35 counted dead and more than 80 prisoners and evacuated wounded. The 1st Battalion had lost 22 killed and 42 wounded.

Individual acts of heroism contributed greatly to this notable success. A case in point is that of Sgt. Richard S. Atkinson of D Co. During the height of the enemy counterattack, Atkinson, finding he could not gain a clear field of fire for his .30 cal. machine gun, dismounted the heavy weapon and, holding it in his hands, sprayed the attacking force from an upright position.

The performance of the 1st Battalion 399th, was so noteworthy as to receive the commendation of Gen. Burress and a Presidential Citation. Their action cemented our grip on Raon L'Etape and opened the gateway through the Voges Mountains to the Alsatian Plains beyond.

To the north, the 3rd Battalion of the 399th, having relinquished its former positions to the 3rd Battalion of the 398th, also attacked on 16 November. The 3rd Battalionites were assigned the mission of taking high ground in the neighborhood of Road Junction 429.9. The enemy allowed the 399ers to advance until they were almost on the objective and then opened up with mortar and artillery. Co. L suffered heavily from what seems to have been a preparatory barrage, because following a severe shelling of the area, the enemy attacked at 1400 from the northwest, or against the left flank of the company. Had the Germans succeeded in driving Co. L out, the whole division flank would have been exposed. But Co. L repulsed the two-hour attack, and the 3rd Battalion of the 398th, attached to the 399th, took over the positions.

Pfc. William J. Ansel was one of the deciding factors in Co. L's success that afternoon. Ansel, who had become acting squad leader earlier in the day when his squad leader suffered serious wounds, was directing his squad in digging an emplacement for their machine gun when the enemy counterattack began. The acting squad leader first noticed the enemy moving on his position when the Krauts were less than fifty yards away. Ordering his men to take cover and open fire with their small arms, he tried to mount his machine gun which had been removed from its base during a previous change of positions. But the enemy was closing in too rapidly. Climbing out of the partially dug hole, Ansel began firing the heavy gun from his hip. Temporarily surprised, the enemy hesitated, but soon were advancing again, directing most of their fire at him. Ansel was forced to fall back twice, once because of the enemy onrush, and the second time to



insert a new belt of ammunition in the smoking gun. With the new belt inserted, however, Ansel grimly began walking toward the thickest part of the Jerry attack, firing as he advanced.

Seven enemy were killed and 11 wounded before Ansel ceased firing, having broken the counterattack and enabled Co. L to retake the ground it had lost and make its position secure.

During the day, the 2nd Battalion of the 398th, except for F Co. which was patrolling Baccarat, remained in positions south of the Meurthe and to the west of Raon L'Etape, while the other elements of the regiment moved into positions around Bertrichamps to be ready for the attack the following day.

The operations of 17 November were those of regrouping the units for a new attack to seize the high ground across the Plaine river and southeast of Raon L'Etape, an area to which the enemy had withdrawn. Except for enemy patrols which approached the new positions, contact was difficult to make with the Germans. The 1st Battalion 397th was withdrawn from the high ground north of Raon, and Co. C of that battalion patrolled the Neufmaisons road. The 3rd Battalion 397th mopped up what enemy resistance still existed in their area. The prisoners taken were chiefly deserters who had been absent from 2 to 10 days from their units. Some of them had acquired civilian clothes and been fed by the French. The 399th Inf. spent the day making secure the positions it had gained in two days of bitter fighting. Co. E 399th, relieved the 3rd Battalion of the 398th in the positions they had taken up in the 399th area.

The 1st Battalion of the 398th had begun an attack in the morning to take a hill in the center of the division front. But the plan was called off and the bat-

talion was sent to an assembly area across the Plaine river from the new division objective on the hills south and east of Raon L'Etape. In this new area it was joined by the 3rd Battalion 399th and the 2nd Battalion 397th which was attached to the regiment. The 2nd Battalion 398th was near Clairrupt on the right of the division line.

With the 399th protecting the left flank and rear of the division on 18 November, the other two regiments prepared a two-pronged attack against the enemy on the hills south of the La Plaine river and to the east of Raon L'Etape. The 398th was to drive south across the river near La Trouche and the 397th was to attack through Raon from the west.

While the 3rd Battalion of the 397th held the high ground to the north the 1st Battalion attacked through the town and reached the outskirts. Here it was held up until darkness by an enemy force strongly emplaced in a stone quarry. The town was mined and booby-trapped, and the Mine Platoon of the regimental Anti-Tank Company was engaged in clearing the streets while Co. A of the 325th Engrs. cleared away roadblocks and checked sewers for demolition charges. The enemy were said to be holding civilians as hostages in a mine shaft or quarry tunnel in the area. In the other drive of the attack, where the 398th was being committed to an attack for the first time, Co. A tried to cross the Plaine river against strong resistance. The Company failed at the first attempted crossing site, but before nightfall was able to get across at another place near La Trouche. Behind Co. A were the other companies of the 1st Battalion, and the 3rd Battalion with Co. K in the lead position. The 2nd Battalion was in reserve. The regiment had two platoons of tanks from Co. D of the 753rd TD Battalion and Co. C of the 83rd Chemical Battalion.

Sunday, 19 November, sunny but cold, was a day of continuing attack. While the 399th continued to hold on the left, the 100th Rcn. Troop, and the 117th Rcn. Cavalry Squadron, attached to our division, attacked northeast and captured Neufmaisons, Pexonne and Badonviller without opposition.

The 1st Battalion of the 397th Inf., which had been stopped at the edge of Raon L'Etape by enemy fire from a quarry, was finally successful in pushing south across the Plaine river at this key junction with the Meurthe. The battalion then moved to high ground southeast of the town so that it controlled the road running south along the Meurthe and through the village of Sainte Brayen. Considerable artillery support was necessary in this operation. The 397th regimental Can-



Outskirts of Raon L'Etape. Note heavily wooded hills in background.



Looking south toward Etival through the cemetery wall in St. Remy.

non Co. fired many missions, and the 374th F A Battalion tossed out 226 rounds during daylight. The advance was also aided by liberal use of smoke to screen the hill tops. Units of the 83rd Chemical Battalion fired 320 rounds of smoke shells. In Raon L'Etape, Co. A of the 325th Engrs. filled shell craters, de-activated mines and booby traps, and removed two 500-pound Teller mines.

The first trickle of personnel replacements—or reinforcements, as the Army prefers to call them—began to trickle into the Century Division at this time. Sorely needed by the rifle companies, they soon caught the spirit of our division and within a few days were Centurymen to the core. It doesn't take long to become acclimated in combat.

The 398th Inf., which on the previous day had been able to get only Co. A across the Plaine river near La Trouche, east of Raon L'Etape, attacked in column of battalions and pushed all three companies to the south side of the river. Except for the action of Co. A on 18 November, this day was the first day of actual combat for the 398th. They had moved into woods on the north side of the valley of the Plaine river. The ground to the front of them was the level, open floor of the valley with the little river running west through it paralleled by a road on the south side. Beyond, wooded hills rose sharply from the valley base. The regiment had the job of coming out of the woods on the north, racing over the open ground to the river, and crossing the river to the flat ground on the other side from where they were to move against woods and hills. During the night, T. Sgt. Albert Campbell and two squads of Co. K's 2nd Platoon had moved down to the river and into the shadow of a lumber yard in the little settlement of La Plaine just west of La Trouche.

From here they could reach a small wooden bridge which they found intact. They had crossed cautiously and worked to the right of the bridge under cover of the river bank. Before them was an open field stretching to the woods and hills to the south. This was the ground over which the troops would attack at daylight. Under cover of darkness, the patrol had started to cross the field. Finding it pitted with shell craters, they had guessed that it had been zeroed in by mortars, and had returned to report.

Before dawn on 19 November, the 1st Battalion of the 398th Inf. started across the river in column of companies after the area to their front had been pounded by artillery fire. According to plan, Co. A began assaulting the hills and woods to the south and took Hill 450, its first objective. Cos. C and B followed as the advance continued southeastward to Hill 554. At 1130 the plan was changed and Co. A moved to take high ground at the head of a valley which ran south to St. Prayel. By the end of the day the battalion held a line from this point of furthest advance back to the Plaine river.

Starting an hour after the 1st Battalion attack, the 3rd Battalion, also in a column of companies, crossed over the bridge in La Plaine. The first man to cross the river was Lt. Henry Pajak of the 3rd Platoon of Co. K. He left the protection of the lumber pile, streaked across the bridge and turned right along the embankment, followed by his platoon. When the Weapons Platoon, following the 3rd, began to cross the bridge a German machine gun opened fire from the woods to the left, the first objective of the attack. Three men were caught in the fire and all three died of their wounds. Determined to clear the woods before the enemy had a chance to begin firing mortars, Lt.

Henry Pajak passed word along the line that the men should watch him. Then he stood up, firing his carbine, and moved out toward the woods. Crouching low, the men followed his example and began racing toward the trees. By this daring action they were able to overrun the German positions.

Now the 1st Battalionites turned southwest toward Hill 362. Co. I followed the same route as Co. K, but constantly ran into sniper fire from Germans who had been bypassed by Co. K. Cos. I and L fanned out in the woods behind Co. K's advance, at one point coming upon horses hitched to artillery pieces which the Germans had abandoned in their retreat. At 1130 the plan of attack was changed, and Co. K turned southeast to reach the foot of the formidable hill about nightfall.

In the afternoon of 19 November, the 2nd Battalion of the 398th, which had been in reserve, also moved across the river with Co. G in the lead. By dark, Co. G had moved to Hill 603 between the 1st Battalion to the east and the 3rd Battalion to the west. Although night caused the enemy fire to diminish, the Century-men, dug in on the hills and operating security patrols, were to suffer other hardships. In the thick woods and steep slopes the trails were so muddy that supply was impossible. The men were without water or food. Emergency K-rations had been thrown away with burdensome packs. Even blankets could not be brought up from the rear. What few blankets the Germans had left behind in their retreat, even though soggy, were needed for the wounded who could not be evacuated after nightfall. It was from days of heavy casualties like this that there developed that mutual admiration which the rifleman came to feel for the medic.

During the night of 19-20 November, the 3rd Inf. Div., to the south of us, managed to sneak two regiments across the Meurthe. At dawn, the veteran "Rock of Marne" men coordinated their attack with ours and, within a matter of hours, the bewildered Krauts found that their Winter Line had been broken in two places, and they were in danger of being completely outflanked. Faced by an untenable position, the enemy began a hasty withdrawal and the Seventh Army started a drive which in seven days was to take them to the Rhine.

Three Century battalions sparked the attack on 20 November. The 1st Battalion of the 397th Inf., leaving Raon L'Etape behind, moved south along the high ground parallel to the river and took St. Blaise, a village on the Meurthe (not to be confused with a larger town of the same name further east). Here the bat-

talion was relieved by the 3rd Battalion, while the 2nd Battalion of the 397th moved from its positions in the 399th sector into Raon L'Etape.

The 2nd Battalion of the 398th, holding ground to the east, attacked south and east with Cos. E and F moving past Co. G on Hill 603 to join the 1st Battalion of the regiment on the high ground above St. Prayel. The 2nd Battalion moved toward its objective steadily throughout the morning, meeting no resistance. A little after noon, however, as the unit reached the top of a slope to the north of St. Prayel, a Co. E scout reported seeing a German sentry on guard at a farmhouse situated in a clearing on the outskirts of the valley town.

Headed by Lt. Edward A. Silk, a Raider squad of light machine gunners, so called because of their willingness to volunteer for hazardous duty, was dispatched to reconnoiter the farm. Having reached the edge of the woods, the squad cautiously left the protection of the trees and began closing in on the house. They had advanced only a few yards when they were discovered by the enemy and were forced to beat a hasty retreat under a hail of machine gun and small arms fire which poured from every window of the farmhouse.

With his squad once more in the shelter of the woods, Lt. Silk ordered the Raiders to return the enemy fire. But as the fire fight grew in intensity, it became evident that the Krauts were too well fortified for the light machine guns of the Raiders to have any effect. Lt. Silk studied the situation thoughtfully. Here was a major barrier in the path of his battalion. Still, to order his squad across that open ground would be the signing of their death warrants. If he tried it himself, there might be a chance.

Ordering his men to cover him as best they could, Lt. Silk dashed from the concealing woods into the clearing. While the Raiders poured fire into the windows of the house, the lieutenant, running like a quarterback, zigzagged 100 yards across open ground to the cover of a three-foot-high wall which surrounded the farm. Then, working around to a position between the house and his squad, he rested his carbine on the wall and began firing into the windows.

After several minutes of this with no apparent lessening of the enemy fire, however, Silk decided to assault the house single handedly. Vaulting the stone wall, the lieutenant raced for the side of the building, 50 yards away. The surprised Krauts poured fire from their machine guns and small arms at the intrepid attacker. But Silk seemed to lead a charmed life.



An infantry patrol scouts through the densely wooded Vosges forest. Mines and "tree bursts" were always a danger.

Gaining the corner of the house, Silk paused a few moments for breath and then began inching around the structure until he was directly under the window from which the enemy machine gun was being fired. Unobserved by the Jerries, Silk tossed a grenade into the window and streaked for a wood pile on the opposite side of the yard. As he crossed a second machine gun opened fire, spraying lead around him and raking the woodpile after he had dived behind it. But the first machine gun had been silenced. The grenade had found its mark.

Silk now turned his attention to the second gun which was firing from a woodshed to the rear of the house. Jerking the pin from another grenade, the lieutenant tore across the yard toward the woodshed, lobbed the grenade through the doorway as he ran past, and ducked around a corner of the house.

The grenade went off, all right. But the Krauts continued firing. The throw had been wide of the target. With enemy bullets chewing the corner of the house, Silk pulled the pin from his last grenade and rushed for the woodshed a second time. This time, only the silence of death followed the explosion.

But the farmhouse full of Jerries still remained to be dealt with, and Silk hadn't even one round of carbine ammunition left. Running to the side of the building, the lieutenant began hurling rocks through the window calling for the Krauts to surrender. His ruse was effective. Twelve Germans, all who were left, walked from the farmhouse with their hands held high.

Months later, Lt. Silk's heroism was officially recognized with the award of the Medal of Honor, making

him the first man to win the award in the division, although another was presented with that singular honor at an earlier date for his part in a later action.

To the right of the 2nd Battalion, meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion 398th fought off two Kraut counterattacks and suffered several casualties from snipers in the Bois du Grand Fays, but made a considerable advance.

In the 399th area, where that regiment had been in a holding position for two days, the 1st Battalion, with Co. F attached, moved into new positions just north of the Plaine river while Co. B attacked to the east to clear a section of La Trouche which the 398th had by-passed the day before. In one small but bitter engagement during the day, the 1st Platoon of Co. K drove several enemy machine guns from the forward slope of Hill 467.6 and took the hill after a two and one-half hour fire fight.

While the 399th, with the 1st Battalion of the 398th attached, continued to clear hills to their immediate front in the northern part of our division sector, the Mine Platoon of Co. C 325th Engrs., on 21 November, removed a time bomb from a sawmill in La Trouche. The presence of the bomb had been reported to us by an enemy PW, and its disposal enabled Co. B to complete occupation of the town. The 925th F A Battalion lent valuable assistance by destroying an enemy road block astride the road to Celles-sur-Plaine.

On the western edge of our front, the 1st Battalion 397th moved into Moyennoutier, south and west of the village of St. Blaise, without hindrance from the enemy, and sent patrols beyond the town. This advance



was chalked up while the 2nd Battalion 398th, in the division center, was moving into an assembly area and the 3rd Battalion was closing into Moyennoutier. Here, for the first time since we had entered combat, we were billeted in houses. A mobile shower unit was set up and most of the 398th was able to crowd under the refreshing spray and change into clean clothing. Ironically, the 1st Battalion of the 397th, which had taken the town and erected the showers, was unable to pause long enough to enjoy them.

Because the enemy Winter Line showed signs of collapsing completely on 22 November, higher Headquarters ordered that we form a motorized Task Force with enough speed to exploit a major breakthrough and keep the enemy off balance. Task Force "Fooks," named for Col. Nelson I. Fooks, regimental commander of the 398th Inf., was thereupon organized. Elements making up the Task Force were the Command Group and I and R Platoon of the regiment, the 2nd Battalion 398th, the 100th Rcn. Tp., Btry. A of the 69th Armored F A Battalion, a platoon of Co. B 636th TD Battalion, Co. A of the 753rd Tank Battalion, a platoon of Co. B 325th Engrs., a platoon of the 5th AAA Battalion, and personnel from the 325th Medical Battalion and the 100th Signal Co.

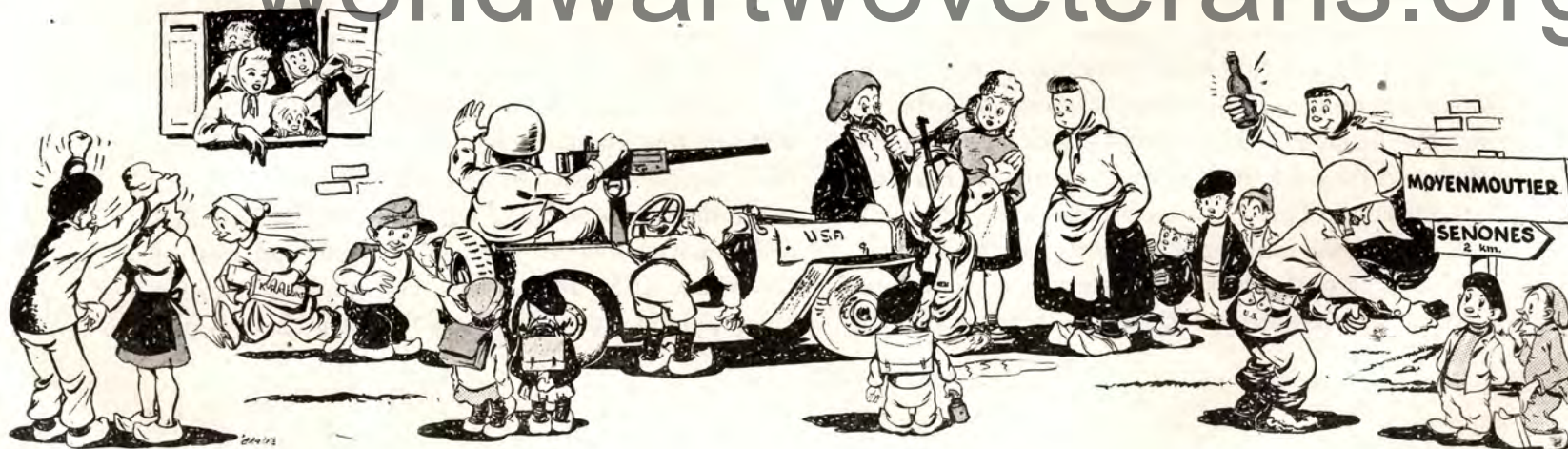
This powerful striking force moved east from Moyennoutier with the object of advancing to St. Blaise, 20 kilometers away. In this mission, Task Force Fooks was something less than a success. It was stopped cold by a mined but unmanned road block in Senones after an advance of some eight or nine kilometers.

Also attacking on this rainy morning, the 1st Battalion of the 397th, moving along the north side of the road between Moyennoutier and Senones, passed beyond the stalled Task Force and, despite heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire from a hill southeast of Senones, captured La Petite Raon to the northeast. The 2nd Battalion of the 397th, advancing behind the 1st Battalion, was held up by enemy resistance at first, but after forcing the Krauts to withdraw, also bypassed the stalled Task Force and continued south around Senones to capture Vieux Mouline. Finally, the 3rd Battalion of the 397th moved through Task Force Fooks to take Senones itself by a combination of infiltration and direct assault. The 3rd Battalion of the 398th was then attached to the 397th and moved into Senones later in the day.

By nightfall, Task Force Fooks, still slowed by roadblocks, had progressed southeast as far as Le Vermont where it was joined by the 3rd Battalion of the 398th. The 1st Battalion of the 398th, which with part of the 117th Rcn. Group was holding the whole left and rear of the division, was able to move to La Trouche where they finally got their hot showers.

Preparing to attack the following day through the 397th, the entire 399th Inf. assembled in the neighborhood of Senones. The regiment encountered no opposition except an anti-tank ditch, a blown bridge, felled trees, and a few suicide detachments of snipers who caused several casualties before they were eliminated.

Interrogation of prisoners showed that the enemy, on 24 November, was confused. In some cases he had been ordered to hold at all costs, in others to withdraw, and in others to fight a delaying action. How





A machine gun crew holding an important forest position.



KP was a break. There are worse assignments than washing mess-kits.

confused he was is shown by the fact that the 397th Inf., which was in reserve, captured 81 prisoners.

While the bearded and weary men of the 397th shaved and ate a belated Thanksgiving dinner, the 399th moved through the lines to attack along the highways up the Bruche River valley. Our plan was for the 399th to make a right end-run north and east up the Bruche River valley while the 1st Battalion of the 398th made a left end-run eastward up the Plaine River valley. These two attacks, it was hoped, would leave a large force of the enemy trapped in the inaccessible mountains of the Middle Vosges between the two rivers.

Moving up the Bruche River valley, which we shared with the veteran 3rd Div., the 1st Battalion of the 399th, led by Co. C with Co. B on its left, had reached Rothau, eight kilometers northeast of St. Blaise, by mid-afternoon. But the other troops were slowed by enemy fire from Fouday, a town on the east side of the river and about half way to Rothau. The attack was made along a narrow front and designed only to clear roadways, by-passing the strongholds which the enemy had built in the forested mountains. Mopping up behind the onrushing 1st Battalion, the 2nd Battalion 399th, therefore, cleared the secondary roads which ran parallel to the main roads overrun by the 1st Battalion. Co. E led this 2nd Battalion attack, conducted in a column of companies, through the town of Plaine and beyond. By nightfall, the enemy was really in a bad way.

To the north, in their left-end run to clear the Plaine River valley, the 1st Battalion of the 398th and part of the 117th Rcn. Sqdn., assigned the task of merely keeping in contact with the enemy, overran the towns

of Celles-sur-Plaine, Bionville, Allarmont, Vexaincourt, Luvigny, and, finally, Raon-sur-Plaine in an eastward drive of about 15 kilometers.

The 1st Battalion of the 399th, on what was to be the last full day of attack, 25 November, still with the Bruche river on its right, moved north to take a section of the highway leading west from Schirmeck into Garndfontaine. The 399ers then continued east and north along the river and the highway leading east from Schirmeck. At Wisches, the enemy put up his last fight. From here the battalion was motorized with what trucks the regiment had and fanned out north of the main road which ran east to the Alsatian city of Strassbourg. Co. C took Heiligeburg on the right while Co. A captured Nieder Haslach and allowed Co. B to push through to take Ober Haslach. For this rapid action, the battalion was commended by our division's commander, Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burrell, the second commendation for the battalion in ten days.

The 2nd Battalion of the 399th, still fighting to the right of the 1st Battalion, was going through heart-breaking terrain. It overcame the enemy at Les Quevelles, where after the fight 22 Germans surrendered by sending out two men with a white flag. Now fighting west along the Schirmeck-Grandfontaine road, Co. F took Wackenbach, Co. G seized Vacquenoux, and Co. E went on to Framont.

The 398th Inf., minus its 1st Battalion, moved on foot and in trucks from Le Vermont north into Salm, preparing to leap-frog the 399th on the following day. A patrol was sent into Grandfontaine, just north of Salm. Four prisoners were captured by the patrol in the town, and the Centurymen were informed by



The Rabodeau River and blasted bridge in the Vosges town of Senones. The patriotic inhabitants of Senones afforded us a warm welcome.



French women who collaborated with the Germans have their hair cut by members of the FFI. They were later stripped and marched out of town.

civilians that they were the first Americans to enter the village. Later, the 1st Battalion of the 398th entered Grandfontaine in force.

The trap around the enemy in the mountains between the Plaine and Bruche rivers was now snapped shut. Our Vosges Campaign was over.

In a stirring letter of commendation to our division on the successful completion of this trying assignment, Gen. Burrell wrote: "Today the 100th Division has completed a series of important and difficult operations against the enemy. All objectives have been taken. It has pierced and rolled up the enemy winter line of the Vosges and captured the towns of Raon L'Etape and St. Blaise. By its actions it has contributed materially to the success of the larger forces. It has established a reputation for its spirit and fighting qualities, no matter how rough the terrain. Every member of the Division can take justifiable pride in its achievements in the initial and prolonged operation against the enemy. Please accept my personal appreciation and congratulations for a job well done."

At 0930 on 26 November, after the 3rd Battalion of the 399th had moved through the 1st Battalion above Ober Haslach, an order was received from VI Corps instructing our division to withdraw from action and assemble around Moyenmoutier and Raon L'Etape. The civilian population, under the impression we were retreating, experienced a few tense moments as our long lines of trucks and foot troops retraced hard-won steps. But, reassured, the Alsations were soon smiling and waving again.

The remainder of the day was passed in conjecture as to what lay ahead.

Bitche

From a proud tower in the town

Death looks gigantically down.

—POE—*The City in the Sea.*

There are times when it is well that clairvoyance is not a human capability. For, had we been enabled to foresee what unbelievable hardships lay ahead of us, some of the joy which we felt upon withdrawing from the Vosges mountains would have been considerably dulled. After fighting victoriously through that wooded hell, what terrain could be worse, what contrivances of the enemy more cunning, what test more severe? We were veterans now, wise in the ways of warfare. The terrible, gnawing doubt which grips green troops at the moment of entering combat was no longer a part of us. We had met the Germans on terrain which had never before been invaded successfully, and had emerged crowned with laurels. Of course, we were still scared. Every soldier worthy of the name always is scared. He *knows* what 88s can do. But our "freezing" days were over.

Flushed with victory, morale soared to new heights as we were loaded on trucks for the shift to the area of Sarrebourg, some 40 kilometers to the north of our former division sector. We sang old training songs during the cold ride, talked about mail, the possibilities of a beer ration, sleeping in houses, a few days of rest. We didn't know about Bitche, yet.

In our new area, our division was attached to the XV Corps and remained in corps reserve until 3 December, with the division CP in Sarrebourg. Combat Team-8 moved through Sarrebourg and southeast to

Scenes from the division Rest Center at Sarrebourg. Tired dogfaces were sent here for a few days of relaxation from fighting.

Troisfontaine about nine kilometers away. Here the 398th went into training, stressing the care and cleaning of equipment. Movies were provided by Special Services and stubby bottles of beer and cans of peanuts were issued.

Combat Team-9 did not move until the following day, 28 December, when it went into an area around Niederviller and Schneckenbusch, three or four kilometers southeast of Sarrebourg.

Most of the action of the last few days of November and the first few days of December centers around Combat Team-7. With its command group in Dossenheim about 30 kilometers east and slightly north of Sarrebourg, and the other units in the surrounding towns—Neuwiller, Ernolsheim, and Hattmatt—the regiment relieved the 324th Inf. of the 44th Div. and was attached to the 45th Div. as reserve. In this area, 15 kilometers north of the city of Saverne, the regiment was close to the main road between Hagenau and Saarbrücken—one of the two invasion routes through the Saverne “gate.”

The 1st Battalion of the 397th entered the lines again on 29 November when it took over the fox-holes, CPs, and installations of the 45th Div's. 1st Battalion 157th Inf. These positions were on high ground overlooking the Hagenau highway just north of Ingwiller. During the morning the 2nd Battalion had moved from Ernolsheim to Weinbourg, and the 3rd Battalion moved behind it into Weiterswiller. Advancing to Ingwiller, the regimental Cannon Company fired 50 rounds at probable enemy positions.

While Co. B of the 1st Battalion 397th remained in position on the right or east side of the Hagenau highway just north of Ingwiller, Co. A, followed by Co. C, attacked north along the other side of the highway. As soon as the attack began at 0800 on 30 November, Co. A received fire from enemy foot troops to the northeast. The advance went slowly until, in the face of mortar fire, Co. C was committed on the east side of the highway and the two companies made a little headway. To the left of the 1st Battalion, the 2nd Battalion secured the town of Weinbourg, sent Co. G north to take the high ground overlooking the Millbach brook which ran eastward into the Moder River just above Ingwiller, and sent a rifle platoon and Weapons Platoon of Co. E northwest to Sparsbach, two kilometers away, as security for the left flank.





The 3rd Battalion, leaving Co. K in Weiterswiller as security, moved northeast to Weinbourg, passed through the 2nd Battalion, and continued northeast along the road toward the Millbach, just east or downstream from the positions taken by Co. G. Because of heavy mortar fire, the battalion had to infiltrate troops one platoon at a time to take up positions along the stream and in a group of buildings at a watermill less than a kilometer west of the Hagenau highway where Cos. A and C were attacking northward.

The first day of December was clear and sunny. The 398th and 399th Inf. were conducting training programs concerned with the assault on fortified positions, learning about bangalore torpedoes, beehive and pole charges. The 100th Cav. Rcn. Tp. was attached to the 106th Cavalry Group, and moved to Zittersheim, northwest of Ingwiller, where the 397th was attacking and just south of Wingen. The Rcn. Troop was to outpost the town of Zittersheim and keep in contact with the enemy around Wingen and Puberg to the north while the division was preparing to move into line.

On the front held by the 397th Inf. the day was quiet except that Co. K marched some 7000 yards, from Weitersviller to Ingwiller, and a patrol of Co. I, attempting to take Hill 296, two kilometers north of Ingwiller, was stopped by artillery fire and withdrew south for the night. The 1st Battalion of the 397th was along the Hagenau highway in a valley just to the west of this hill.

Except for the 397th which continued its attack, the division spent 2 December moving into position to attack on the following day. The assembly areas were

around Metting, northeast of Sarrebourg. The division CP was in Metting itself. The 398th, which was to attack through parts of the 44th Division and the 106th Cavalry Group, and take Wingen, Puberg, and the roads to the west, moved to the neighborhood of La Petite Pierre. The 1st Battalion trucked from Val-lerysthal to Lohr, 15 miles to the northeast, then marched to a bivouac 12 kilometers away in the area just southwest of Zittersheim. The 2nd Battalion motored from Troisfontaine (Dreibrunnen) to Schoenberg and then hiked to a bivouac area west of the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion, which was to be in reserve, motored to La Petite Pierre.

Behind the 398th, the 399th Inf. took over the area around Schalbach, Veckersviller, and Sieviller.

In the continuing attack of the 397th, when one platoon of Co. I was stopped by artillery fire at the base of Hill 296 north of Ingwiller, another platoon worked around the base of the wooded hill and attacked the enemy from the flank and rear, forcing his withdrawal. The two platoons then took the hill, overrunning an enemy observation post. Co. F, advancing up another part of the hill, found that the enemy had withdrawn so rapidly that he had left a field telephone and wire in position. The company followed the direction of the wire down the hill. When the hill had been taken the troops dug in because enemy artillery, from Hill 370 to the northeast, was falling in the area. The 1st Battalion was on the south facing the enemy dug in 800 yards away in the direction of Rothbach. North of these positions, Co. I faced Hill 370 and the burning houses of Lichtenberg to the northeast. Co. L was moving into the area from Ingwiller, encountering heavy artillery and mortar fire.



In the rain of 3 December, the 397th Inf. continued its advance above Ingwiller. The wooded hills made communication difficult and contact between small units was in a deplorable state. The enemy had strung trip wires and planted mines through much of the area and heavy enemy artillery concentrations in the direction of Rothbach added to the hazards of the 397th position. Pushing forward doggedly, however, the 397th was able to complete the capture of Hills 296 and 369 on the way to Hill 375, the immediate objective. Three hundred and eighty-four rounds of interdictory fire by the regimental Cannon Co., accurately directed by the company's forward observers and men in the rifle companies by means of radio, greatly aided the advance. Some of the prisoners taken during the 397th push were in civilian clothing and masquerading as shoemakers and carpenters. Others claimed to be AWOL or on furlough.

The 398th began its attack from south of Puberg and Wingen, on a front to the west of the 397th. The 2nd Battalion of the 398th attacked on the west, and moved north along the road into Puberg. The leading elements by-passed two road blocks which were protected by machine guns and artillery, and captured the town.

One of these roadblocks was an abatis at a point where dense forest came down to the road on both sides. Sgt. Dee W. Crosby, a squad leader in the 2nd Platoon of Co. B 325th Engineers, was assigned the task of securing the abatis. When his squad moved through it to the enemy side, Germans in entrenchments and houses only a few hundred yards away, began to fire machine guns and rifles at the Engineers. From a partially concealed position, Sgt. Crosby di-

rected the withdrawal of his squad while returning the enemy fire. His direction was so expert, that only one man was lost in the engagement. A short time later, Sgt. Crosby volunteered to return for a reconnaissance of the roadblock so that a tankdozer could remove the trees. Crawling through the abatis, though a sniper had been firing at the spot from only 30 yards away, Crosby found anti-personnel mines but no anti-tank mines. The tankdozer, thereupon ground through the roadblock and the armored vehicles went on to knock out the enemy positions.

By nightfall, the 2nd Battalion 398th was several thousand yards beyond Puberg on the road to Soucht.

The 3rd Battalion 398th swung right toward Rosteig with only light mortar fire hindering their advance.

The 1st Battalion 398th, however, attacking east against Wingen, had been less successful. Like most of the towns in that area, Wingen lay in a flat valley surrounded by steep hills. It was a communications center on the Moder river, with a railroad and a highway running along opposite sides of the river from Wimmenau and Ingwiller to the southeast. A road net led north toward Meisenthal and northwest toward Rosteig, with another highway stretching from Zittersheim to the southwest and into Wingen. The 1st Battalion, with 3 TDs from the 106th Cav. and attached engineers, attacked along this main road and through the valley against harassing fire from enemy foot troops and murderous 88s. The battalion reached a roadblock to the south of the town and moved to take hill positions overlooking the settlement from the south. Co. C, to the east, sent patrols down to houses on the eastern edge of the town, but the men were driven back by machine gun fire. Late

in the afternoon Co. A went down into the town. The company is known to have captured several houses, but during the night suffered such severe losses in prisoners that it later had to be entirely reconstituted. When night fell the engineers were still working to remove the roadblock south of town.

The 399th, following behind the 398th, prepared to pass through in an attack.

Continuing its attack northward to take Hill 375 on 4 December, the 397th was slowed to a halt before noon by the stubborn enemy. Our forces withdrew so that all available artillery could be thrown upon the positions which were camouflaged six-foot by ten-foot holes protected by sandbags and logs or roadblocks covered by the all-purpose 88s used as flat-trajectory weapons. But as our troops backed off, the enemy followed, and our artillery failed to do much damage. The 397th attacked so quickly after the barrage, however, that the enemy was caught outside his holes. The regiment took Hill 375 by late afternoon. It had been a hard day for the medical aid men and the litter bearers because of the inimical terrain and the enemy mortar and artillery fire.

In the 398th Inf. sector to the west, the 2nd Battalion, with Co. G remaining in position to ward off counterattacks, sent Co. F northward toward Soucht through the Forêt Dominale de la Petite Pierre Nord. The 3rd Battalion in the center completed the taking of Rosteig against bitter enemy fire from the high ground around the town. To the east and south, the 1st Battalion sent patrols into Wingen in an unsuccessful attempt to make contact with Co. A. Co. C then pushed northeast along the ridge toward the highway coming into the town from the east. From these positions observed artillery fire could be dropped on strong points in the town, but the advance by Co. C was delayed by enemy mortar and artillery.

At one minute past midnight, the morning of 5 De-

cember, the 397th Inf., which had been attached to the 45th Div. for the past six days, reverted to our division, as did the 100th Reconnaissance Troop which had been operating with the 106th Cavalry. The Recon. Troop was to continue reconnaissance of the left flank of the division and to maintain contact with the 44th Div. Contact could not be made with the enemy, and when the 397th attacked in the morning, it found that the Krauts had pulled out of the area to its front. The enemy had, however, left many mines, felled trees with trip wires attached, and various forms of booby traps to impede the troops. By the end of the day the 1st Battalion of the 397th had taken Wimmenau, two kilometers east of Wingen, and the 2nd Battalion had secured Reipertsviller and Lichtenberg to the north as well as Rothbach to the east.

After a twenty-minute artillery preparation, the 1st Battalion of the 398th entered Wingen just before noon and took the high ground to the north and east. The 2nd Battalion, in the center, sent patrols into Soucht and Meisenthal. The 3rd Battalion to the west completed the capture of the hills north of Rosteig.

The 399th now moved through the 398th sector. The attacking force was the 3rd Battalion with Cannon Co., a platoon of Anti-Tank Co., a platoon from Co. C of the 325th Engrs., and half a Mine Platoon. The engineers were to prove very useful, for the battalion had hardly begun its advance northeast from the Wingen-Rosteig railroad when it ran into roadblocks which the engineers removed and into a destroyed bridge which the engineers made passable. The advance continued with Co. L to the west and Co. I to the east of the highway leading from Wingen northeast to Sarreinsberg. Civilians informed the regiment that the enemy was withdrawing to Lemberg, leaving in haste and abandoning their equipment in Soucht and Meisenthal. Moving up the highway on which, since it was the only main road in the division





sector, the 399th had priority, the two companies did not encounter the enemy and by mid-afternoon had reached their objectives. Co. L was in the little settlement of Colonne at a road junction just east of Meisenthal, and Co. I was to the south and east at a junction of the Wingen-Sarreinsberg highway and the road running from Wimmenau to the east into Meisenthal. The 1st Battalion of the 399th followed the 3rd Battalion by bounds, and the 2nd Battalion patrolled to the west, covering the Rosteig-Volksberg road and establishing contact with the 114th Inf., of the 44th Div., the unit on the division's left. The 925th F A Battalion had returned to Combat Team-9 after its mission with the 398th Inf.

Rain was still falling on 6 December when the 3rd Battalion of the 399th Inf. resumed its attack astride the highway leading north from Wingen to Lemberg. By mid-morning the battalion had taken Sarreinsberg, Goetzenbruck, and Plateau 409 to the north without a fight. But here there were indications that the enemy meant to hold Lemberg. The regimental I and R Platoon, working ahead of the battalion, found that the enemy had destroyed a bridge on the road just south of Lemberg and had entrenchments running parallel to the west of the road. When these entrenchments were fired on, the Germans returned mortar fire. The enemy had a battalion of 105s just south of the east-west highway between Lemberg and Enchenberg; he had 75s and 88s north of Lemberg, entrenchments and fortifications on Hill 423, a hill around whose base on the south, west, and north lay Lemberg itself, and a company of the 953rd Volksgrenadier regiment on Hill 345 just east of Lemberg and north of the highway to Mouterhouse.

After reorganizing, the battalion attacked with three companies abreast. Co. L, to the west of the road, moved through the woods but was stopped when

it reached a clearing just south of the highway to Enchenberg. Artillery fire from Hill 423 in Lemberg forced Co. K to dig in just southeast of the town when it had advanced to the edge of the woods east of the road. Farther east, as it moved northeast toward the Mouterhouse highway, Co. I was stopped by artillery from Hill 435. The battalion spent the night in these positions, preparing to attack after an artillery preparation the following morning. The 1st Battalion of the 399th moved up to support positions and the 2nd Battalion remained in reserve. The regimental CP moved to Sarreinsberg.

While the 1st Battalion of the 398th regrouped around Wingen, the 2nd Battalion moved into Soucht where the troops were billeted in houses, and the 3rd Battalion moved into Meisenthal and sent patrols east into St. Louis and west to make contact with the 44th Div.

On the 397th Inf. front to the east, the 1st Battalion took Wildenguth and Melch which the enemy did not defend. Then the 2nd Battalion, moving along trails through thick woods to the north of Melch, dug in an all-around defense on Hill 335 about half a kilometer south of Mouterhouse, held by the enemy in force. There was no opposition to this move, though there was difficulty in carrying the heavy machine guns and mortars of Co. G through the woods. Chow was brought up from Reipertsviller, and the battalion spent the night patrolling. The 3rd Battalion remained in reserve. Co. A of the 325th Engrs. and the Mine Platoon of the regimental Anti-Tank Co. spent the day clearing the roads of mines and felled trees, many of which were booby-trapped.

The enemy which the 399th Inf. faced on the gray and rainy anniversary of Pearl Harbor was not merely entrenched on all the commanding ground near Lemberg; he also manned concrete pillboxes at the junction of the road running north from St. Louis to the Lemberg-Enchenberg road, on the hill at the east edge of Lemberg. At the western base of Hill 345, on the north side of the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road, he had anti-tank guns covering all routes of approach. 20mm. anti-aircraft guns, used as anti-tank guns mounted on armored vehicles, had been dug in to serve as pillboxes.

When the 3rd Battalion of the 399th attacked following a ten-minute preparation by Corps artillery which changed to a rolling barrage lifting a hundred yards every four minutes, Co. I on the east flank was almost immediately stopped south of the Lemberg-



We took losses, too. Above, an American tank knocked out on the outskirts of Lemberg. Right, one of our big guns is jockeyed into position in a field south of the town.

Mouterhouse road. The enemy was firing from positions on Hill 345 in a curve of the road and from pillboxes, fixed armored vehicles, and buildings at the base of the hill. If the company advanced, it would have to move up hill into an arc where the enemy had fire from three sides.

Co. K, working through murderous cross-fire, was able to cover only 400 yards in two hours; then it was stopped north of the Mouterhouse road, to the north and west of Co. I, by enemy fire from the left on Hill 423. After an artillery concentration on these positions, Co. K crept forward suffering heavy casualties and by mid-afternoon one platoon had reached the forward slope of Hill 380 which faced Hill 423 from the southeast. With the other platoons on the reverse slope, the advance was again stopped. To the fire from Hill 423 was added fire from enemy entrenched in a ravine to the other flank.

At noon, Co. L attempted to move into the gap between Cos. I and K caused by the advance of Co. K. By attacking north and northeast up the long curving slope of Hill 405, Co. L would flank both the positions on Hill 435 which were delaying Co. I on the east, and the positions in the ravine which were stopping Co. K to the west. After a slight advance Co. L was withdrawn to allow further artillery preparation.

To the west of the Sarreinsberg-Lemberg Highway, Co. C drove forward against a pillbox at the junction of the St. Louis road from the south and the Enchenberg road running west and captured three 20mm. guns. Further west, also attacking toward the Enchenberg road, Co. B crawled across open ground in its approach, but enemy fire was so heavy that those

elements which could do so were ordered to pull back. Two platoons of Co. B had to remain in the open ground until after dark. On the western edge of the regimental front, Co. A held blocking positions which were under artillery and mortar attack during the day and throughout the night.

On the 397th front to the east of Lemberg, the 2nd Battalion had seized a part of Mouterhouse, the important town protecting the southern approaches to the Campe de Bitche. Just before midnight on 6 December, S. Sgt. Herbert Harvey, a Co. H forward observer for mortars, and a nine-man patrol from Co. E had started northwest along a trail which ran through dense woods to the road leading into Mouterhouse from the southwest. Because of the activity of enemy patrols, the men avoided the path and advanced parallel to it through the woods. The final 150 yards to the road were a steep slope down which the patrol was compelled to crawl before making a dash across the road. Here they came upon a pond not shown on their map, but shallow enough to wade across. Entering an isolated house on the edge of town, the patrol ordered the astonished civilian inhabitants into the basement. Then they set up an observation post from which they could watch enemy activity on the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road and Hill 275 to the north of the town. Spotting Jerry entrenchments, a road block and an armored vehicle, Sgt. Harvey directed accurate mortar fire on these positions.

Meanwhile, attacking northward along either side of a trail leading down the north slope of Hill 335 toward Mouterhouse, Cos. G and E moved through a section of woods which ended 75 yards from a church to the south of the town. In attempting to cross this open ground, the troops were immediately blanketed by fire from 88s, mortars and machine guns.



Left, an engineer gingerly deactivates a "dud" from the center of a highway. Above, mines removed from a road leading to Bitche. The enemy made constant use of this weapon.

S. Sgt. Buddy Thomas of Co. G braved sniper fire to move across the clearing to the church. Finding that the door was located on the north, the enemy side, he waited until the remainder of his squad had joined him and then ordered them to boost him through a window. From this vantage point, he directed other elements of his company into the church.

Co. E, storming the church on the left, advanced through the cemetery. The Easy Co. men suffered several casualties as enemy fire chipped pieces of stone from the tombstones and sent them spinning into the crouching Infantrymen. Toward dusk, however, Co. E had also gained the shelter of the church.

Under cover of darkness, Co. G continued their advance to the schoolhouse. They were followed by a platoon from Co. E, while other elements of the two companies captured the Sarriensberg-Lemberg road junctions and cleared houses at the base of Hill 275 and the western edge of town. Here they paused for the night, the platoons of Co. E withdrawing to the church in preparation for resumption of the attack the following morning.

Co. F of this fighting battalion, left reserve positions late in the afternoon and, swinging east, crossed into the northeastern part of town. The 2nd Platoon, coming up through a defile, so surprised a number of Germans dug in on a cemetery that they surrendered. By the end of 7 December, the 397th was well on the way to taking Mouterhouse.

In its third day of attack, 8 December, the 399th Inf. began to succeed on the Lemberg sector. The 2nd Battalion, moving up from reserve in Goetzenbruck, was committed to an end run to flank the German strongpoints on Hill 345, that hill in the curve of the Lemberg-Mouterhouse highway which had stopped the 3rd Battalion for two days. When

Co. F tried to approach the hill from the southeast, to the right of Co. I, it was stopped along a draw and streambed. But Co. G, further east, was able to cross the highway and go up Hill 327 which faced Hill 345 across a steep ravine to the east. Outflanked, the enemy began to withdraw, and Co. F was able to move up Hill 345 just before noon. As the attack gained momentum Co. F took the hill just north of 345, and Co. G moved out along a ridge to take Hill 329 even further north and east facing a ridge along which ran the Lemberg-Bitche railroad. Machine gun fire from this railroad ridge slowed Co. G, but Co. F cut across the railway in the late afternoon. In the center, aided by the flanking attack of the 2nd Battalion, the 3rd Battalion also advanced to positions they had formerly reached and given up to allow artillery to soften the strongpoints. This time there was no withdrawal in spite of machine gun fire from Hill 405 to the rear, road blocks and mines. Co. L reached the head of a valley just east of Hill 423, to the other three sides of which lay Lemberg. The furthest point of advance for Co. L was the railroad underpass on the edge of this valley. Here the company was stopped by 20mm. fire from buildings to their front and by machine guns emplaced on the ridge above the railroad.

On the left flank of the 399th, elements of the 398th took over the positions which Co. A of the 399th had captured and held against great odds. Co. A, thereupon, moved to St. Louis as a mobile reserve, with the exception of one platoon which shifted to the east side of the road running north from St. Louis.

In this sector, Cos. C and B of the 399th, were preparing to launch a night attack across the open

In the late afternoon, under a white phosphorous smoke screen, Cos. B and C attacked with the 1st Platoon of Co. A 781st Tank Battalion. Two of the four tanks were almost immediately disabled when their tracks were blown off by anti-tank mines. But the remaining two tanks, flanked by part of Co. A and Co. C, battered their way directly up the highway and into Lemberg, where they began blasting the stubborn enemy out of the houses. The tanks fired point-blank into the cellars, and the infantrymen threw hand grenades into the windows and through the doors. The fighting continued all night and it wasn't until late afternoon of the following day that Lemberg could be called secure.

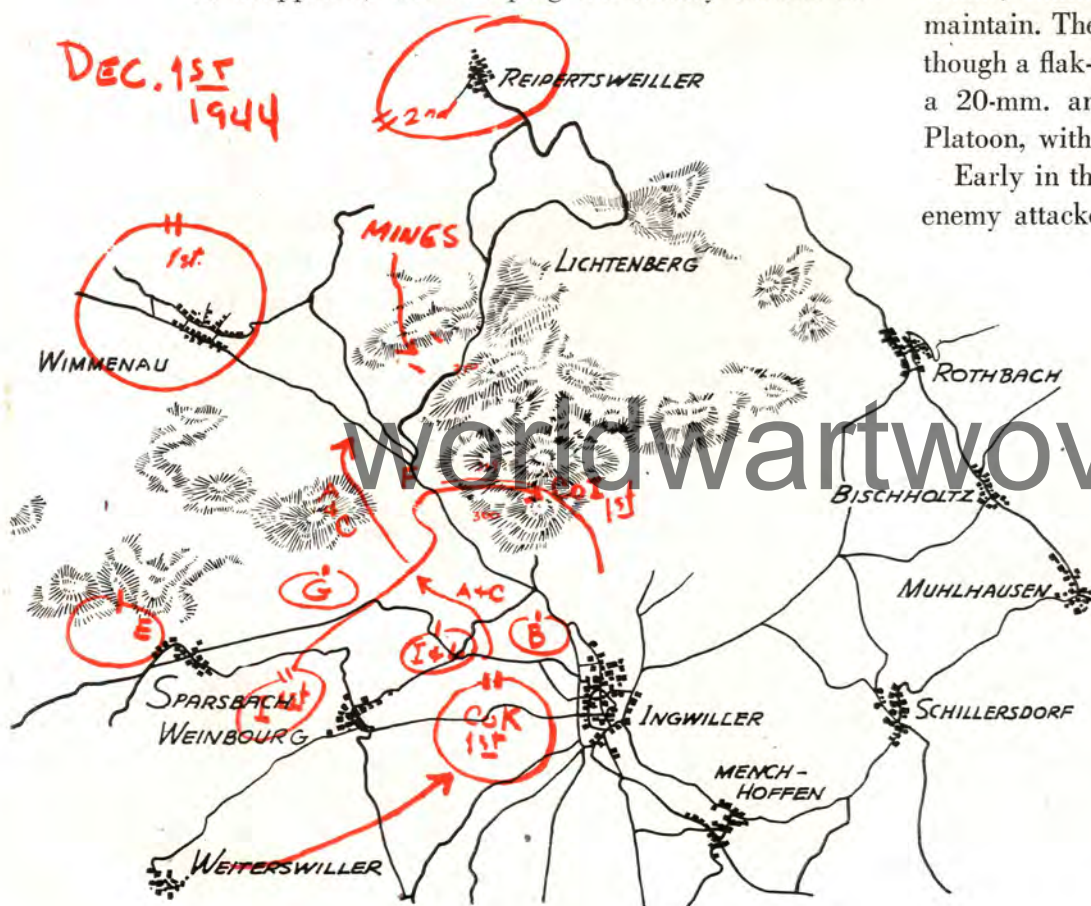
the center of town. The only real action of the day was the capture of a few enemy guarding a road-block east of town by a squad of Co. F mudsloggers.

In the 1st Battalion 397th's attack to take a cross-roads east of Mouterhouse, Co. B was caught in a draw by artillery fire, but continued infiltrating. Not all casualties could be evacuated before night, and the mined roads over which the litter bearers had to pick their way in the blackness, delayed the complete removal of the wounded until midnight.

With their two tanks in support, Cos. A and C of the 399th Inf. continued to push their attack in Lemberg through the night of 8-9 December. The house-to-house fighting was the toughest kind of combat. By 0315, the 1st Battalionites had cleared the main street in the southern half of town to a crossroads at the center. At daylight, Co. B entered Lemberg to begin clearing the side streets. Enemy resistance and artillery fire from hills to the north, slowed the attack, and another platoon of tanks was committed. By dark, the northern end of town had still to be cleared.

Along the railroad and high ground northeast of Lemberg, Co. F had two platoons dug in north of the railroad and to the west of a bridge spanning a railroad gorge. Except for one squad of the 3rd Platoon, the remainder of the company was south of the railroad on ground between two steep ravines. The wild terrain, the deep gorge of the railroad, and the thick woods, limited vision and made contact difficult to maintain. The enemy did not attack during the night, though a flak-wagon—a half-track vehicle armed with a 20-mm. anti-aircraft gun—did approach the 1st Platoon, withdrawing on sighting the E Co. men.

Early in the morning of 9 December, however, the enemy attacked from two sides with two flak-wagons



Tanks and TDs line up along the main street of Lemberg preparatory to moving forward in the drive against Bitche.



supported by infantry armed with automatic weapons. Having the advantage of terrain and fire-power, the Krauts forced the 1st Platoon into their foxholes and then overran the positions, firing into them at point-blank range. The 2nd Platoon, unable to come to their comrades rescue, with their own right flank exposed, circled back to the south side of the railroad and joined the rest of the company in regrouping.

The combined fire of Cos. F and G finally stopped the attack, and late in the afternoon, with Co. F holding on the right flank, Cos. E and G moved forward across the railroad toward Hochfirst Hill. As Co. E was climbing a ridge beyond the railway, it came under merciless fire from concealed enemy positions and from four flak-wagons on the road to its front. When one flak-wagon was finally hit by an anti-tank grenade and a second suffered a near-miss, the three remaining vehicles withdrew. But a dug-in half-track and several machine guns continued to fire, and Co. E pulled back in the darkness to the reverse slope. Co. G, nearer Lemberg on the left, went on and took Hochfirst Hill.

In the center of the 399th front the 3rd Battalion had a double mission. While Co. I moved into Lemberg to help the 1st Battalion secure the houses there, Cos. K and L were attempting to clear Hill 423. Lemberg surrounds this hill on all sides except the east. The task of Cos. K and L was to climb the dangerously open eastern slope and clear the houses on the crest.

During the attack 2nd Lt. Warren D. Behrens led his 3rd Platoon of Co. K, a platoon reduced to 17 men, in a wide arc around to the west of the hill following various roads until he was to the northwest of a group of enemy foxholes, two of which contained machine

guns. Exposing himself in order to deploy his platoon for the assault, Lt. Behrens saw that the attack uphill across fifty yards of open ground would cause many casualties. Instead he ran forward alone and, though being fired on constantly, threw two grenades, one into each of the machine gun emplacements. The grenades wounded two Germans, and the lieutenant killed two more with his carbine as they were trying to escape. The rest fled. While the platoon was coming up and regrouping, Lt. Behrens saw three enemy entering a house about a hundred yards away to the flank. With one of his men the lieutenant advanced to the house, ordered the man to throw in a grenade, and then shot the three Germans as they came out. Before the end of the day all the houses on the hill had been cleared by Cos. K and L.

The 397th Inf. continued seizing ground north of Mouterhouse from an enemy who showed little ability to resist except in the 3rd Battalion area to the north and west of town. There, when Co. K attempted to cover the advance of tanks up an open draw near Hammerkopf Hill, enemy artillery and mortars forced the tanks to withdraw, and the infantry was compelled to take the Kraut positions unaided. Co. L also ran into enemy artillery fire while taking the ridge called Le Witterschall, further north and to the west. The men dug in and held the ground under enemy artillery concentrations which were so heavy that the wounded could be moved out with only the greatest difficulty.

On the Lemberg front the enemy seemed to be pulling back toward Lambach and Reysersviller to the north. The 1st Battalion of the 399th Inf., having completed the mopping up of Lemberg, went into reserve



in St. Louis before midnight of 9 December. During 10 December, while the 2nd Battalion consolidated its positions on the Hochfirst to the northeast, the 3rd Battalion reorganized in the northeast sector of Lemberg under light artillery fire throughout the day. A platoon was sent to outpost le Schlossberg, the hill to north of town. In late afternoon the 398th began to relieve the 399th which went into division reserve.

To the east, the 397th continued north of Mouterhouse without interference from the enemy who had taken positions in a northwest-southeast line northeast of the town along a group of hills running parallel to the road and railroad between Hagenau and Bitche. Thus there was danger of an enemy attack from the east, but no opposition to the advance northward toward the Campe de Bitche.

Under a new Commanding Officer, Col. Paul G. Daly, who had replaced Col. Nelson I. Fooks, the 398th began its drive on 11 December toward Bitche and the Maginot Line in our division sector. The 3rd Battalion advanced north of Lemberg in the direction of Reyersviller, taking successive hills against enemy delaying action. The 2nd Battalion, which had been at a chateau called Alt Schmel behind the 2nd Battalion of the 399th, moved north across country, seizing hills and ridges to the rear of the positions held by the 397th on hills like Hammerkopf and Witterschall which faced northeast. Cos. F and G of the 398th were to seize the Sommerkopf Hill to the west of the railway and the eastern highway between Lemberg and Bitche. Co. G had nearly reached le Sommerkopf by nightfall, and Co. F, though halted for a while by a road block, moved up to the west of Co. G. On the 397th sector to the south and east of these positions, elements of the 3rd Battalion advanced

A wounded Centuryman is carried to the rear by four of his buddies. Left, cover was sparse in some sectors and positions had to be taken in the open.

northeast along le Witterschall to take Hill 395. During the early morning hours and intermittently throughout the day, enemy artillery shelled Hill 415, north of Mouterhouse, and the town itself, dropping shells all around the regimental CP. During the night Co. H had left a section of machine guns and 17 men on a nose of hill to the east of Hill 415. In the morning, the men had disappeared, except for one soldier who had been killed, but the guns were still in place.

While the 399th Inf., in reserve around Goetzenbruck and St. Louis, engaged in training in the assault on fortified positions, the 398th Inf. continued its advance toward Bitche on 12 December. The 3rd Battalion, on the west, moved north along the Lemberg-Reyersviller road with Co. I leading the attack behind a rolling barrage. By the end of day Co. I had dug in on the eastern slope of Hill 427, east of Lambach and Glassemberg, and overlooking Reyersviller from the south. Just west of Co. I, Co. K moved into positions on the northern slope of Hill 427 and just east of le Steinkopf, while Co. L seized the nose of le Spitzberg to the east so that it had command of the junction of the road from Lemberg and the road between Reyersviller and Bitche to the northeast. The 3rd Battalion positions to the south of Reyersviller thus formed an arc running along high ground west from the road junction. To the east of the junction in the 2nd Battalion sector, Cos. F and G had turned northwest from le Sommerkopf and taken the hill area south of the Reyersviller-Bitche road.

There were only two enemy actions on the 397th Inf. front, above Mouterhouse: the first was a sharp



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Taking "ten" during the initial drive on Bitche. Right, a Centuryman takes a sniping position in a ruined house. The Jerries learned respect for the M-1.

fire fight when the enemy was taken by surprise as part of the regiment took le Hochkopf, or Hill 430, the commanding peak in the area; the second was an enemy counterattack against Co. A on the crest of a hill, in which our troops drove off an enemy force twice its size. Although the enemy continued to throw in harassing mortar shells, one of which temporarily knocked out the mobile shower-unit, supplies got through unhindered and the 397th, when it had taken le Hochkopf, held positions well suited to block an enemy attack from the northeast while the division continued its northward advance toward Bitche.

Our division was now in position to begin its attack to breach the Maginot Line in the Bitche area. The plan called for the 398th Inf. to attack swiftly along the ridge north of Reyersviller as it circled west of Bitche, breaking through the Maginot Line by first taking Freudenberg Fort and the Freudenberg Outpost. Because divisions in other sectors had found the Maginot forts lightly defended, there was reason to believe that this plan might succeed. If the 398th met heavy resistance, it was to stop this attack and prepare for a major assault with stronger forces.

In the first action of this plan, the 398th entered Reyersviller on 13 December and took the ridges beyond it to the north and northwest. Co. A, attached to the 3rd Battalion, went into Reyersviller unopposed, and the 3rd Battalion moved to le Kirschscheid, a hill north of the western end of the town, and met only sniper fire. The 2nd Battalion, continuing its attack to the northwest, crossed the highway to Bitche

east of Ryersviller, moved along a hill road above the town. Co. F, spearheading this attack, was the first element of the division to reach the Maginot Line. Having taken le Schoenberg in the curve of the Bitche road, Co. F went on to the next hill, le Schimberg, just north of the center of Reyersviller and adjacent to the 3rd Battalion. Co. G followed to positions at the head of a valley running northeast toward Bitche, and Co. E moved up behind to hold le Schoenberg. The lines thus formed a part of a ring around Bitche, a kilometer and a half to the northeast. To block an attack from the northeast in the sector which separated the 398th and the 397th to the east, the 3rd Battalion of the 399th Inf. and Cos. A and B of the 398th moved into the hills between highway and the railroad from Lemberg to Bitche.

During the afternoon of 14 December, the 1st Battalion 398th Inf., moving northwest along the hill road above Ryersviller through the 2nd Battalion sector, launched an attack against the first of the major fortifications of the Maginot Line. The "Folly of France" may have been weak in other sectors, but before Bitche the construction of "The Line" was of unbelievable strength. Two of four main forts, Freudenberg and Schiessack, lay directly in our path. Fort Freudenberg was a huge single unit. Fort Schiessack was divided into 11 interconnected units of varying size and firepower. All were constructed of rigid, reinforced concrete with walls from three to ten feet thick. One unit, No. 11, descended five flights into the earth where a tunnel joined it to the other units. Even a narrow gauge supply railroad was included in this maze of fortifications. Of the 11 units, Nos. 2, 4, 6, and 9 were the largest and were provided with moats



and emergency exits. With Fort Otterbiel and Fort Grand Hohekirkel added, this 15-mile belt of concrete had stymied every effort of the Germans and was captured only after the French capitulated voluntarily after the fall of France.

With the 3rd Battalion keeping abreast to protect the left flank, the 1st Battalion 398th now hurled its might against Fort Freudenberg in the vicinity of Freudenberg Farm. In spite of unyielding enemy resistance by foot-troops supported by heavy artillery and flak guns, our infantry, artillery, and tank team, with tanks from Co. B of the 781st Tank Battalion, was able to neutralize this first major fort.

Cos. A and B then attempted to turn to the northeast against the outer forts of Fort Schiesseck beyond the Bitche road. Because this attack had to be made across a bold plateau, however, enemy opposition forced the companies to dig in after a short advance. Had they succeeded, the 3rd Battalion was to move ahead, take the rest of the fort and give supporting fire to the attack of the 399th on Bitche itself.

While the 2nd Battalion of the 398th held positions south and east of this attack and captured an infiltrating enemy patrol, the 1st Battalion of the 399th moved to le Schoenberg in a sector between 2nd Battalion 398th Inf., and 3rd Battalion 399th Inf. The 399th Inf. thus held hills on either side of the Lemberg-Bitche road. Although the enemy was defending Bitche from pillboxes, forts, entrenchments, and machine-gun emplacements strengthened with mine fields and roadblocks, the 1st Battalion sent patrols toward the town. A patrol from Co. A got into a lively fire fight just west of the College de Bitche and came back with two prisoners. Also near

the College, a Co. B patrol encountered some Krauts, killed two, and captured four. Patrols from the 3rd Battalion went far ahead of our lines, one to the hill just east of the College, where the enemy was observed laying a mine field, and another across the railroad as far as the lake called the Etang d'Hasselfort where the enemy had earlier been seen preparing positions. The 399th set up an observation post in the 1st Battalion sector on le Schoenberg which gave a remarkably clear view of Bitche and the declivitous hill at its center called the Citadel.

Co. A of the 398th Inf. again tried an attack on Fort Freudenberg on the morning of 15 December, but enemy opposition was so strong that the company pulled back to its line of departure to await an artillery softening up. Now began 36 hours of air and artillery attack on the forts surrounding Bitche. Besides its organic artillery battalions, our division had five attached battalions: two of 105mm howitzers, two of 155mm howitzers, and one of 4.5-inch guns, or 60 firing pieces. On call, in addition, were a battalion of 155mm rifles, a battalion of 8-inch howitzers, two batteries of 240mm howitzers, and one battery of 4.2-inch chemical mortars. During the night the 781st Tank Destroyer Battalion moved into place for direct fire from the edge of the woods three 105mm assault guns and two tanks mounted with 76mm guns. The 824th Tank Destroyer Battalion brought up three of its guns but could find a place for only one of its three-inchers. During the afternoon of 16 December two M12 self-propelled 155mm. rifles moved into firing position.

The first day of the firing a shell from a 240mm howitzer smashed the grilled door of Fort Freudenberg, and later another 240, failing to go off, plowed through the very walls. Seven Germans carrying a white flag came out and surrendered. But the artillery in general did not cause much damage to the forts. Men reported seeing large shells actually bounce off the curved concrete surfaces.

Unit Number 7 of Fort Schiesseck had an hydraulic firing turret which rose, fired, and retracted with great rapidity. Hit after hit failed to halt this turret until a 240, catching it in the up position, caused it to jam. The next direct hit should have demolished the jack-in-the-box but only succeeded in loosening the jammed mechanism, and the turret continued firing. White phosphorous shells fired by the artillery in the hope that the fumes would enter the forts and drive the enemy out, proved unavailing. During the initial two days of the assault, 78 fighter-bombers dropped 27

tons of 500-pound bombs on the area in a futile attempt to neutralize the flanking strongpoints and destroy those targets which could be reached only from the air.

In a diversionary thrust, the 397th, to the east, took two hills commanding the road entering Bitche from the east, securing that edge of the division front. But as a whole, our operations of 16 December were not very successful. Bitche was proving a tough nut to crack.

After a 30-minute air bombardment and a 45-minute artillery preparation, the 3rd Battalion 398th began a four-day assault the following morning that captured Fort Freudenberg and the 11 units of Fort Schiesseck. In the clear dawn, through woods covered with frost, the battalion moved to positions held by the 1st Battalion at the edge of the forest south of the Freudenberg plateau. Just before noon, the 3rd Battalion started across the open ground toward the forbidding fortifications.

The plan was elaborate. While a diversionary air attack and artillery shelling began to the east against Camp de Bitche in the 397th sector, the 3rd Battalion 398th was to capture all the forts on Schiesseck Hill in a daring maneuver which meant exposing themselves to attack from three directions. The 2nd Battalion, moving as rapidly as possible to minimize this danger, was then to attack northward and reduce all forts in their line of advance until they had captured high ground south of Schorbach to the north and west. This action would protect the left flank of the 3rd Battalion.

If successful, the 3rd Battalion, by taking Schiesseck Hill would have flanked Bitche. The 399th was then to seize that town at once to protect the right flank of the 3rd Battalion 398th, while the 1st Battalion 398th moved in between the 2nd and 3rd. The success of this entire strategy depended upon timing. If any portion of our strategy went wrong, the 3rd Battalion 398th could be cut off by the enemy.

Actually, the 2nd Battalion didn't move up on the left flank until 19 December, two days later. The 399th Inf. did not advance on Bitche, and there was a constant gap closed only by occasional patrols to the west of the 398th where the 44th Div. was trying to take Fort Simserhoff. The reason for this delay was that the whole Seventh Army was about to be engaged in a different kind of war, and the division was to have a new mission.

Cos. L and I, the attacking companies of the 3rd Battalion 398th Inf., had special equipment for their



job. Each squad carried a bazooka and a satchel charge of TNT. The pole charges which each squad had been issued were left behind in casements which the battalion had taken a couple of days before. Each man was also carrying two thermite grenades and two hand grenades, about a quarter of them white phosphorous. Each company had two nine-man squads of engineers from Co. B of the 325th Engr. Battalion attached. The engineers all carried demolitions as well as two 25-pound satchel charges or "beehive" demolitions, which are shaped charges with the quality of clinging to vertical surfaces. The companies were to attack in waves of platoons: the assault platoon, covered by fire from the other two, would knock out the initial resistance; the support platoon with the engineers would destroy the fortification and seal up the openings; and the reserve platoon would move up to keep the enemy from reentering the fort while the other platoons went forward.

In the assault, Co. L, led by 1st Lt. Samuel Teitelbaum, was the first platoon which started down the trail toward Fort Freudenberg, then swung left to approach as closely as possible up a wooded ravine. At last the men had to make a dash for it across the open ground under artillery fire from the Schiesseck units and Bitche. They found the barbed wire cut by the artillery and reached the unoccupied structure with its unexploded 240 still inside.

Coming up behind were Capt. Robert E. Brinkerhoff, the CO of Co. L, with his command group, and the support platoon under 2nd Lt. Elmer R. Givens. The assault platoon, by-passing Unit 9 to the north, struck northeast toward Unit 11. Leaving a six-man guard at Freudenberg, the support platoon followed. Capt. Brinkerhoff got permission by radio not to destroy the fort but to use it as a CP and observation post. The engineers with Capt. John J. Upchurch III,

CO of Co. B of the Engineers, came up with the support platoon and conducted four prisoners who had been taken during the advance back to the ravine. Here two platoons of machine guns from Co. M had set up, the limitation on their fields of fire being compensated for by the protection the positions gave them from artillery.

Enemy artillery made Lt. Teitelbaum's platoon cross to the north of the Bitche road and approach Unit 11 by crawling along a trail and ditch. Below them to the south they could see 2nd Lt. Vincent G. Williams and the assault (third) platoon of Co. I approaching Unit 10. This platoon had attacked the fort directly from the south, passing through the 1st Battalion and over the ground where the dead of the previous attack still lay. They had inched up the incline under very heavy artillery fire, but found that no resistance was coming from the fort itself.

Above and to the north, the 1st squad of Lt. Teitelbaum's platoon had sprinted from the ditch across the road to the protection of a pile of logs. From here, covered by fire from the rest of the squad, Sgt. Paul E. Brannon, Pfc. Theodore O. Bayard, and Pfc. Floyd E. Baker rushed onto the roof of the fort. Baker dropped two grenades into the turret and silenced a machine gun which had been firing from there. The rest of the squad rushed the entrance of Unit 11, the personnel entrance of the system. In front of the grilled door was a moat five feet wide and about ten feet deep. After S. Sgt. William Hust and three men had placed a log across the moat, Pfc. Richard D. Ahlers crept along the log to the grill and found it locked. He worked back across the log and returned with a satchel charge. Then he dashed for a shell crater where the rest of the men were taking shelter from the explosion.

The hurriedly-placed demolition didn't go off, and

Supply entrance to Ft. Schiesseck. Small railway cars could roll right into the fort. Note steel cupola on top.

Personnel entrance. It was from the protection of logs in foreground that Baker-Bayard assault was covered.





Schiesseck system above ground as viewed from Unit 9. Unit 1 can be seen in the distance. Turrets of others appear to the right.

the squad decided to try to explode it with a bazooka round. But the three men with the bazooka had been killed by a mortar shell when the squad began to rush the fort. Despite the shell fire, Pfc George Burzynski ran back to the second and third squads, still in the ditch by the road, and came back with a bazooka. Pfc. Robert McKnight then crawled to within 25 yards of the door and fired the bazooka to set off the charge and blow in the door. The men surrounded the fort and entered it to find the lights still on and in one room a fire raging. To blow open an inner door in the main corridor the squad needed engineers.

But these trouble-shooters were still pinned down at the junction of the Schorbach-Bitche road. Someone went down to Co. I at Unit 10 and brought back several engineers who were attached to that company. A shaped charge failed, but pole charges proved more successful. The support platoon of Co. L with Lt. Givens, now came up to Unit 11, and Lt. Teitelbaum sent a squad to locate a machine gun firing from his right, then tried to reach Capt. Brinkerhoff with a "536" which, as usual, didn't work. When the captain finally was reached by radio, he ordered the attack to continue.

At Unit 10, Sgt. Harry E. Johnson used a satchel charge to destroy the grill across the supply entrance into which ran a narrow gauge track. Again after a delay, because the engineers had gone to Unit 11, the inner door was destroyed, and with the explosion the whole fort seemed to burst into flames. Fed apparently by fuel oil stocks on a lower level, the fire continued to send up billows of smoke for 24 hours.

It was now late afternoon. While Lt. Williams of the Co. I assault squad sought his CO, 1st Lt. John M. Albright, the support platoon of Co. I, led by acting platoon leader T. Sgt. Robert L. Armstrong,

moved from Unit 10 in the direction of Unit 11. There, Lts. Teitelbaum and Givens of Co. L, leaving a guard to prevent enemy occupation of Unit 11, had gone forward to the crest of the hill to make a reconnaissance. Between them and the upper units of Fort Schiesseck lay a formidable wire entanglement. Explaining the difficulty by radio, they learned that the CO would move forward from Fort Freudenberg to look the situation over. After this reconnaissance it was decided that Co. L should dig in for the night on either side of Unit 11.

Flank defenses had been set up around Fort Freudenberg. The reserve (3rd) platoon of Co. L had dug in along the road all the way from Legeret Farm to positions east of the fort. Casualties from enemy artillery, much of it from Unit 7 with its rising and retracting turret, were heavy. A Love Co. light machine gun was set up to cover the draw to the north, and mortars were ready to fire from a draw to the south. The fort itself was full of activity. The Co. L CP was there, and so were Lt. Col. Raymond Renola, CO of the 325th F A Battalion, and Capt. Vernon C. Hines, the artillery forward observer with Co. L, his radio operator and a wire crew. Capt. Hines decided to take his radio operator, S. Sgt. David B. Hatch, forward to a shell crater for better observation. As they reached their hole, a shell landed in a crater just ahead and splattered the corpse of a German soldier all over them, draping Capt. Hines with the entrails. Sgt. Hatch vomited, and they left their new-found OP.

Investigation showed that from the main room of Unit 11 a stairway, winding around an elevator shaft, descended for five stories to a tunnel with a narrow-gauge track running through it. Lt. Albright, CO of Co. I, had already posted a guard, but when Capt. Brinkerhoff of Co. L returned from his reconnaissance with instructions to dig in for the night, he decided



Pictured from top to bottom are a stretch of typical Maginot terrain, a common Maginot fort, a Maginot unit showing cupola, a concrete pillbox, and Ft. Freudenberg.

that the guard should be placed at the lowest level. Later the guard came up and reported having been engaged in a fire-fight with Germans. Communications Sgt. Joseph Clark of Co. L spoke German, and he and 1st Sgt. Marvin L. Larson of Co. I went below to try to persuade the Germans to surrender. Cautiously, the two men felt their way along the tunnel over barricades the guards had placed to hinder any enemy who might try to use the passage. After moving through the tunnel for a short distance they heard the Krauts conversing and Sgt. Clark shouted to them in German, advising them to surrender. The Jerries' only answer was a volley of shots through a grill, and the two sergeants took off like BABs, banging against the barricades as they retreated through the tunnel.

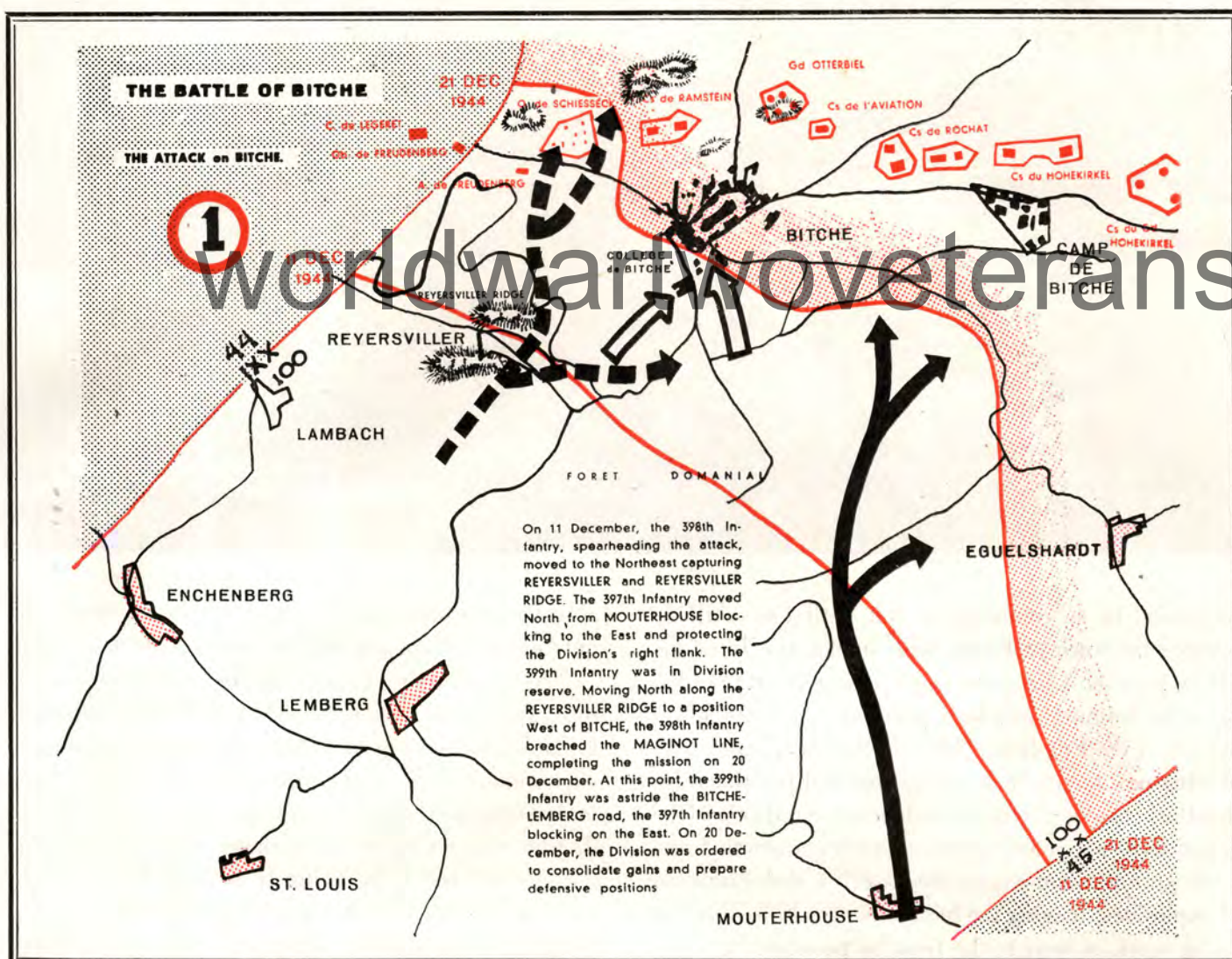
Co. L and two platoons of Co. I dug in around Unit 11 for the night, and the Love Co. light machine guns, replaced at Fort Freudenberg by the heavies of Co. M, came up on line. They were joined by the reserve platoon of Co. I, under S. Sgt. Samuel Rosenberg. This platoon had been broken up late in the afternoon when, while attempting to advance, the maneuvering of a friendly tank drew enemy artillery fire upon them.

To the southeast, the guns of the battalion Anti-Tank Platoon commanded the Bitche road, and a medium tank of the 781st Tank Battalion controlled the Schorbach road.

In the center of the division front, a platoon of Co. C 399th Inf. fought its way to the support of a patrol which had entered the College de Bitche during the night, and succeeded in driving the enemy from this former seat of learning.

The enemy, however, showed no sign of giving up the area. Where we forced them to withdraw, they did so slowly, laying mines and booby-traps to impede our advance. In an effort to dislodge the Krauts from their almost impregnable positions, our artillery blanketed the hill with fire during the night of 17-18 December and followed with a severe 15-minute barrage at dawn, just prior to our attack.

Shortly before the artillery began blasting the Krauts in final preparation for our assault, Capt. Hines, the artillery FO with Co. L, who had spent the night in Freudenberg, was warned by a guard on lookout duty in the turret of the fort that some Jerries were coming down the Schorbach road from the



north. Hines and Cpl. James M. Hagman climbed on top of the fort and killed five of the Germans who were walking as though unaware that a war was in progress. Then a Co. L machine gun opened fire, and the Germans raised a white flag. As the firing ceased, one Jerry bolted and escaped, but one officer and 11 enlisted men surrendered to the two intrepid Century-men. While Capt. Hines was searching his prisoners, three more Krauts walked in from Legeret Farms, to the west, and surrendered. At this point, however, a German machine gun began firing from the woods to the northwest, forcing the two Americans and their 15 prisoners to take refuge in the fort.

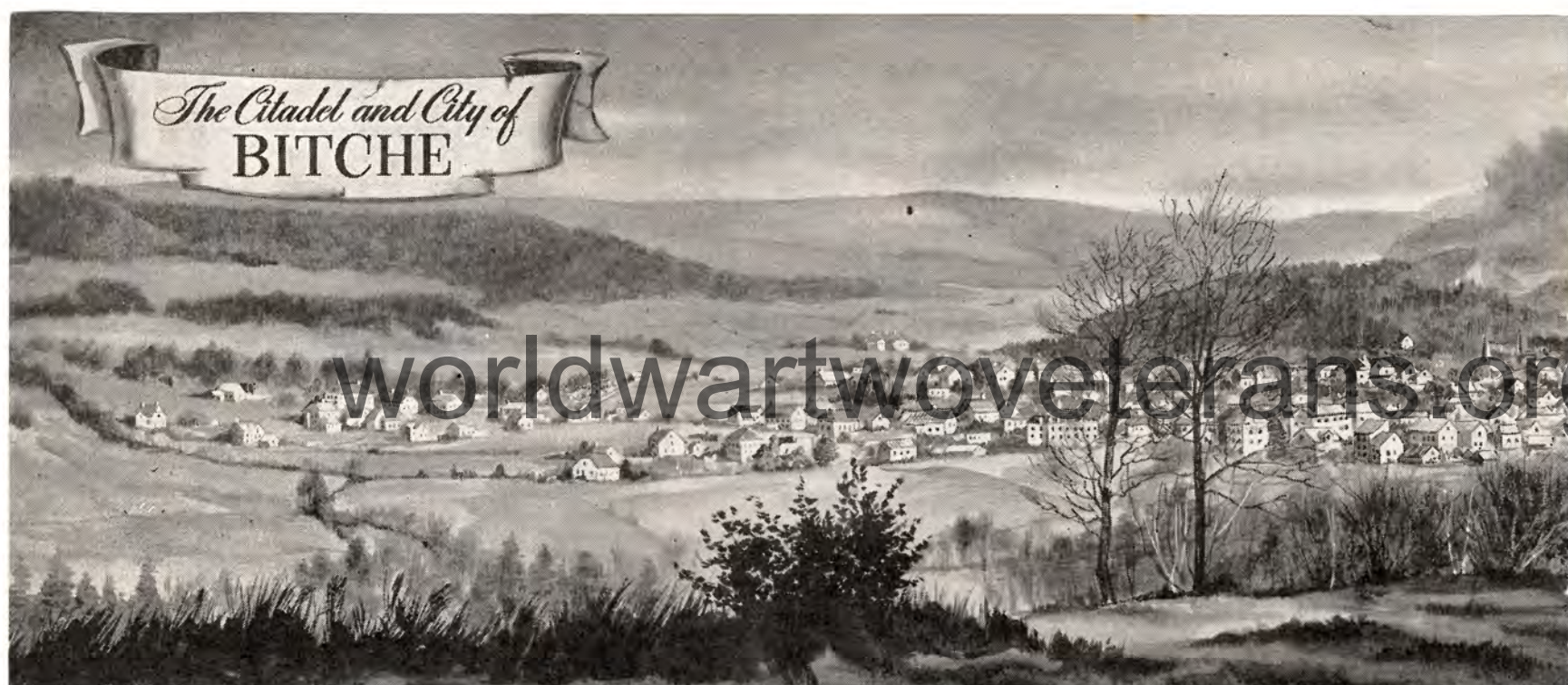
The attack, designed to reduce the remaining fortifications barring our entrance into Bitche, got under way slowly. As planned, Co. L was to take Units 6, 7 and 8, while Item Co., to the right, was to capture Units 4 and 5 to the southeast.

Upon attempting to move forward from Freudenberg, however, the reserve platoon of Love Co., under S. Sgt. Weseley E. Jones, was immobilized by enemy

artillery fire on the road and machine gun fire from the same weapon which had forced Capt. Hines to take cover earlier. Sgt. Jones reported the difficulties of his position by telephone and the 2nd Platoon, which had been the support platoon the day before, was assigned to the assault.

The men of the 2nd Platoon, under Lt. Givens, were reluctant to leave their holes in the face of the severe enemy fire. But, gradually, urged on by Lt. Givens, they began to crawl through lanes blasted by our artillery in the enemy's wire entanglements. Almost immediately, machine gun fire from Bitche caused the Love Co. men to flatten. The same fire caught the men of Lt. Williams' Co. I platoon just as they were leaving their holes. Somehow, the lieutenant managed to reach a crater, and from there he directed his men, shell-hole by shell-hole, through the barricades of wire.

Unit 5, a concrete pillbox with turrets for machine guns and automatic rifles but without a personnel entrance, was unmanned when the Co. I platoon finally



succeeded in surrounding it. But until our artillery covered the town of Bitche with smoke, the Jerry artillery kept the I Co. men from closing in on the fort. Now the Infantry was in a position to cover the approach of the Engineers. The "Dynamiters" were employing new tactics in storming fortified positions. Instead of having large detachments hand-carry the demolitions necessary to reduce such mammoth forts, small groups accompanied the assault with a minimum of explosives, leaving the heavy charges to be brought up by truck as near to the front as possible. Sgt. Dee W. Crosby, for his bravery in organizing this work of the engineers in the face of enemy fire, later received a battlefield commission.

Unit 5 presented a difficult problem in demolition. When pole charges failed to explode, Lt. Williams tried the trick with a bazooka. But this, too, was unsuccessful. Leaving two squads to guard Unit 5, the platoon leader and one squad crawled to Unit 4 which, like Unit 5, was unoccupied and had no entry above ground. Stripping off his equipment, the lieutenant tried to squeeze through a firing port but heard voices below and instead threw in grenades. When the dust cleared he found a light still burning in the 57mm gun turret. After throwing white phosphorous grenades into the turret, he began to help the engineers place charges.

To the left, the Co. L assault platoon had passed Units 6, 8, and the inverted saucer of Unit 7's retractible turret—all without ground-level entrances—and faced Unit 3 on the nose of Schiesseck Hill. Leaving five men to guard Units 6 and 8, Lt. Givens with ten men went north and east toward Unit 2, the largest

above-ground fort in the upper Schiesseck units. Its only personnel opening was an escape grill in its moat.

The 1st Platoon of Co. L, acting as support on this day, also passed Units 6 and 8 and, after throwing grenades into the ports, dug in around Unit 3, the easternmost of the forts on the nose of the hill. Misunderstanding a signal from Capt. Brinkerhoff at Unit 7, who was trying to warn them against a machine gun he believed to be firing from Unit 3, Lt. Givens and his men left Unit 2 to go to Unit 3. As they started forward, an explosion, either of a mine or artillery shell, killed four and wounded one of our men. The rest found the men of Lt. Teitelbaum's platoon already dug in around Unit 3, and a reconnaissance of the northeast nose of the hill showed merely more wire and shell craters.

The Co. L communications sergeant, Sgt. Clark, with Pfc. Orrie Kittleson, Pfc. John C. Kearfoot and two other wire men, had been sent after Lt. Givens to check Unit 2 as a possible CP. The explosion which killed the four men of the assault platoon sent the sergeant and the wire men scrambling into the moat around Unit 2. Once inside, they could hear Germans talking beyond the grating of the waist-high escape port. When Kittleson tried to climb out of the moat, he was wounded by machine gun fire from the fort. The others pulled him out of range to dress his wounds. The aperture was intended to give fire over the moat, but by depressing the gun to the limits, the Germans were able to hit the rim and to endanger the men with ricochetting slugs. When Pfc. Kearfoot was mortally wounded by such a shot, Sgt. Clark was so enraged that he fired a full clip from his M-1 through the



grating. Inside, a voice called out in German, "Stop shooting." Interested in the possibility of prisoners, Clark did. "We want to help you. Are you British or American?"

Clark answered in German, "We are Americans."

"Good. We understand that the Americans know how to treat prisoners. We also treat prisoners well."

"Come to the point!"

"We are glad that you are not like the Russians. We are not like them either. Now, we would be glad to surrender if you can get some more men to storm the fort. We would not like for it to look as if we had given up too easily."

Clark felt that his earlier suspicion of a trick had been substantiated. He explained that he would like to get medical aid for his wounded men.

"Are there any wounded German soldiers outside in the area?"

"Yes. Several, only a short distance away."

On being told that he could go for a medic, Clark said he would climb out of the moat and told the Germans not to shoot.

A German officer replied arrogantly from the grating, "We are not your prisoners; you are ours. You will find that Germans do not surrender so easily. . . . And you had better come back, or we will keep the medic."

Outside the moat Clark found Pvt. Russell J. Vander Hoff, a medic who had come up to treat the wounded man from Lt. Givens' platoon. While the medic lowered himself into the moat, Clark returned to his CO, explained the situation, and was ordered not to go back.

It was now noon. Because Lt. Williams and his platoon were still having difficulty with the destruction of Units 4 and 5, the Co. I CO, 1st Lt. John M. Albright, sent T. Sgt. Robert L. Armstrong to take Unit 2. Having left six men still guarding the tunnel in Unit 11, Armstrong had only eight men with whom to pass Unit 4 and try to cross the bare hill to Unit 2. Machine gun and mortar fire almost at once forced the platoon into a slight defilade, the only available cover. By radio, Armstrong explained his position to Williams who said he'd send support for an attempt to work down hill to Unit 3, already held by Co. L, and attack Unit 2 from the rear. Short of men himself, Williams tried to find the Co. I 2nd Platoon, which had been scattered the day before and finally assembled during this morning in positions with Co. L between Units 7 and 8. When he had brought this platoon to Unit 4, Williams learned that he was in command of Co. I because 1st Lt. Albright had been killed by a shell which landed in his crater O.P.

1st Sgt. Lawson and Pfc. Alfred E. Kickey of the engineers, who had sought shelter there from a demolition he was firing on Unit 4, were wounded by the same shell. Lt. Williams, as new CO, brought the command group to Unit 4 and recalled Sgt. Armstrong to place his men along a line of skirmishers between Unit 4 and Unit 5 to the south and later sent the Co. I 2nd Platoon into line beside that platoon of Co. L which stretched from Unit 3 on the northeast part way to Unit 4. Williams also placed his light machine guns to cover the draw below Unit 5, his right flank, and called for the heavies from Co. M in the hope of setting them up in the turret



Wreckage of Freudenberg Farms after weeks of incessant pounding by our artillery. This enemy strongpoint proved a major trouble-spot.

of Unit 4, his center. Pfc. Kickey's demolition had broken in the wall above the escape port in the fort. Kickey had had difficulty in placing the charge because, when he got into the moat, he had moved some wire entanglements and set off a booby-trap. But he succeeded in placing the charge only to be wounded in Lt. Albright's crater when he took cover. Though Unit 4 was now accessible, no one entered because the phosphorous grenades tossed into the turret earlier had started a fire and set off small arms ammunition which continued to explode during the afternoon and night.

Having relieved the 1st Battalion of the 398th at the line of departure, the edge of the woods, where it had suffered casualties from the artillery, Co. K, under 1st Lt. William E. Nelson, was ordered to move north from Fort Freudenberg and Unit 11 and neutralize Unit 9. Co. I had earlier by-passed this unit, but now a machine gun seemed to be firing from there. Lt. Nelson called for a tank for support. He was told it would arrive, but his offer to direct it was declined. The tank finally came up to the crossroads near Freudenberg, dashed off west toward Legeret Farm, and then clanked back toward Bitche. Disgusted, Lt. Nelson decided to go on without it.

Leaving his 2nd Platoon at Freudenberg and sending his 3rd Platoon to Units 10 and 11, Nelson led his 1st Platoon toward Unit 9 under enemy mortar fire. Since no resistance came from the fort, the platoon threw in grenades and called for the engineers. A machine gun, firing from the woods in the northwest

draw, kept the engineers from crossing the Bitche road. The platoon radioed for a tank and then crawled to the edge of the draw, hoping to be able to rush the machine gun. But the fire was so thick that they asked for the Co. M mortars to blanket the woods. The engineers, supported by three tanks, set off satchel charges on the cupolas and 240 pounds of TNT against the observation turret without causing any damage. Nelson then withdrew to dig in at reserve positions around Units 10 and 11 while the tanks and anti-tank guns were placed for the night so as to cover roads and draws leading to our lines.

During the afternoon, Cpl. William A. Mueller of Co. L was in charge of the dull job of guard duty at Unit 11. He had broken down his rifle to clean it when he saw two Germans working up the south draw with a machine gun. Taking the offensive, he charged them with his only weapon, a bayonet. The startled Germans dropped the machine gun and surrendered. When Mueller told his story to his CO, Capt. Brinkerhoff jokingly asked, "Where's the machine gun?" In a few minutes Mueller struggled back under the machine gun and several bandoliers of ammunition.

Though the hill was now almost wholly occupied and as much damage as possible was being done to the forts, the Germans were still using the lower passages. Four Jerries appeared in the open in front of Pfc. Rogenos of Co. I's 2nd Platoon. The Germans apparently came from a concealed escape passage near Unit 5. When a couple of them were wounded, the four Krauts tried to escape and were killed.



Reading mail and opening packages from home during a lull in the firing. Some of the doughfeet constructed 3-room apartments underground.

About this time, Lt. Williams, acting as CO of Co. I, was wounded in the hand. 2nd Lt. Raymond H. Snell, just returned from the hospital and sent to the area by Maj. Ernest L. Janes, the 3rd Battalion CO, arrived at Unit 4 as Lt. Williams was leaving to have his wound dressed. Snell, the sole officer in the company, continued preparing for the night, extending his lines back toward Unit 11, placing his command group in the gap between Cos. I and L near Unit 4, and putting the heavy machine guns from Co. M in line between platoons. All this had to be accomplished without adequate communication because his "536" didn't work and he had no "300" radio. To make matters worse, the company communications sergeant, Sgt. Hyman Cohen, had been killed and Lt. Snell lacked experienced aid in operating what communications he had.

During this re-arrangement, Pfc. Theodore H. Bates, intent on digging his foxhole, absently allowed two Germans with a machine gun to approach him from the south draw. When he realized that they were Germans, he dived and seized one of them by the arm. In the fight which ensued, Bates bit deep into the shoulder of the German struggling to escape. Both surrendered.

Meanwhile, the engineers had been attempting to demolish the forts, detonating 1,600 pounds of TNT in the tunnel between Units 10 and 11, killing at least a dozen Germans hiding there and smashing the tunnel wall. Later, a PW said that 80 escaped through Unit 2 in the darkness. The engineers also tried to damage the ventilation intake ducts.

Though no counterattacks accompanied the heavy enemy artillery shelling during the night of 18 December, the men of the 3rd Battalion 398th Inf., continued to feel that they held a dangerously jutting point.

In other sectors of our division front, the 399th continued to hold the College de Bitche in the division center; Co. F of the 397th pushed forward in a small attack south of the Bitche-Hagenau road; and the artillery continued with its systematic destruction of Camp de Bitche.

Early on the morning of 19 December, a bedraggled German surrendered at Fort Freudenberg. He said he had been manning a machine gun in the northwest draw, west of the Schorbach road, and was tired of being without food. When he said others might be ready to give up, he was sent back and returned with one man. Capt. Hines, the artillery forward observer, sent a patrol to the point where the PW reported the machine gun and a third German was captured.

This third day of attack almost completed the conquest of Schiesseck. Only Unit 9, which was causing no trouble, and Unit 2, far to the northeast and occupied by Germans, still remained in enemy hands. Instead of making a costly assault on Unit 2, the troops drew back to the area around Unit 11 and an M-12 155mm. self-propelled gun moved from Hill 412 to the south to Legeret Farm to the west to fire on Unit 2. When the infantry had marked the target with smoke grenades, the gun fired 17 rounds, seven of them direct hits. Lt. Col. Raymond Renola, division artillery officer, said that one of the rounds went through the concrete walls, but most of the shells seemed to bounce off harmlessly. Capt. Hines, asserting that no part of the Maginot Line was impervious



Closeup of entrance to mammoth Ft. Oterbeil. Note thick walls and ingenious construction into side of hill affording minimum target.

to "155" fire striking at a 90 degree angle to a surface, said that the shelling would have been more effective had it come from a proper angle. Major Janes had Bitche smoked while the troops moved back to their forward positions. Later there was some argument about whether the Germans had reoccupied Unit 3 while the troops were gone, but the Co. L men who returned to that fort did not see any enemy.

Although a bulldozer, which could bury the fort entrances under tons of earth, had been brought to the area, enemy artillery fire on the hill was still too intense to allow the machine to be used. The engineers fired 500 pounds of TNT in an effort to destroy the stair and elevator shaft of three-story depth in Unit 11. Capt. John J. Upchurch, CO of Co. B 325th Engrs., dissatisfied with the damage done to Unit 10, went down the tunnel between Units 10 and 11 to find a place where he could block the passage. At a blind turn where grenades and ammunition were discovered stacked against the walls, he thought he had found the ideal spot. But at that moment a party of Jerries suddenly dashed around the turn and began hurling grenades. Capt. Upchurch and his patrol back-peddled and chose an alternative location nearer the entrance. Two 400-pound charges, however, failed to damage the tunnel, and a 600-pound charge set off by the engineers just about chipped the concrete.

These were the forts about which Ed Clark, staff writer for *Stars and Stripes*, describing the Maginot Line, had said that the fortifications were "stacked up gravel" and could be "reduced to powder with a pencil." Having read these statements, a number of the men who had attacked the forts in the Maginot around Bitche, sent Clark a box of pencils and wrote him saying he could have the job. Later Clark visited the area and wrote a retraction.

While 1st Lt. Clifford McClure was forward observing for the artillery, Capt. Hines and his men, having found the turrets of Unit 11 not suitable, busied themselves with keeping communications lines in working order.

Part of the 2nd Battalion of the 398th Inf. advanced to the west of the 3rd Battalion to take the high ground south of Schorbach. Since most of the 3rd Battalion did not know of this move, the men continued to feel that they were out on a limb. Other elements of the 2nd Battalion came up with the 3rd Battalion around Unit 9 and near Unit 2, the farthest northeast of the units, to help the engineers reduce these last two forts. The 1st Battalion shifted forward to Fort Freudenberg and toward Unit 9 to be ready to move between the other two battalions on the following day.

Late in the afternoon, Sgt. Edmund A. Bogert, Pfc. John J. McKelvey, and another man of the Co. L guard at Unit 7, heard voices and discovered that 30 or more Germans, to whom an officer was gesticulating, had formed around Unit 2. Bogert and McKelvey fired. The Germans, mistaking the direction of the fire, threw themselves on the ground for cover in such a way that they were still exposed. Belatedly correcting their error, they scrambled to the other side of Unit 2 and took off. Bogert, afraid that the enemy would form for a counterattack, sent a runner back to the company CP. News of the incident had preceded the runner's arrival, and Lt. Nelson of Co. K had already sent out his command group to reinforce the area.

Shortly afterward an exhausted runner staggered in from Lt. Teitelbaum's platoon far out on the nose

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BETTY BAILEY
FRANK BAKER



ROBERT BANE
CHARLES BEACH



JOHN HENRY BEVERS
GLORIA BERRY



THEDA BLASSINGAME
WALTER BLASSINGAME



BETTYE BONNETTE
BILL BRADFIELD



LENA JO BRYANT
MAXINE BUHLER



EDITH BURCH
MARY GRACE BURKARD



ANN CABANISS
NORMAN CAMPBELL



WANZ CASTLE
E W CAVENDER



IDA FLORENCE CHIESA
ROGERS COLEMAN

Handwritten note: Look de look Wanz Castle

Handwritten note: Lena Jo Bryant

Handwritten note: Theda Blassingame

Handwritten note: Good Luck Walter C.B.





Interior of a Maginot fort. Picture at right shows results of incessant artillery and air bombardment. 240mm shells bounced off these walls.

of Schiesseck, bringing word of a large force of Germans forming in the draw for an attack. At the same time, Teitelbaum had been able to reach the battalion OP by radio, inquiring where the artillery observers were. Capt. Hines immediately called for unobserved fire on the whole area and set out with his radio operator and two wire men, planning to lay wire back from the nose.

In the dusk the Co. L men moved to the edge of the wood, using hand grenades, thermite cannisters, light machine guns and their rifles against the virtually invisible enemy.

Capt. Hines reached the area and radioed that he was ready to start observing. He was asked for coordinates. "Coordinates, hell," he snapped, "Just throw some in, and I'll tell you where to put them." Soon five field artillery battalions and the regimental Cannon Company were firing into the area. Hines and his radio operator continued to move forward, slipping and sliding down the slope as they directed the barrage for 15 minutes. Then the fire rate was reduced to one round per gun per minute. In the comparative quiet, the men could hear screams, groans, and the sound of the enemy digging in. Later information from a PW showed that 50 Germans had been killed in the break-up of the enemy's preparation for a counterattack. Capt. Hines, out of curiosity, went out to the listening post of Pfc. Floyd W. Baker from which the news of the impending attack had first come. On his way three Germans surrendered to him.

In its last day of attack on Schiesseck, 20 December, the 398th Inf. completed conquest of the great fort by taking Unit 2. For the rest, the 3rd Battalion

acted as a holding force while the engineers went on with their destruction. These demolitions groups were led by S. Sgt. Dee W. Crosby who continually exposed himself to enemy fire to carry out the work of his engineers. They demolished the turret of Unit 1, thus far almost ignored, and ruined the elevator and ruptured a turret in Unit 2. The elevator in Unit 6 was also wrecked. A charge in Unit 7 unseated a turret and moved it ten yards at the same time raising the retractible turret so that the gun could be destroyed by a charge in its muzzle.

Early in the morning the 2nd Battalion continued its northward attack. Co. E was subjected to an artillery barrage, but took the hill a kilometer north of Schiesseck. Co. G sent a patrol north toward Schorbach which was found to be full of enemy troops. Then, Co. G, hindered by much small arms fire, moved west to establish contact with the 71st Inf. of the 44th Div.

The 1st Battalion had been ordered to pass through the 3rd Battalion and take Hill 370, a lump of wooded height jutting out northeast from Schiesseck, but the battalion's mission was changed to the seizing of the road junction on the northeast nose of Schiesseck itself. Leaving Co. A in regimental reserve, Cos. B and C took the road junction and captured 24 prisoners. But early in the afternoon, adjusting lines in the face of an enemy counterattack, the two companies drew back slightly and held the north slope of Schiesseck Hill.

On the division right, to the south and east of Bitche, the 397th had a quiet day though enemy artillery continued to drop in and two patrols came through the lines. One patrol was driven off with numerous casualties and the other captured intact.

At dusk, a XV Corps order was received instruct-

ing the division to consolidate its defensive positions in location, and prepare for an enemy counterattack. The 398th fell back to more tenable ground south of its forward positions. In the center, with evidence growing that the enemy was planning an attack out of Bitche, the 399th pulled back its outposts. On the regimental right, the 3rd Battalion left the edge of the woods at the north end of the pond called the Etang d'Hasselfort, while Co. C of the 1st Battalion, reluctantly withdrew from the hard-won College de Bitche.

The last day on the Hill, 21 December, the 3rd Battalion held the line while the engineers went on with their destruction of the forts. The 800 pounds of TNT which finally blew out the stair in Unit 2, brought the total of TNT used on Schiesseck Hill to 5,000 pounds. On this day, too, for the first time, the bulldozer, which had been in readiness, was used to bury five of the units. Until now, no one had wanted to risk bringing the bulldozer into action. But on this last day of the assault, Tec. 5 Joseph Anderson of the 781st Tank Battalion volunteered to brave enemy artillery fire to bury Unit 9 under earth, rock, and barbed wire, fill the moats and seal the escape ports of Units 2 and 4, and block the turrets of Units 6 and 8. Attempting to cover Unit 7, Anderson got his bulldozer so bogged down that he would have had to risk many lives to get it out. He and the engineers put it out of working order and abandoned it.

As part of the last action on Schiesseck, Pfc. Floyd W. Baker, from whose listening post the first news of the enemy's impending attack had come the night of 19 December, gained a reputation for single-handed action against small hostile patrols. About noon, shortly before the battalion drew back, Baker killed one and captured three Germans of a patrol, the third patrol he had done away with in a little over 24 hours.

Summing up our critical operations against the Bitche fortifications, Berlin Sally was reported to have called the engineers and the infantry "the underpaid butchers of Bitche."

Our casualties for the operation were very small for the immense accomplishment. Of the 692 men and 38 officers in the 3rd Battalion 398th Inf., 15 men and one officer were killed, and 120 men were wounded. The engineers had one man killed, two men and two officers wounded.

On 12 March, the 3rd Battalion received a Presidential Unit Citation for its action.

But the division was not to be permitted to follow-up the capture of Schiesseck. Instead, because the offensive by Von Rundstedt in the First Army sector (the so-called Battle of the Bulge) required the Third Army to move north, the troops of the Seventh Army were to be spread out over a very long front. Since there were not enough troops for an attack on such a front, the best we could do was hold thin lines in defensive positions.

In this new mission our division front was shifted northwest and greatly extended. The area on the east of the division sector, held by the 397th on the high ground south of the Camp de Bitche and above the highway running east and south from Bitche through Eguelshardt and Hagenau, was taken over by elements of the 106th Cavalry Group. When this change had been completed without interference from the enemy, the 397th moved around to the northwest and took over the positions of the 114th Inf. of the 44th Div. The regiment learned that its new area around Hottviller had been quiet during the day. By the end of the period elements of the 106th Cavalry Group had also begun to relieve the 399th in the division

Lower left, panorama of difficult hilly terrain surrounding Lambach. Below, group of mudsloggers relax after liberating town.



center, south and west of Bitche. On what had been the division left, the 3rd Battalion of the 398th, after covering the work of the engineers, moved to an assembly area in the woods south of Schiesseck, leaving Cos. C and B in defensive positions there. The 2nd Battalion, in an assembly area to the southwest on the hills east of Siersthal, prepared to take over positions from the 71st Inf. of the 44th Div.

When the division had completed its adjustment to its new lines on 22 December, these were the sectors held: The 2nd Battalion of the 399th, holding the right flank, was in defensive positions facing east from just above the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road north to the hill called le Kreutzberg across the Lemberg-Bitche railroad, and then north along a line of hills just west of that railroad to the Lemberg-Bitche highway. At this point the line turned northwest, and the 1st Battalion of the 399th held the hills running parallel to the Reysersviller-Siersthal road from the Lemberg-Bitche highway almost to Fort Freudenberg. Here the 1st Battalion was in contact with the 1st Battalion of the 398th which continued in its positions around Schiesseck Hill. Further west was the 3rd Battalion 398th Inf., dug-in around Legeret Farm, in lines taken over from the 71st Inf.; while on the regimental left flank, the 2nd Battalion 398th Inf. entrenched near Holbach. The 397th Inf. extended on the division's left in the vicinity of Hottviller. The 3rd Battalion of the 399th was in division reserve with secondary defensive positions northeast of Lambach.

During the two days before Christmas the division continued to extend its front to the north and west and to adjust its positions for defense in depth. Mines and tree charges were placed along the main routes, and listening posts and anti-tank defenses were set up.

Below, a German tanker lies dead beside the wreckage of his tank. Right, a long line of Jerry prisoners is marched to the rear.

Defensive plans were somewhat revised during the afternoon of 23 December. On the division right, the 1st Battalion of the 399th pivoted northward so that its lines ran from the pond called the Etang d'Hassel-fort west and then north along the ridge above Reysersviller to Freudenberg Farm, making an arc around Bitche. The 2nd Battalion of the 399th withdrew westward from the Lemberg-Bitche railway so that Co. G and Co. F, which kept one platoon in mobile reserve, held two hills called Hochfirst and le Schlossberg, straddling the Lemberg-Bitche highway and extending north of Lemberg just west of that road. Co. E was the battalion reserve in Lemberg itself. On line with the 2nd Battalion and between it and the 1st Battalion, Co. I dug in on the hill called le Spitzberg, just south of Reysersviller. The rest of the 3rd Battalion remained in secondary defense northeast of Lambach.

Except for patrols from the 1st and 2nd Battalions, the 398th sector in the center was quiet. The 1st Battalion, soon to move back through the lines, was still near Schiesseck Hill, the 3rd Battalion was still around Legeret, and the 2nd Battalion, holding a narrow front near Holbach, could give showers and clean clothing to part of its troops.

On the division left, the front was further extended when the 2nd Battalion of the 397th took over positions from a part of the 87th Inf. Div. and of the 12th Armored Div.

On one patrol from Co. F of the 398th, after the patrol had encountered a small group of enemy and wounded four, the men were forced back to their lines by enemy fire. Pfc. William R. Birchall volunteered to remain in the advanced position and when the enemy fire ceased moved out behind the German lines where he remained for seven hours until darkness, gathering information on the positions of enemy automatic weapons and troops.



When the 1st Battalion of the 399th had extended its lines to Freudenberg Farm, the 1st Battalion of the 398th was able to leave Schiesseck and move through the lines to reserve positions in Siersthal. The 398th Regimental CP moved to Enchenberg while the 399th CP moved out of that town and south to Sarreinsberg. The 2nd Battalion 398th Inf., widened its front northward to high ground near Holbach and Hottviller, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 397th were thus freed to extend to the division left flank. The enemy was quiet this day before Christmas except for a little artillery fire and a patrol which the engineers drove off from the 399th sector where the Germans were removing dynamite from trees.

The division's third Christmas was a day of little military activity. The army did what it could—a turkey dinner, served as hot as the cooks could manage with marmite cans; a PX issue of beer and peanuts. But the army could not forget the war, and it issued fleece-lined white coats with hoods for camouflage against the snow that was sure to come. The men of the 397th also received their November pay. But individual soldiers were able to add to the festivities; it was still possible to get schnapps in Alsace. Small groups, unaware perhaps that they were following a German custom, set up small pines or firs and decorated them with wrappings from the Christmas packages which had come through or with the tinfoil streamers dropped by planes to confuse radar detection. And food from home improved the army chow.

The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 397th completed their shift to the division's left flank so that the regimental front now extended along the ridge from Rimling, on the northwest, eastward to Urbach. This shift was made in time to encounter two enemy attacks which caused the troops to move back from their

outpost lines to their main line of resistance. In this withdrawal Co. H lost two jeeps, and Co. F had the greater, though unmilitary, loss of its Christmas dinner and 25 of its newly issued white coats. Enemy possession and use of these coats continued to cause confusion for some time along the front.

The clear, bright air of this Christmas was perfect weather for our P47s in their missions over Bitche. War doesn't stop for Christmas.

Early in the afternoon of 26 December, about a hundred Germans using only small arms and automatic weapons, attacked the 3rd Battalion of the 397th in the area east of Rimling. The attack was broken up by our artillery. Tanks from the 23rd Tank Battalion then pursued the enemy who scattered and withdrew to Guiderkirch and Utweiler. On the rest of the division front the 398th and 399th repulsed almost constant small enemy patrols. The 3rd Battalion of the 398th went into reserve defensive positions in the Maginot Line area northwest of Holbach, and the 399th, on the extreme right flank of both the division and XV Corps, finally made contact with the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron of the 106th Cavalry Group, a part of the VI Corps.

Col. Andrew C. Tychsen, regimental commander of the 399th Inf. since its activation, became acting Assistant Division Commander on 27 December. He replaced Brig. Gen. Maurice G. Miller who was forced to return to the States because of ill health. Lt. Col. Elery M. Zehner, CO of the 1st Battalion 399th Inf., became acting commander of the 399th.

Below freezing temperatures continued to make digging-in a major operation. In the only action of the day, the 397th sent a patrol to Erching to capture prisoners but found no enemy in the town. Other patrols reported that the Krauts had also abandoned





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For Christmas cheer we decorated pines or firs with packages from home and tinfoil dropped by planes to confuse radar detection.

Urbach. Since the enemy seemed to be holding positions no further forward than the northern side of Bitche, the 399th moved its main lines forward to where the outpost lines had been.

During darkness of 28 December, the division put "Plan Tennessee" into action. This was an attempt to achieve a defense in depth on a front so long that our lines were spread dangerously thin. Strategy called for each regiment to have two battalions on line and one in reserve. Every day of our defensive operations, each regiment was to dispatch a patrol of at least platoon strength, in daylight or dark, to gain information or take prisoners.

Continuing to work out defensive positions, the 1st Battalion of the 398th moved its CP to Petit Rederching while the troops took up Maginot Line positions east and north of the town. On the regimental right, the 3rd Battalion of the 398th moved into reserve—Co. I resting in Holbach, Co. K in Siersthal, and Co. L around Legeret Farm. The 2nd Battalion of the 399th, taking over from the 3rd Battalion 398th, left its defenses facing eastward along the Lemberg-Bitche highway and came into line next to the 1st Battalion 399th Inf. in position north of Legeret Farm.

As a part of the defense in depth, the 3rd Battalion of the 399th extended its lines across the entire rear area of the regimental front from Lambach south-

east across le Spitzberg to south of the little settlement Schwangerbach, making contact with the 398th on the left and the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron on the right. The 399th regimental Cannon Co. and Anti-Tank Co. and the 925th F A Battalion coordinated their fires with particular concern for the right flank. In the light of the attack which was soon to come this concern was almost a premonition.

Because intelligence reports showed that all American prisoners were asked a standard set of questions about gas masks and gas training, the division was again issued its gas masks on 29 December. The day was without military action, but there were further shifts in position. The 1st Battalion of the 397th shifted part of its front to the left near Rimling. The 3rd Battalion rearranged its positions on either side of Rimling with Co. K to the northwest, Co. L to the east, and Co. I south of the town for defense in depth. To each battalion of the 397th, one platoon of Co. A of the 23rd Tank Battalion was attached. Part of the front left by the 1st Battalion of the 397th was taken over by the 1st Battalion of the 398th when Co. B moved north from positions along the Maginot Line east of Petit Rederching to Hill 312, just south of Urbach. Co. A also advanced northeast by foot so that it was on line to the right of Co. B and on high ground between Urbach and Hottviller. Co. C remained in Petit Rederching.

In the 2nd Battalion sector, Co. G moved to reserve in Hottviller and Co. E took its place on line, capturing six prisoners whom Co. H had spotted. Co. F was still near Hottviller and the 3rd Battalion remained in reserve. When the 2nd Battalion of the 399th had completed its relief of the 398th around Freudenberg and Legeret Farms, it divided its zone into two parts, with Co. G next to the 398th and Co. E on the east next to the 1st Battalion of the 399th. Co. F was in reserve near Legeret.

A platoon of Co. C 397th, accompanied by four medium tanks and preceded by high explosive and smoke shells from the artillery, attacked across open ground to the hill east of Rimling and cleared the patch of woods, taking 19 PWs and finding 12 dead.

In mid-afternoon of 30 December, 11 P47s, some with German and others with American markings, strafed and bombed Hoelling, Petit Rederching, Maierhoff, Rohrbach, and Bining, killing three and wounding eight men in the 397th CP area. After nightfall, Lt. Robert H. Rush and 25 men from Co. G of the 398th, leaving their reserve positions in Hottvil-



as the uncertainty of life which made one shiver. The soldier learns to look at death philosophically. But it was this business of living from second to second which made the burden so difficult. The ability to plan for the future is a prerequisite for human happiness. Here there wasn't even a few hours of respite on the eve of the western world's greatest festival. Here there was only waiting for an awakening from a dream-world, while we dangled in mid-air, suspended like puppets on a thread which a puff of artillery could break.

As an escape, we took refuge in reminiscing. We recalled happier New Years, wondered what friends and loved ones were doing, imagined the feverish preparations for the celebration. Had we been at home, we, too, would have had a date. It was nice to think about that. Soft, clean clothes, a warm room, thick steaks, music, a stimulating cocktail, the heady scent of a woman. Happy New Year! We cursed obscenely.

But we did have a date that night, a midnight show, an all-night party with thousands of screaming, drunken German Fascists whose leaders had chosen this as the psychological moment for their long expected counter-offensive. We were perfect hosts. The party was going to be a success even if our German guests didn't enjoy it.

Until late in the day, there was little indication that this was the beginning of a determined German counter-offensive which was to threaten the entire Seventh Army front. In general terms, the Germans drove southward in the vicinity of Gros Rederching and forced the withdrawal of the 44th Div. This drive exposed the 397th Inf. holding the 100th's left flank. At the same time, the enemy, taking advantage

of the enforced withdrawal of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron below Bitche, attacked the uncovered right flank of the 399th from the east and south. Our division was thus in danger of being cut off by the two prongs of a double envelopment. Had these two German drives, attacking toward each other, been able to meet, the 100th would have been completely outflanked from four sides. That we did contain the enemy's thrust to three sides, is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that our lines were spread dangerously thin on a single front and that we were prepared to hold that front only. Two factors can be attributed to this success: the great skill with which, though handicapped by insufficient troops, we had been deployed for defense in depth; and the individual fighting qualities of the American soldier.

The enemy offensive began innocently enough. A Kraut patrol hit the right center of the 399th's Co. B, entrenched on the northeast corner of le Schoenberg Hill, south of Bitche. The patrol was driven off after a brief fire fight, but it had marked the line where the attack was to come in force.

Preceded by colored flares, the first attack came on just this portion of the line in late afternoon. Striking from southeast of Bitche, the enemy cut across Junction 304 on the Lemberg-Bitche highway. This assault, in considerable force, was driven off by machine gun fire. To meet this attack the 1st Battalion of the 399th was in prepared positions on high ground. Co. A was on the hill called le Schimberg north of Meyersviller, and Co. B was on le Schoenberg just west of the Lemberg road with an outpost of six men in the College de Bitche, another outpost of ten men east of the highway, and a third outpost in a house along the road. With each company was a platoon of



The great winter defense before Bitche was a commentary to the men who dug the positions and manned the outposts.

heavy machine guns. Twenty mortar men from Co. D were also in line as riflemen.

At 2130, four hours after the first attack, Co. B reported that the enemy was sending up a great number of flares. The Germans began firing on the outposts half an hour later but were apparently stopped, though communication with the College was knocked out. By the light of flares, the outpost to the east of the road counted 20 dead to their front and reported hearing fighting to the east as though the 117th Cavalry were being attacked.

The firing batteries of the artillery, the regimental Cannon Company, and the mortars had all planned to unleash a few rounds just at midnight as a celebration for the New Year. They had already been alerted for this fire when word came back to the mortars that the enemy was firing on the outpost along the road. The mortars opened up. Shortly, the artillery fired its celebration and caught the main body of the attackers right on the primary targets.

This fire and that of such weapons as Sgt. Clifford W. La Belle's light machine gun, stopped the attack. La Belle, of Co. B's Weapons Platoon, was located in an open field 100 yards to the front of a group of buildings called Wolfsgarten Farm at the right of the company. In this outpost, the machine gun was supported by ten riflemen. Enemy tracers set the barn on fire, and the flames silhouetted the position, but the men continued firing their gun. Later, La Belle exposed himself to run 300 yards to the woods to obtain additional ammunition and a new barrel for the machine gun which had been burned out by the outpost's continuous firing.

Two hours later, the enemy made his third attempt

against the outpost on our east flank. The attack was in full force, when an officer of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, on the division's left flank, telephoned Maj. Lawrence A. Conrey, S-3 of the 399th.

"We're falling back a little," he said.

"How far is a little?" Maj. Conrey asked.

"About two thousand yards," was the reply.

The major swore. "Do you have to fall back so far all at once?"

His answer was a click of the telephone. The mechanized cavalry is effective mainly as a striking force. When it comes to holding ground, it is impotent. Actually, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron withdrew a great deal further than 2000 yards. By mid-afternoon, they had fallen back as far as Wingen, eight or nine miles to the south, only to find that the enemy already was in the town. The cavalry then turned back and moved off westward out of the combat zone.

By 0230, the enemy, in his third attack, was already capitalizing on the withdrawal of the cavalry and, while striking the Co. B main line of resistance from the northeast, was also coming against our right flank outpost from its unprotected east side. With Sgt. La Belle at the machine gun continuing to delay the enemy, the outpost began to move back, taking successive positions to hold off the Germans. For two hours T. Sgt. William T. Kelleher, Tec. 5 Leon D. Beacham, Pfc. Robert H. Douglas, and the other riflemen with La Belle kept the enemy away from the MLR. They moved into the area of a Co. C. platoon on the east side of the Lemberg highway, aided it in



Above, stringing wire entanglements. Right, a wire crew, dressed in white camouflage suits, warms up in the open.

its delaying fight and withdrawal, and then reported to the B Co. CP. Here they were given the task of guarding the right flank of the command post.

Completely cut-off by the enemy after the enforced withdrawal of their company, the six B Co. men holding an outpost in the College de Bitche were engaged in a life and death comedy-drama with 300 Germans which would have done justice to the wildest Hollywood scenario writer.

The six men, Pfc. Irving W. Bower, Andrew Powell, and Juan Meza, and Pvt. Porter W. Lane, Willis C. McIntyre, and Carl L. Eyverson, had been in their advanced listening post for several days. In the darkness of this New Year's morning, one of the team spotted the approaching column of Jerries, and the helter-skelter to disappear began. With all normal exits from the college blocked by the enemy, the Baker Co. men asked one of the French civilians who inhabited the building whether there was any secret way out. In answer, they were led to a room where a window had recently been sealed with cement blocks.

With only their bayonets and trench knives as tools, the six men began hacking at the cement bulwarks in an effort to loosen the blocks. Down the corridor, they could hear footsteps approaching. Andy Powell, a full-blooded Indian, moved to the side of the door and waited. Just as the first block came loose, a rifle butt crashed against the closed door. A solid blow smashed a panel, and a German, holding a candle, poked his head through the opening. That was a bad error and showed poor training. Powell blew the Kraut's stupid head off with one rifle shot.

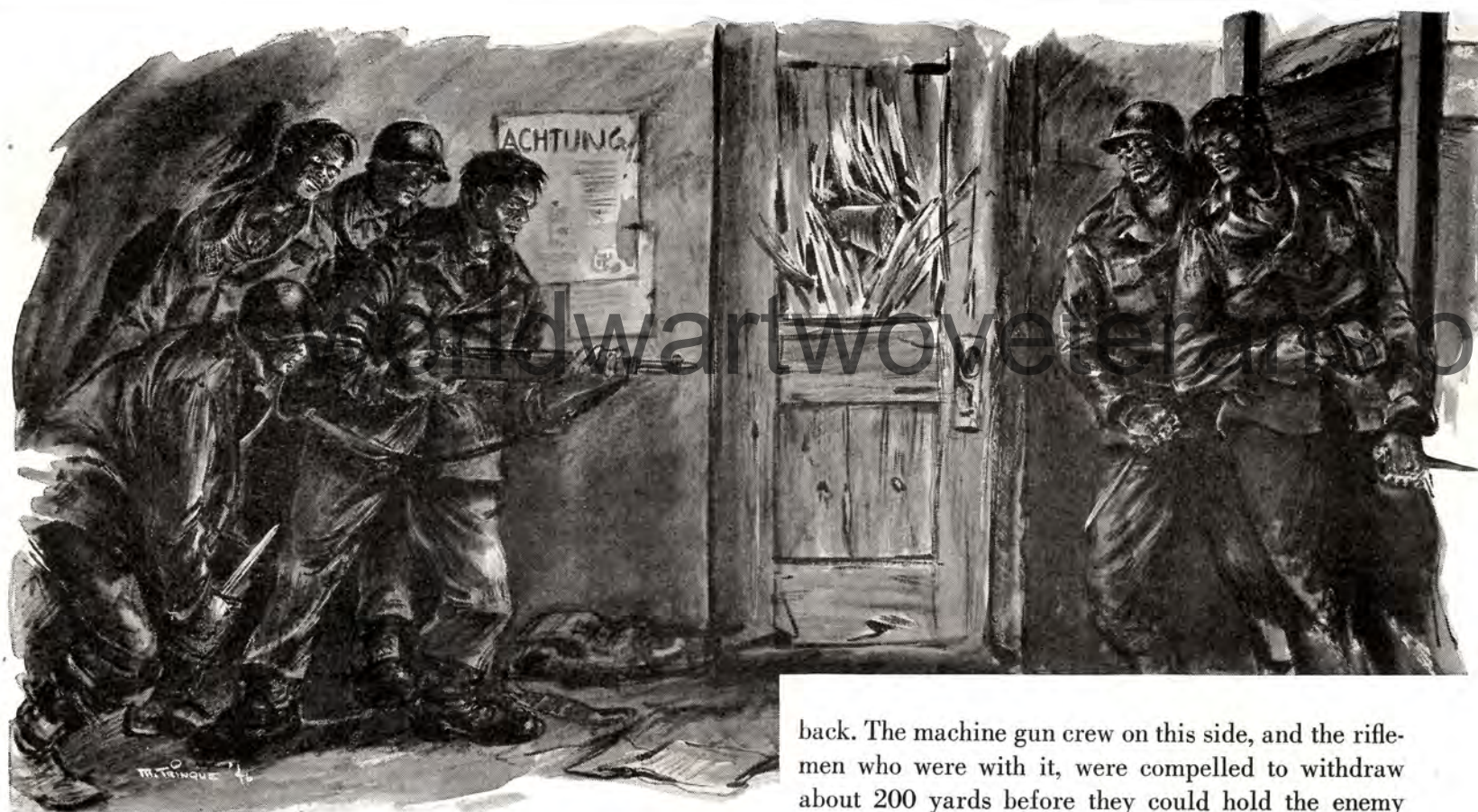
Working frenziedly, the Co. B men enlarged the hole in the blocks while the battering at the door was resumed with renewed vigor as additional Germans rushed to the scene. Finally, the hole was large enough for them to crawl through, and the Centurymen, abandoning all their equipment except for Meza's sub-machine gun, squeezed through the opening.

To their chagrin, the Baker men found that the window led to another corridor instead of the great outdoors and safety. Spotting a German at the far end of the passage, Meza cut him down with the tommy-gun, and the six men took off around a corner in the opposite direction as a flock of Krauts, attracted by the firing, dashed after them. Luck was with the Co. B men. By accident, the Americans stumbled upon a basement furnace room and scrambled into the dark flues. Almost holding their breath, they waited tensely in their sooty hiding place while the Germans searched the room.

The morning and afternoon dragged on slowly. The sound of voices and the scrape of hob-nailed boots could be heard plainly by the Baker men as the Germans combed every room in the corridor and other parts of the building. At last, the noise of the hunt died away. For the moment, at least, they were safe.

Waiting until nightfall, the six men left their hiding place and tiptoed upstairs where they found a room with an outside door on the far side. On the floor of the room, however, three Krauts lay sleeping. Taking a desperate gamble, the Americans stealthily stepped over the slumbering Germans and opened the door with a prayer that it would not squeek.

Luck was still with them. The German sentry was just turning a corner of the building. The Americans



waited until the sentry was out of sight and made a dash for the woods, 300 yards away. Rapidly as possible, the six Centurymen began to climb a slope which led to our lines. They were brought up short by an American voice from a foxhole and the ominous command "Halt! What's the password?"

The six men could have kissed that sentry. In American, Bower answered, "We're just looking for Baker Co. We've been lost for 16 hours."

At the front, one can never tell what will happen in such a situation. But, fortunately, the soldier believed them. By midnight, they had been taken to an artillery headquarters to be identified.

Because of the difficulty of maintaining communications, the 1st Battalion of the 399th did not know that the Recon had already fallen back at least 4000 yards, but the battalion reserve was sent to the right flank anyway. The reserve platoon of Co. A was placed just east of Co. B along with two rifle platoons of Co. C. These troops went across the Lemberg road and took positions facing east. The remaining platoon of Co. C was the battalion mobile reserve.

Before daylight the Germans threw in a short artillery barrage against Co. B. Then they sprang their fourth and most powerful attack. With this one they almost succeeded. The two platoons of Co. C which were facing east held against the severe pressure, but the major thrust of the enemy against Schoenberg Hill and the right flank of Co. B caused our lines to fall

back. The machine gun crew on this side, and the riflemen who were with it, were compelled to withdraw about 200 yards before they could hold the enemy advance. T. Sgt. Rudolph Steinman of Co. D, who was with this gun crew, notified the battalion CO that he was moving back and asked for some riflemen to support him in an attempt to retake the position. He was promised a platoon, and the understrength platoon of Co. C, which had been the mobile reserve, was sent to Steinman's positions. When daylight came Steinman had fought back with his MG-crew nearly to his original position. Elements of Co. B were now to come up and take over from the Co. C platoon. Across the road from his position, Steinman could see two enemy digging in. He shot one, and the other surrendered. While Co. B returned to its positions, the enemy dug in to await reinforcements. Unfortunately for the Germans, Co. B had good observation of these reinforcements coming from Bitche, and accurate artillery fire blasted group after group of the enemy as they attempted to move into line.

At 0815, an enemy artillery shell struck an ammunition truck passing the CP of Battery A of the 925th F A Battalion. While the medics were trying to rescue the truck driver and battery men were struggling to put out the fire, the ammunition exploded, injuring two medics and two artillerymen.

Initially, the 399th was disposed so that its front faced northeast toward Bitche, the 3rd Battalion holding rear area lines to give depth to the defense. But with the sudden withdrawal of the 117th Cavalry, the regimental flank suddenly became the front which now extended as far back as Sarreinsberg, or Wingen, or



With the ground frozen hard as flint, digging in for the expected counterattack became a major problem.

Marseilles, for that matter. With Co. L in reserve, the remainder of the 3rd Battalion held the ridges to the rear of the front lines, ridges which began with le Steinkopf, just east of Siersthal, and curved southeast to a height east of Lemberg.

Co. K of the 398th, attached to the 399th, blocked the enemy on the west of le Steinkopf. The 2nd Platoon of Co. K 399th, with a section of light machine guns, held Steinkopf and Signalberg as the left flank of the secondary defense. Just to the east, the 1st Platoon of Co. K, with one heavy machine gun and an anti-tank gun, covered a point of woods at the head of a draw between Signalberg and Spitzberg and maintained a three-man outpost in Reyersviller. Co. K's 3rd Platoon stretched across the northeast face of Spitzberg to the Lemberg-Bitche road at the Kollert road junction, with an outpost in Schwangerbach where the Reyersviller road joined the Lemberg highway.

Beyond the highway, covered by a section of heavy machine guns, the 3rd Platoon of Co. I was dug in on the north slope of Rundenkopf. The east slope of Rundenkopf was occupied by the 1st Platoon of Co. I. The 2nd Platoon defended le Staengelberg, the high ground between Rundenkopf and the Lemberg-Bitche railroad. A four-man outpost held Wolfsbronn Farm.

This outpost first discovered that it was in the front lines when in mid-morning 30 Germans began firing on the building in which they were housed. In a running fire fight during which a BAR was used to good advantage to make the enemy keep close to the ground, the outpost moved back to its lines. Farther north in Reyersviller, the Co. K outpost was also finding that the enemy might at any moment have them surrounded,

and they too fell back to their main lines. Since the enemy was exploiting the open flank by making end runs further and further south, two platoons of Co. L were sent out to Hochfirst ridge, just east of Lemberg, with two mortars and three heavy machine guns for support. They sent an outpost south to the other side of the Lemberg-Bitche railway.

All morning the enemy had been moving more troops to his front opposite Co. B. Suddenly, just at noon, a mob of German soldiers leapt out of their holes and trenches and came running toward the Co. B lines on Schoenberg Hill. Screaming, howling, and cursing above the sound of their fire, they ran upright, ignoring cover, and acting as though they were drunk or doped. This first wave shattered itself against the crossfire of our machine guns and accurate mortar shelling. The Germans who escaped dodged back until a second screaming wave caught up with them and swept them forward again.

T. Sgt. Steinman had been digging in his machine gun in the area of the Co. A platoon on the right flank of Co. B, when at least a company of the insanely charging Germans began rushing his position. Pfc. "Rip" Farish who was with him shouted, "Let's take off! Let's get the hell out of here."

"Take off? Look at 'em come! I've been waiting two years for this."

Waiting until the Germans were only 50 yards away, Steinman began to fire. Farish said later that he had never heard a machine gun sing the way that one did. One hundred Germans were killed in successive charges against the gun.

Just as this fifth attack against the Co. B main positions began, the two platoons of Co. C, east of the Lemberg Road and to the right of Co. B, reported that the



enemy was attacking them and apparently trying to make a flank assault from the southeast. These platoons held against the attack, and the reserve platoon of Co. C took up positions to their rear. But the enemy was able to by-pass the positions to the south and slash through to the Lemberg road to the rear of the Co. B main lines on Schoenberg. Then, wheeling the attack northward, the Germans overran and completely surrounded the reserve platoon of Co. C which fought on until all but four of the men had been killed or captured. These four were able to sneak through to our lines when the enemy attack had gone beyond them.

The German's northward attack carried them to the rear of the Co. B CP. The Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon from the Battalion Headquarters Company and all the Co. B men who were around the house where the CP was located, formed a defense line. Crouching at a window S. Sgt. William Bartscher, the forward observer for the 925th F A Battalion, called for artillery to be dropped on spots as little as fifty yards from his own position. This damaging fire and that of the small group of defenders who used up more than 400 rounds of ammunition, held the enemy for two hours. Much of this fire came from the machine gun of Sgt. La Belle who was firing from an upstairs window of the house. Worried for fear this barrel would also burn out, as an earlier one had, La Belle continually oiled his gun. He was among the last to leave when the CP group withdrew and was captured before reaching our lines.

The order for Co. B to withdraw from its positions on Schoenberg and fall back west to Schimberg Hill in line with Co. A, came at 1500 in the midst of this defense. By this time, the enemy, attacking from both

the northeast and the south, had almost closed the escape route. The Co. B men began to fall back by two's and three's, moving cautiously along the wooded ridge. Some of the men on the right flank cut across to the high ground south of the Reyersviller road and reached the positions of Co. K. Sgt. Steinman with his machine gun crew and the platoon of Co. A, which was with him beyond the Lemberg road, moved back from one position to another. While the machine gun moved to a new spot, the platoon kept up a fire from the flank. Then when the MG was able to give them flanking fire for cover, the platoon fell back. Working this kind of alternate crossfire, the men were able to reach Enchenberg where they were ordered to go to the rear of the new positions of Co. A.

The 925th F A Battalion was also ordered to move back to Enchenberg.

Having held the enemy off and even forced him to pull back a little to escape our artillery shells, the Co. B CP group had given some of the company time to reach the new lines. Capt. Altus W. Prince, Sgt. Bartscher, and Pfc. Earl K. Oliver with two others now set out for a ridge 1500 yards to the west. They were taken prisoners and failed to reach the new area. In another tragedy of the withdrawal, the driver of a jeep in which three wounded B Co. men were being taken back to the aid station was shot. The jeep careened over a bluff, killing all the men.

Though Co. A had swung its right flank back slightly so that its lines ran nearly straight south from Freudenberg Farm, the burden of fighting off the enemy while moving to new lines fell on Co. B. To cover this withdrawal, Lt. Joseph Nageotte and his 81mm mortar platoon fired nearly 1000 rounds at minimum range. Then in the dusk, when the mortar men had already removed four of the tubes, they were set upon by the enemy. Firing the two tubes still in position as well as their small arms against the Germans who came up from their right rear, the mortar men repulsed the Jerries and, leaving the base plates which were frozen in the ground, took their tubes with them back to Lambach and Enchenberg.

When the two platoons of Co. C east of the Lemberg road—platoons which had beaten off all attacks only to have the enemy by-pass them to the west—had fallen back and re-assembled in Lambach, the 1st Battalion's readjustment of its lines was complete.

During the late afternoon the enemy had also been attacking in the 3rd Battalion area further south. Shortly after Co. K of the 255th Inf., reinforcing our



Moving against Bitche. Note the shin-deep mud covering the field.



A mortar crew prepares to "throw 'em in". Empty cases tell own story.

division, had moved to support positions on Hochfirst Ridge near Co. L of the 399th, the enemy attacked both Co. L and Co. I to the north. Co. I killed all of a small force of enemy who approached from Wolfsbronn Farm. The enemy force attacking Co. L was spotted by the outpost on the south side of the Lemberg-Bitche railway as they came along the tracks. The outpost sent this information to the sergeant in charge of the 2nd Platoon. He began to lead two squads along the north side of the tracks so as to fire on the attackers from across the railway area. But the outpost fired first, and the Germans tore across the tracks right into the path of the two squads. The fire-fight lasted about 30 minutes. Then another enemy force came at the two squads from the northwest, charging and screaming as though expecting to overrun our men who, instead of being trampled under foot, continued to fire as they pulled back to their foxholes. Because it was dusk and their losses had been severe, the Germans dug in.

The company now had to cover so large a front, there was a gap on the northeast face of Rundenkopf Hill between the first and third platoons of Co. I. Through this gap about 30 enemy infiltrated just before dark and reached Kollert Hill on the Lemberg Road one-half mile to the west. Capt. Alfred E. Olson, Co. I CO, shifted his second platoon to the left and a Co. L platoon moved up so that the enemy was pocketed. Five Germans were killed. When the night closed down, the enemy made no attempt to break out and before dawn the 3rd Battalion had shifted its positions from the area.

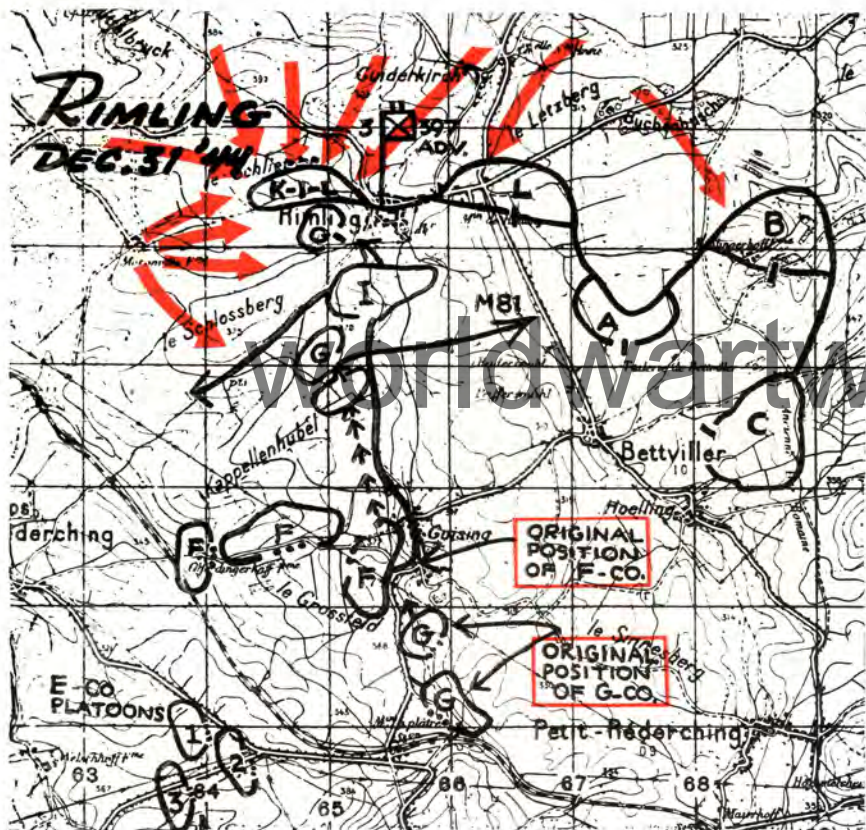
The 3rd Battalion of the 255th Inf., whose Co. K was already in line, moved into Lemberg and began

to take positions facing east and running from Road Junction 404, southeast of Lemberg, north to Rundenkopf. These reinforcements made possible the closure of the gap in the lines of the 3rd Battalion of the 399th. Further support was on the way. The CO of 3rd Battalion, 141st Inf., 36th Div., arrived at the CP of the 3rd Battalion 399th, a couple of hours before midnight with the word that his outfit, a part of VI Corps reserve, was to take over the area east of Lemberg to help shorten and seal off the exposed and extended flank. This outfit was to establish itself from Road Junction 404, southeast of Lemberg, to the junction at Kollert Hill on the Lemberg-Bitche road two kilometers north of the town. Since Kollert Hill was already the right flank of Co. K of the 399th, this change meant that Cos. I and L, further south, would move out. They were ordered to take new lines west of Co. K and reach across the Steinkopf Hill in line with the 1st Battalion.

The first twenty-four hours of 1945 thus ended for the 399th, after the regiment had sustained five vicious enemy attacks in the area of Co. B and held against deeper and deeper encircling attacks on its unprotected right flank.

The enemy had also attacked against the left flank of the division at the same time as he began his major offensive against the eastern flank. On the west Co. K of the 397th Inf. faced the chief force of the enemy's attack.

On the last day of 1944, the 3rd Battalion of the 397th held the 100th's western flank in the area around Rimling. To the west was the 71st Inf. of the 44th Div. The 1st Platoon of Co. K 397th Inf. was dug in on a bare hill called le Schlietzen north and west of Rim-



ling. This hill was the highest peak in the area and commanded all the ground to the north and west. To the south, it extended in a long, somewhat lower ridge or series of ridges running past Guising, two or three kilometers south of Rimling, almost to Rohrbach. This ridge was higher than the other ridges to the west. Just east of the positions of the 1st Platoon of Co. K on the north end of this commanding ground, were the lines of the 2nd Platoon. These lines covered the highway running from the north into Rimling and were the northernmost positions of the battalion. The positions of the 3rd Platoon of Co. K ran southwest along the highway and ridge and then turned east to include the north edge of Rimling itself.

The east end of Rimling was held by Co. L. Its lines extended eastward along the highway between Rimling and Epping-Urbach to its crossing with the north-south highway between Güderkirch and Bettviller. From here, the Co. L positions turned east about half a kilometer into the open ground to the right of this crossroads.

The 1st Battalion of the 397th, as the right element of the regiment, extended about two kilometers east of the 3rd Battalion in the direction of Urbach. Co. I formed the secondary defense in positions running east and west just south of Rimling, supporting the entire front of the battalion. The heavy mortars of Co. M were set up in a dry creek bed east and south of Rimling and to the rear of Co. L. The 2nd Battalion was in reserve, with Co. F around and west of Guising,

Co. G south of Co. F on hills above the Gare de Rohrbach, and Co. E deployed around the road junction west of the Rohrbach railway station. These support positions, like those of the 3rd Battalion of the 399th on the right side of the division, were to become front positions when the division flank was exposed.

Because the 397th had been in these positions for a few days, our foxholes were deep and had been roofed over with logs and earth. In the bare earth these were well camouflaged, but the snow which fell late in December, shortly before the attack, made them almost invisible. The warning from division G-2, a couple of days before the attack, that the Germans were likely to start an offensive sometime near New Year's caused the 3rd Battalion Commander, Major William Esbitt, to order all the men to be on the alert twenty-four hours a day. Both Co. K and Co. L had a platoon of heavy machine guns set up as a part of their defenses, and there were four tanks in Rimling to be used as emergency defensive fires.

Just after dark on the last day of the year Co. I sent a patrol from its support positions into Gunderkirch, for, although the enemy lines were known to be generally north of the positions, his main lines had not yet been determined. Just before midnight the 71st Inf., 44th Div., to the west of Co. K, sent word that they were being attacked by at least five companies of enemy. The battalion commander alerted the already alert battalion, and the patrol from Co. I was recalled. It reported that it had encountered no Germans either going out nor coming back.

At midnight, as a New Year's celebration, the 374th F A Battalion took part in a total fire by division and corps artillery, firing one round of high explosive and one round of smoke from each gun.

A few minutes later the enemy attacked along the entire battalion line, with especial force against Co. K on Schlietzen Hill. Apparently hoping to have the advantage of surprise, the Germans advanced without artillery fire, but the companies had been on the alert for this attack for some time and were ready for it. As he had done on the 399th front, the enemy came at our lines without trying to take cover, rushing forward bold upright and shouting such things as "Yankee bastards" and other obscenities. The Jerries attacking on this front were known to be elements of the fanatic 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. They were clearly determined to take Schlietzen Hill. About two hundred men attacked the 2nd and 1st platoons of Co. K. Our men used every weapon available in fighting off the

Pvt. Leon Outlaw, the Co. M machine gunner who played an important role in stopping the enemy by killing an estimated 100 Krauts.

Krauts. In the 2nd Platoon area, on the top of the hill, the right-flank heavy machine gun manned by Pvt. Leon Outlaw of Co. M tore holes through the advancing Germans and did much to stop the attack. To the east along the highway, however, the enemy overran the positions of the Co. K first platoon, and 18 or more Germans reached the north edge of Rimling where they attempted to set up machine guns to the rear of the 1st Platoon positions. S. Sgt. Moore fired on this group and killed one of them, then called for fire from the tanks within Rimling itself. After a few rounds of hits and near-misses from this tank fire; the enemy fled from the town, leaving guns and equipment behind.

Although the first wave of the offensive had been stopped as a co-ordinated movement, small groups still remained on the Co. K front and continued to fire. Often they stood upright and hollered "American gangsters" or "Yankee bastards" as they fired. This unexplainable behavior allowed our men to kill or wound many of them. Frequently, with a kind of insane heroism, the wounded Nazis continued to fire from where they had fallen. Small groups also tried to infiltrate through our lines. Since many of these Germans wore white camouflage suits, it was nearly impossible to see them against the snow. But when they moved they were revealed in the bright moonlight and cut down by our rifle fire.

The main power of this first assault had been released against the two western platoons of Co. K on Schlietzen. But there had been heavy patrol action against the 3rd Platoon deployed along the northern edge of Rimling, and against Co. L along the road to Epping-Urbach and in the area around and beyond the crossroads. Coming from the north, one of these patrols was able to enter the outskirts of Rimling. Two Germans came within rifle range of the Co. L CP in a building in the east end of town.

Sgt. Steen, at the doorway, fired upon them, killing one and wounding the other. This wounded German he then persuaded to come into the house to have his wound treated. The Jerry seemed chiefly interested, once he had been persuaded to give up, in getting out of combat and back to a rear area.

Co. L had its machine guns set so as to fire on an area about 75 yards to the front, a close-in fire intended to increase the deadliness of the weapons. During the night, Sgt. Robert L. Madren reported an



enemy patrol trying to attack frontally from the northeast against his position. Then he waited to allow the four Germans in the lead to come very near his hole. Firing with great rapidity at very close range, he killed all four, and the rest withdrew.

All through the period, after the first wave of the attack, while the men of Cos. K and L waited for the enemy to form his new assault which they knew would come, the 3rd Battalionites could hear the sounds of heavy fighting on the front of the 71st Inf. to the west. The prospects were none too pleasant.

When the first enemy attack had been beaten off after about an hour, sounds to the front of Co. K showed that the Germans were regrouping to make another attack. This time, as though realizing that there was no chance of surprise, the enemy began his onslaught with an artillery barrage. Immediately after the artillery and mortar fire had lifted, more than 300 Germans, screaming and shouting, rushed toward Co. K from the north and northwest. This foolhardy assault was stopped because the fire from Co. K maimed or killed whole groups of the attackers.

In the lull, one platoon of Co. I went into line just to the east of the flank platoon of Co. K and another Co. I platoon took over positions within the area of the 1st Platoon of Co. K on the east slope of Schlietzen Hill. The other platoon of Co. I and the Weapons Platoon remained in the support positions south of Rimling. Although the 374th F A Battalion fired several missions to the west in aid to the 71st Inf., that



regiment dropped back. Because of a failure of communications, the 3rd Battalion of the 397th was not informed of this withdrawal which further exposed its left rear area to the enemy.

The third wave of the enemy offensive, again preceded by artillery, came just before dawn. Although it was repulsed, the Krauts discovered the unprotected stretch of about a thousand yards along the 3rd Battalion flank where the 71st Inf. had fallen back. Small German patrols began to by-pass Co. K's positions on the heights of Schlietzen and, by swinging south, worked into Rimling from the southwest. The terrain south of Schlietzen Hill is slightly lower than the crest of the hill but is still a high ridge dominating the land to the west. When the enemy began to come across this ridge, the platoon of Co. I which had remained in support when the others went forward, was sent to ridge positions south of the Co. K flank with part of the Weapons Platoon as support. Even when this platoon was given two tanks for additional support there were not enough men to fill the gap. The Germans, still noisy and apparently indifferent to danger, continued to attack and infiltrate through the openings in our lines.

With the enemy infiltrating behind its positions and continuing to make small attacks from its front, the 2nd Platoon of Co. K was forced to draw back off the top of Schlietzen.

S. Sgt. Saul Scheiman of Co. I directed deadly mortar and artillery fire on these enemy patrols, stopping many of them. But one group of about platoon strength managed to enter the south end of Rimling. There they assembled in front of a church. In the

tower of the church where he had an excellent view of the entire area was 2nd Lt. James S. Howard, forward observer for Battery C of the 374th F A Battalion. For weapons Lt. Howard had a grenade, a carbine, and a pistol. It was still not quite light, but Howard dropped the grenade into the midst of the enemy group and then fired a magazine from his carbine and one from his pistol into the patrol. Those Germans who were still alive and able to move dashed across the street and into a house opposite a church. After daylight some men from Co. I headquarters surrounded the house, threw a hand grenade into the basement window, and ordered the Germans to surrender. One by one, 20 Jerries came out of the cellar and gave up.

With Germans on three sides, with patrols constantly engaging in fire-fights against them, and with enemy artillery fire falling in and near their positions, the 2nd Platoon of Co. K, even after it had withdrawn from the top of Schlietzen, was in a very hot situation. The Co. K commander, 2nd Lt. Robert Harris, went up to see the condition of this platoon. He was fired on by snipers and his progress was marked by artillery and mortar fire, but he decided that the platoon ought to attack and retake the hill. The battalion commander agreed, called for an artillery preparation, and ordered Co. G plus a platoon of Co. F to move into line south of the ridge platoon of Co. I and the two tanks, a line from which the 2nd Platoon of Co. K would attack. Before these plans could be put into action, the enemy attacked twice, chiefly against the open flank, this time with three companies and eight tanks, but was driven off by artillery. Then, just after noon, while Co. G and part of Co. F moved up from around Guising and the Rohrbach railway station to hold the ridge as far as a kilometer and a half south of Schlietzen, the 2nd Platoon of Co. K counter-attacked. The platoon took the hill with little effort because the enemy had turned his attention to the open flank and was not in position to stop the assault.

During the morning Lt. Weiler with a group from the Co. L CP were making a reconnaissance of Rimling to find any enemy who might still be hiding in the town. A civilian came up to the patrol and said he could show them where there were some Germans. Though warning his men to be careful of a possible trap, Lt. Weiler and his patrol went with the civilian to a house. Here the civilian called out for the enemy in the basement to surrender. Without firing a shot, 17 enemy gave up the fight.

The enemy's assault was so wholly directed at the west flank of the regiment, that Co. L, to the east of Rimling, faced only minor attacks, as did Cos. A and B on the 1st Battalion front further east. An enemy force advanced from the woods east of Güderkirch and reached a draw just to the front of the positions of Co. B around Mehlingerhoff Farm. Here the attack was stopped and, though a number of Germans withdrew, 11 surrendered and nineteen were killed.

During the afternoon enemy-flown P47s strafed towns in the division area. Two bombs dropped in Bining landed near the CP of the 374th F A Battalion, destroying two vehicles and injuring two soldiers. Besides the ack-ack around Montbronn, all automatic weapons on the vehicles of the Headquarters Platoon of the 100th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop fired on the enemy planes when they strafed Montbronn. Tec. 5 William H. Rikers of the Troop was manning the .50-calibre machine gun mounted on the kitchen truck. Tracers from his gun clearly hit one of the planes which later began falling leaving a trail of smoke.

The rest of the Rcn. Troop had been employed on the right flank and to the rear of the division. The 3rd Platoon made contact with the 117th Cavalry Squadron early and found them withdrawing from Mouterhouse. The platoon kept up liaison with the cavalry until late in the day when it sent an eight-man patrol on foot to look for enemy along the road running southeast from Lemberg to Mouterhouse. They found no Germans. Just before midnight, the 2nd Platoon of the 100th Rcn. Troop, further south, sent a foot patrol toward Mouterhouse along the road from Sarreinsberg. It also found no enemy.

Shortly after midnight, on the morning of 2 January, Co. F of the 397th Inf., less one platoon already in line with Co. I southwest of Rimling, moved into positions along the ridge south of Schlietzen Hill so that they faced west and north. Later, Co. G also moved to this area to the south of Co. F. Since Co. E remained astride the road net west of the Rehrbach railway station, the 397th regimental front was now greatly extended along what had been its left flank.

With daylight, the enemy continued his attacks from the northwest. The German had moved ten or fifteen tanks up on the hill north of Schlietzen from where they fired on the 2nd Platoon of Co. K. Throughout the day the enemy formed again and again for containing and holding attacks against the 397th while he attempted to take advantage of his initial success against the 44th Div. to the west.

These attacks were broken up by the 374th F A Battalion. In mid-morning the artillery dispersed at least a battalion of enemy infantry to the regimental flank and shortly after knocked out a tank which was advancing with infantry support. In the afternoon well-placed shells broke up a concentration of 50 tanks and other vehicles to the north of the front. This noteworthy effectiveness was possible because of the location of the forward observer in the church tower in Rimling. But the enemy's success to the west forced Battery C of the 374th to move to positions southwest of Bining, with the result that the battalion CP and the gun positions received a good deal of counter-battery shelling.

To the east, on the other flank of the division, the 3rd Battalion of the 255th Inf. 63rd Div. had taken positions east of Lemberg and the 141st Inf. 36th Div. was moving into adjacent positions. Reinforced, the 3rd Battalion of the 399th began to swing Cos. L and I around from Rundenkopf, northeast of Lemberg, to reinforce Co. K on the hill mass east of Lambach and overlooking the Reyersviller-Siersthal road and the Bitche-Lemberg highway. Co. L shifted to the left side of Co. K and dug in on a hill northeast of Lambach. Co. I was ordered to pull back from Rundenkopf to the Lemberg-Bitche highway, march north along it to the Kollert road junction, and then turn up the steep road northwest on to Signalberg Hill. A detail which had been sent ahead on route reconnaissance came back and met the company south of the road junction. They reported that the enemy already held the area to which Co. I was to go and that two of the advance party had been captured. Informed of this situation, the battalion CO ordered Co. I to take positions on the southern slope of Hill 415, south of Glassemburg. This first defense of a rear slope was to be imitated by other companies of the regiment in the next few days.

The enemy, attacking several hours after midnight on the morning of 2 January, came west along the Reyersviller road between the positions of Co. B and Co. K and forced the left flank of Co. K back from its positions. The company had no radio or telephone communication with the battalion CP, but because this advance looked like a full scale assault, reported it to the battalion commander by runner. Maj. Angelo Punaro, acting battalion CO, sent back word that a platoon of Co. I and a heavy machine gun would be sent to the area. This support was emplaced before dawn, and later on an anti-tank gun was also brought

On 23 July 1946, in Allendorf, Germany, General Von Mellenthin, commanding general of the 19th Germany Army, submitted the following sworn statement relative to enemy forces and defenses confronting the 100th Division during the Vosges Mountains campaign and the battle for Bitche. This sensational, press-time revelation was forwarded to the editor from Germany by Gen. Withers A. Burgess. More than any commendation by an American general, it extols the fighting qualities of the soldiers of the Century Division. It is also a lucid supplement to our own G-2 information.

BREAKTHROUGH OF AMERICAN FORCES OVER BACCARAT TO BADONVILLER, MIDDLE OF NOVEMBER 1944

While in October 1944, the general attitude of enemy forces in the larger Metz area can be described as quiet and the units of the *German First Army*, which were very much worn out by battles ensuing the invasion and the subsequent withdrawal through France, had some time for refreshing, the troops of the Seventh U. S. Army, committed in the Vosges, left the *Nineteenth Army* no time for carrying out the badly needed refreshing in peace. Thus the *21st Panzer Div.* and the *16th Div.*, committed in the Rambervillers-Bruyeres sector, were involved in current defensive battles, which pressed their positions back for several kilometers, in October 1944. Nevertheless, they were able to prevent a breakthrough.

On 8 November 1944 an American major attack was launched on the sector on both sides of Metz. According to an order given by the *Army Group G*, the *21st Panzer Div.* was to be relieved by the *708th Div.* commencing on the night of 9-10 November 1944. The *Panzer Div.* was quickly transferred to the Metz battle area in order to be committed there against the threatening enemy breakthrough. The *708th Div.*, now in the course of being brought up, had been activated in Slovakia about six weeks ago.

By 10 November 1944 a defensive battle, lasting for several days, commenced in the Baccarat-St. Die-Bruyeres area, in which the enemy had but little success in the beginning. On 11 November 1944 stronger U. S. forces attacked also further to the North in the direction of Blamont.

While the *553rd Div.*, committed here, in a tenacious battle succeeded in preventing an enemy breakthrough, the situation in the Herbeviller-Baccarat sector, and south of it where the *708th Div.* was committed, developed in a less satisfactory manner. The relief of the *21st Panzer Div.* by this infantry division was not completed at that time, so that here the enemy struck on a sector not yet fully ready for defense. He could, therefore, make deep penetrations and Baccarat was taken by the 100 U. S. Div.*

Also, on 13 November 1944 the *553rd Div.*, in general, was able to hold its positions west of Blamont. On the contrary, the situation on the *708th Div.* sector became threatening. Exact reports from the division had not yet arrived at the higher staffs on that day. Still, it is recognized that the American leadership quickly grasped the big possibilities offered to them in the Baccarat area as on that day the U. S. units were energetically pushing forward in the direction of Ancerviller and Badonviller. On 15 and 16 November 1944, the remnants of the *708th Div.*, defeated in the Vortagen, were driven back to the line Cirey—east of Badonviller—Raon L'Etape. Thereby the Seventh U. S. Army (100th Div.) had succeeded in penetrating to a depth of 20 kilometers. The elements,

*Baccarat was not taken by the 100th Div. The Division did debouch from that town for its attack through the Vosges Mountains.

still holding positions west of Blamont, were thereby threatened on their deep southern wing and had to be withdrawn into the Blamont area and north of it. Between 17 and 18 November 1944, the 708th Div. was completely pressed back to the edge of the Vosges.

Thus the inner wings of the XV and VI U. S. Corps—the 14th U. S. Armored Div. and the 100th U. S. Div.—succeeded in smashing the 708th Div., lacking combat experience, and in a daring thrust, during a few days, advanced to the line Raon L'Etape—Badonviller—south of Blamont, while the attack launched by U. S. units further north in the direction of Blamont, and north of it, could make headway for a few kilometers only.†

Summing up, from the point of view of the *Army Group G*, we can say that the U. S. units committed on the sector of Baccarat and north of it had almost completely smashed the 708th Div., caught the 553rd Div. in its deep wing, creating thereby the supposition for the breakthrough of the American and French Armored Forces near Zabern, taking place on 22 November 1944.

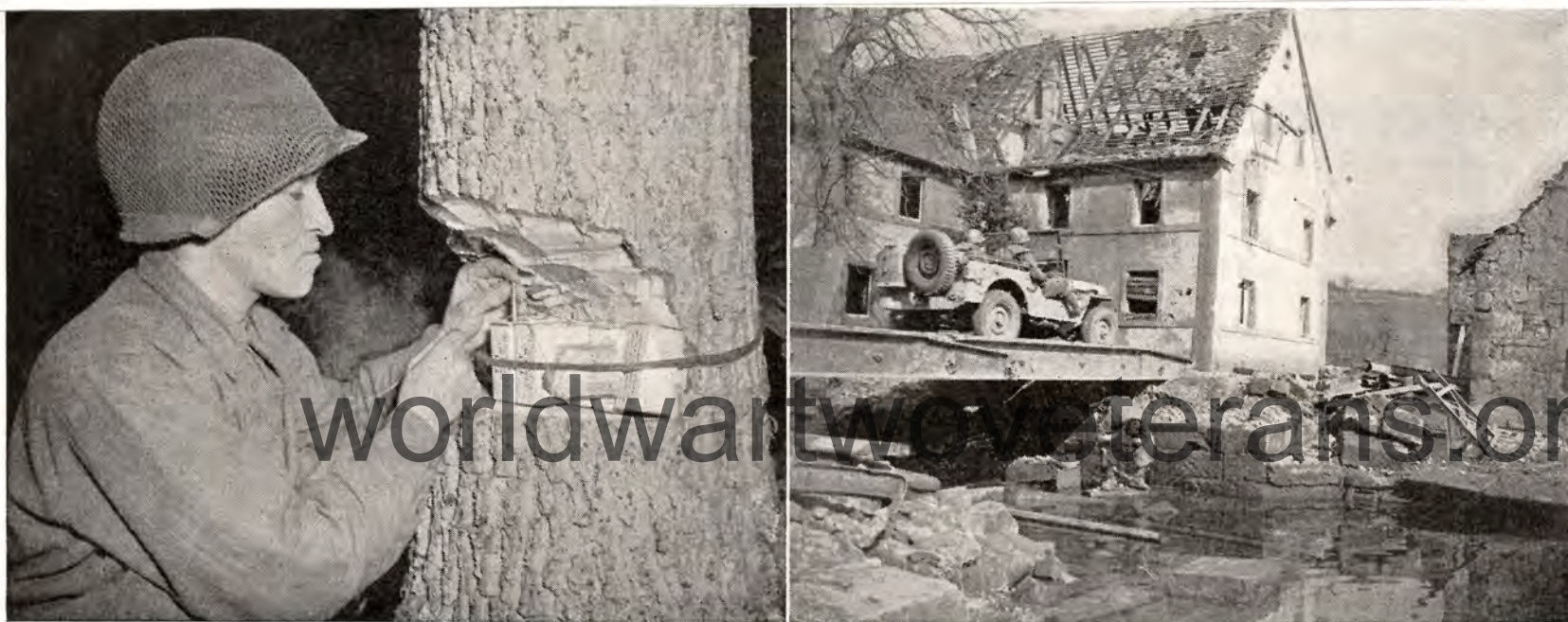
DEFENSIVE BATTLES OF THE FIRST ARMY IN THE BITCHE AREA, BEGINNING OF DECEMBER 1944

The counter-attack launched by the *Panzer Lehr Div.* on 24 and 26 November 1944, with the object of closing the front gap near Zabern (Savern) by a thrust from the Sarrunion to the South, had failed. The forces did not suffice for this purpose. Besides, the 11th and 25th *Panzer Divs.*, which were still committed in the sector of the *First Army*, were required for our major Ardennes offensive, which was scheduled to begin middle of December. On the night of 30 November-1 December 1944 the *Panzer Lehr Div.* had to be quickly relieved from the Saarunion area. With a heavy heart, we had to order the 11th *Panzer Div.* with subordinate 25th *Panzer Gren. Div.* still to extend their long drawn sector in order to relieve forces necessary for relief of the *Panzer Lehr Div.* On 1 December 1944, the main body of the 11th *Panzer Div.* and the 25th *Panzer Gren. Div.*—the latter consisted only of one regimental group with about 8 to 10 tanks—were already taken back into the line Wittling-Aachen-Biningen (Bimling)-Bois de Heiligenbronn (Maginot Line). On that day stronger U. S. Armored Forces pushed forward on both sides of the road Lorenzen-Biningen toward Bitche. We succeeded in intercepting this push by flanking fire from both sides, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. One of these armored flanking groups was assembled in the woods southeast of Biningen.

The 361st *Volks Gren. Div.*, which was committed on the adjacent sector of the lower Vosges south of Bitche—one of the best infantry divisions engaged in the defensive battle in the larger area of Metz—had in the beginning of December to withstand a steadily increasing enemy pressure in forset battles. In these battles the 100th U. S. Div., which was known to us from the Vosges (battles) as being a crack assault division with daring and flexible leadership, succeeded in taking the village Mouterhouse, Lemberg and Montbronn. In consequence of this steady, strong enemy pressure the *Army Group G* was not able to withdraw from the Bitche sector the 11th *Panzer Div.* and the 25th *Panzer Gren. Div.*, so badly needed for the Ardennes offensive. These forces had to remain on this front in order to prevent a possible breakthrough of the American forces in the Bitche area.

(Signed) VON MELLENTHIN

†In other words, the attack by the 100th Div. was of material assistance to XV corps in its breakthrough to SAVERN Pass and the capture of STRASSBOURG.



Left, tying dynamite into a notched tree. When the charge is exploded, the tree falls across the road forming an abatis, or roadblock. Above, time out to wash up.

up. When the Anti-Tank Platoon leader tried to return with his driver in a jeep, he found that the enemy had broken through to the area behind the 1st Platoon in the center of Co. K. The two men were ambushed by the enemy before they could withdraw from the area. The driver and the jeep were captured by the Krauts but the lieutenant was able to return to the Co. K positions. The Co. K men, unwilling to believe that the enemy had penetrated so far, decided that the fire had come from company guards. Lt. Behrens, Lt. Skinner, and four men set out and found the jeep. As they approached they were challenged in German and, when they didn't answer, were fired on from positions around the jeep. They returned to the platoon.

Soon the enemy began a drive on Co. K, and the rest of the company fell back to take up positions on the rear slope of the hill just south of Signalberg, leaving the 1st Platoon surrounded and isolated. In the attack the 1st Platoon killed two wire-men who were advancing with an artillery forward observer and captured the officer. To the west of Signalberg, Co. L, which had also been hit by the German attack, withdrew to the south several hundred yards. This action left Co. K of the 398th Inf., attached to the 399th and dug in on the north slope of Signalberg and Steinkopf, in positions almost surrounded by the enemy. Co. L counterattacked twice to come to the relief of Co. K of the 398th Inf. and was twice driven back. On the third try, Co. L was successful and seized the high ground late in the afternoon.

When it was dark, the 1st Platoon of Co. K, cut off in the center of the front, removed the breech block from the anti-tank gun and the bolts from the machine guns. Leaving the rest of their equipment, they made their way back to the new lines of the company.

The regimental CP moved to Montbronn during the day, and the 925th F A Battalion withdrew to positions around the town. Enemy aircraft dropped a number of bombs in the area of Co. A. Co. G drew back from positions around a road net east of Hottviller to positions about a kilometer west and south where they would be in less danger of having the enemy infiltrate behind their positions.

On the remainder of the 399th Inf. front, the Germans, with lines running almost north and south from east of Hottviller through Simserhoff and Freudenberg Farms and across le Steinberg and le Spitzberg Hills, was generally quiet. Co. L attempted to move forward to the high ground on Steinkopf but, after eight hours of bitter resistance by the enemy, was forced to go back to its original lines.

Co. C of the 141st, attached to the 399th the preceding day, held against enemy pressure and the 3rd Battalion of the 255th moved into reserve positions in Lambach.

Against the other flank of the division, the 3rd Battalion of the 397th Inf. continued to be harassed by enemy assaults, and the Germans went on attacking as though they had been doped. A pre-dawn attack was broken up by artillery, and a mid-morning attack by at least 150 foot troops and a very large number of tanks was driven off by the artillery and by the infantry on Schlietzen Hill. The Germans had constantly shelled Rimling and now began to use white phosphorous shells which set fire to a number of buildings in the town. Co. E, to strengthen the exposed west flank, moved further north so that it occupied a



Keeping vital roads passable was a full-time job for the engineers. Right, refugees returning to Rohrbach after the town was liberated by Centurymen.

nose of hill south of Rimling and pointing southwest toward Gros Rederching. The maintenance and kitchen installations of the 374th F A Battalion moved south to Rahling to get them away from enemy shell fire.

The reason for these changes in position was that the 44th Div. had been forced back to lines south of Gros Rederching so that the flank of the 397th Inf. was unprotected for about 5000 yards south of Schleitzen Hill. Coming through the gap between the 100th and the 44th, the enemy had pushed 150 men and four tanks into the town of Achen where two battalions of the 255th Inf. 63rd Div. had been holding secondary defense positions along the Maginot Line. Though without artillery support, the battalions counterattacked and retook the town thereby ending the German threat to turn the flanks of both the 100th and the 44th Divisions.

Although the enemy main effort on the fourth day of his offensive was directed against the 44th Div. to the west of our lines, he also tried and failed to drive Co. G. of the 397th from the hill south of Schlietzen. On our eastern flank, the Germans attempted to push Co. A of the 399th from high ground but elsewhere on the regimental front was content to hold the forward slopes of the hills whose reverse slopes were occupied by the 3rd Battalion of the 399th.

In the most thrilling action of the day, Co. K of the 255th Inf. sent a 26-man patrol from near Lambach out to Reysersviller and killed 30 enemy with the loss of a single man.

On this day, also, Col. Andrew C. Tychsen was offi-

cially appointed Assistant Division Commander.

During the next two days, 5 and 6 January, the division made a number of changes in its lines. The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 398th effected a double relief with the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 255th; which means, in military terminology, that the units changed places with each other. The 1st Battalion of the 398th took up west flank positions for the division to the northwest of Achen, and the 3rd Battalion moved to the east of Achen. The 2nd Battalion of the 398th was attached to the 399th and took the reserve positions of the 3rd Battalion of the 255th Inf. around Lambach, allowing the latter battalion to move to the area east of Petit Rederching, in reserve positions for its own regiment.

In the 397th Sector, the 2nd Battalion took over from the 3rd Battalion though Co. L remained in its lines to the east of Rimling. In the relief, Cos. E and F moved to Schlietzen Hill and the area just south of it to the west of Rimling, and Cos. K and I moved back to the vicinity of Rohrbach and Bining for a rest.

Only the 2nd Platoon of Co. E had trouble moving into these new positions. The platoon was preceded up the slope by three light tanks whose fire drove the enemy from the knob the platoon was to occupy. The riflemen went into foxholes and the tanks withdrew to the reverse slope of the hill for the night. The enemy attacked, apparently thinking that the tanks had gone. The attack was beaten off, as were three more during the night though one of them was preceded by an artillery preparation. Because of this heavy night fighting, the wounded could not be taken back for medical care.

Germans who had infiltrated to the northeast, or right rear of the platoon, kept the men pinned down



by sniper fire throughout the next morning. The fighting, which had been of varying intensity during the night, had left some men short of ammunition while others had nearly their fully supply. Lt. Dominick S. Cuccinello, the platoon leader, left the safety of his foxhole to collect ammunition from those men who had it and give it to those who didn't. When he was wounded in the arm by a sniper, he crawled back to the reverse slope where the tanks were and ordered them to move up. Under their protection in the gathering dusk, Lt. Cuccinello, though wounded himself, worked until the other wounded had been taken from the area.

The enemy continued shelling the 2nd Battalion heavily all during 7 January and sent numerous patrols against the fighting 397th men. The 2nd Platoon of Co. E could not be supplied with food, water, or ammunition. Wire communications could be maintained only by use of auxiliary wire teams. To the south, Co. G had to beat off enemy infantry and tank advances which were repeatedly launched from the vicinity of Moronville Farm.

After a day of limited enemy activity, 8 January fairly sizzled with action. On the western end of the division front, while the 3rd Battalion of the 398th remained in Maginot Line positions from Achen east to Singling, the 1st Battalion took up secondary defense positions from Singling east to Rohrbach.

On our eastern flank, the 3rd Battalion of the 399th initiated an attack to the east in conjunction with the

1st Battalion, 142nd Inf., 36th Div., which was south of the Century. Co. I had been holding positions on the reverse slope of Hill 415, south of Glassenberg. Co. K, in the center of the battalion lines, was on the west slope of Hill 427, a rugged promontory at the southeast end of the steep-sided valley east of Lambach and just west of le Spitzberg. To complete the battalion front, Co. L, on the northern end, occupied a hill northeast of Lambach, separated by a draw from le Steinkopf to the east.

The aim of the 3rd Battalion attack was to take the heights of Signalberg and Spitzberg instead of holding reverse slopes. The job would be difficult because these peaks were completely open country and the enemy had observation of them from positions which he had had a week to prepare. The artillery barrage on German lines began at 0745. When it was over, Co. I with tanks from Co. A of the 753rd Tank Battalion moved through Co. K and along the edge of woods on the southern slope of the hill mass so that it could go around the southern flank of the enemy entrenched on Spitzberg. This maneuver was slowed by enemy mortar and rifle fire and by the need to co-ordinate with the tanks which could advance best along the roads and trails.

At the time, Co. I numbered only 85 men, a number reduced by ten during the first 1500 yards of advance. Co. I had now reached a line only 35 yards from a formidable enemy position comprising entrenchments of the World War I type and log fortifications from

which the enemy suddenly opened fire on our leading elements. Seeing that his men were too close to attempt to flank the position and that to delay would mean annihilation, Capt. Alfred E. Olson Jr. chose the only alternative. Rushing to the front of the company, he charged the positions. The company followed and overran the emplacements. Before noon, Co. I had flanked the enemy on the crest of the hill and was on the south slope of Spitzberg.

Co. K then moved east to the head of the draw to its front by crossing the saddle between Signalberg to the north and Hill 427 to the south. On the left flank, a platoon of Co. C took over the positions of Co. L on the hill northeast of Lambach overlooking the Meyersviller highway from the south. This platoon was to block off the road while Co. L drove southeast across the wooded draw and up to the height of Steinkopf. But Co. L had hardly started its attack before it was driven back to its positions by enemy fire from 88s and mortars.

In early afternoon, after Lt. Col. Elery M. Zehner had made a daring tank reconnaissance of the route, Co. L again attacked. By nightfall Love Co. had battled up Signalberg and made contact with Co. K on the right and with a platoon of Co. E of the 398th at the road junction northeast of Lambach. This platoon, like the rest of the 2nd Battalion of the 398th, was a part of the reserve defense of the 399th in the Lambach area. Co. F of the 398th during the afternoon had helped Cos. I and K of the 399th fight off a determined enemy counterattack. The day ended with the 399th Inf. holding the high ground to its front.

The major action of 8 January, however, was the defense of Rimling by the 2nd Battalion of the 397th. Rimling is a town located on the long and gradual slope which forms the eastern part of Schlietzen Hill. Basically, the town is built around a rectangle formed by four main streets. The highway which runs north

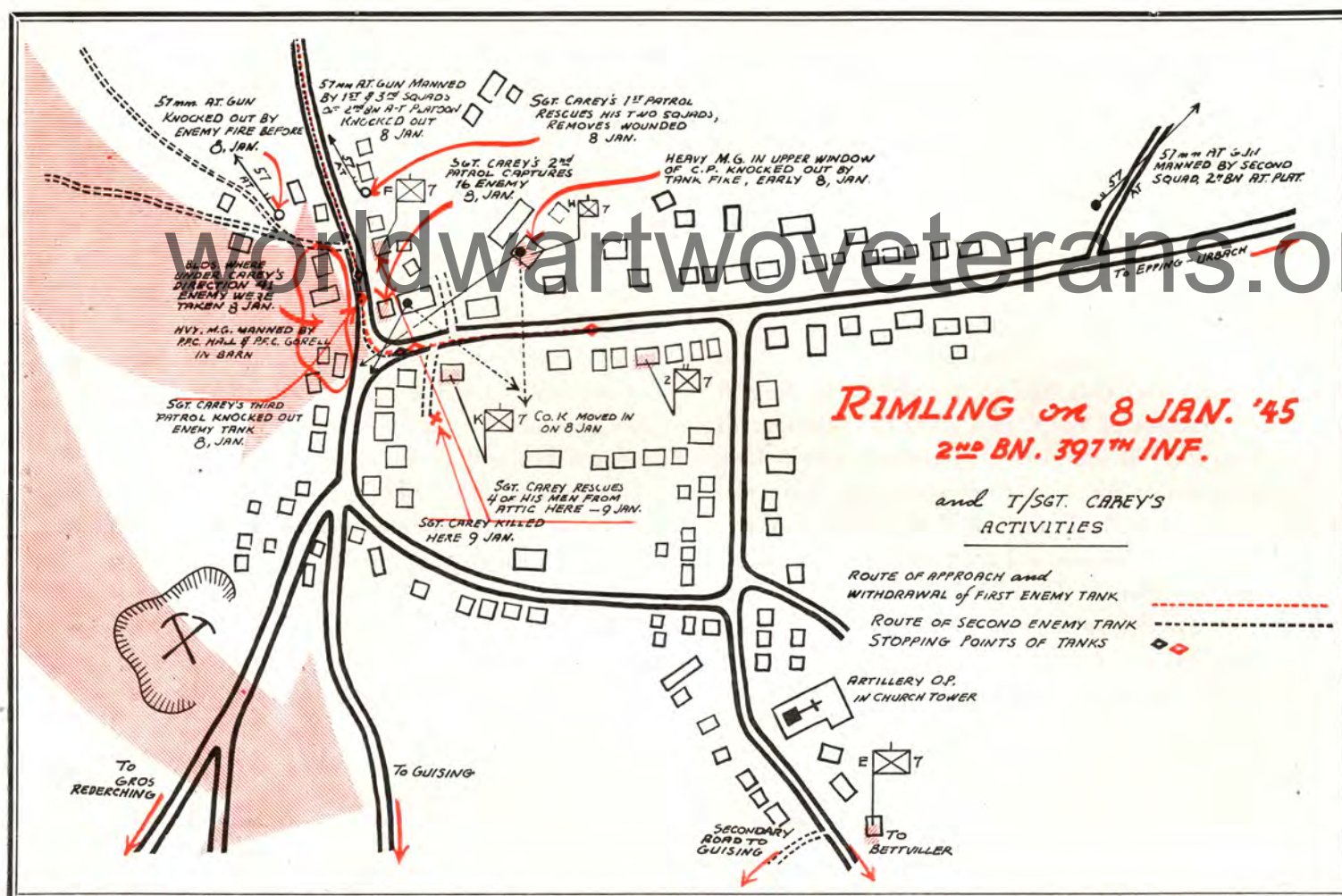
from Guising through Rimling and curves west around Schlietzen makes the western side of the rectangle. The northern side is the highway running east from the Guising road to Epping-Urbach. The eastern end of the rectangle is the road which branches south from the Epping-Urbach highway to the southern end of Rimling where it splits into two roads, one to Bettviller and the other to Guising. The southern leg of the rectangle is merely a street joining the western and eastern ends.

About 0300 on 8 January, the enemy began shelling the positions of the 2nd Battalion 397th Inf. on the high ground west and north of Rimling, using artillery, mortar, tank and rocket fire. Following this fire concentration, about 200 German infantrymen and 12 tanks attacked in a two-pronged drive. Pushing around Schlietzen Hill from the north and south, the Germans entered the houses in the western part of Rimling and began crossing the west side of the rectangle of streets in the central part of the town. The foxholes of Cos. E and F on Schlietzen had been by-passed or overrun. Co. H had set up two of its heavy machine guns to cover the junction where the Guising road, on the west side of Rimling, is joined by the Epping-Urbach road on the north side. One of these machine guns was set to fire from an upstairs window of the company CP, a house on the north side of the Epping-Urbach road about 100 yards east of the corner where the street meets the Guising road. The other machine gun was located in a barn on the corner itself. This gun, because casualties had reduced the machine gun crews of the company, was manned by Pfc. Ellis J. Hall as gunner, and Pfc. Robert L. Gorell, the company bugler, as assistant gunner. With them in the barn was an ammunition bearer.

The lead tank of the German northern prong came into town accompanied by infantry who, as usual, preceded and flanked the tank or rode upon it. As it came south to the corner, machine gun fire from this tank wounded the gunner and assistant gunner and disabled the Co. H machine gun in the CP.

The CP now had only small arms for protection and for sniper fire. But as the tank neared the corner, Ellis continued to fire his machine gun from the barn, and Gorell sprayed the area with a sub-machine gun. The German foot troops took cover and scrambled off the tank. One of them was able to throw a grenade into the barn, however, mortally wounding the ammunition bearer. The explosion blew manure, straw, and debris all over the gun and the other two men. While the gun





was not firing, the lead tank turned east down the Epping-Urbach street toward the CP.

A second tank now moved into the place which the first had just left at the corner. Though they were overwhelmingly outnumbered and now almost surrounded, Hall and Gorell did not leave by the escape route which still remained. Instead they cleaned off the gun and began firing on the second tank. The tank now tried to swing around so as to fire on the barn, but the street was too narrow for this maneuver. In an attempt to take the gun by force, the German foot troops reorganized and rushed the position. Ellis and Gorell fired at point-blank range, killed eight, and drove off the rest. But one of the Jerries had thrown another grenade which caused a heavy barn door to fall on the two men. Once more hay and debris showered over them. The watchers in the CP could almost hear the silence as the machine gun stopped firing.

During this pause the Germans made another attempt to knock out the gun. The second tank, however, seized the opportunity to take off up the street by which it had entered town. The lead tank also backed up. As it reached its original position, the in-

fantry concentrated around it. Suddenly, Hall and Gorell, who had dug out of the debris, began to fire again. This fire so surprised and disorganized the enemy that they hit the dirt, scattered, or tried to take cover behind the tank. But the tank had had enough and began withdrawing. A German captain, apparently trying to stop the tank, was run over and killed by it. This vehicle also rumbled away up the street to the north.

By maintaining their steady fire, Hall and Gorell were able to keep the German infantry pinned down, but a Jerry in a near-by building fired a Panzerfaust at the barn. One old stone and mortar side of the building caved in on the gun and the two intrepid Century-men. Gorell was killed instantly; Hall was blown about twenty feet and knocked out. The Germans didn't know that the gun was buried, and the building now occupied solely by the dazed and defenseless Hall. They seemed only to remember how dangerously effective the gun had been, and took off as fast as they could. When he came to, Hall struggled free of the rubble which covered him and stumbled to the CP. There he reported to Capt. Anthony J. Maiale, his CO, that he had been

stunned by the last explosion, that he had searched for but couldn't find Gorell or the gun, and that the ammunition handler had been very seriously wounded. Since it was almost daylight, a combat patrol from the company went over to the barn. They returned in a few minutes, having found that Gorell was dead as Hall had reported. The gun was completely covered by fallen masonry. The ammunition handler, meanwhile, had reached the Co. F CP, the next house to the north of the barn, and was dying of his wounds.

When the Germans attacked at 0300 on 8 January, the 2nd Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon was manning only two guns. The third gun, which had covered a road leading up Schlietzen Hill to the west of Guising street, had been knocked out by earlier action. Of the two guns in position, one manned by the 2nd Squad of the platoon was on the eastern edge of town covering the approach along a road running from the north into the Epping-Urbach road. The other gun was in position north of the Co. F CP. This piece was manned by the 1st and 2nd Squads of the platoon.

Because the enemy had by-passed or overrun the troop positions on Schlietzen, the only men left to defend the town were the guards and personnel of the company and battalion command posts. Shortly before 0800 direct fire from an enemy tank knocked out the anti-tank gun in the northwest corner of town.

T. Sgt. Charles F. Carey Jr., the anti-tank sergeant and acting platoon leader, reported from this area to the battalion commander that the gun had been destroyed. Then Sgt. Carey assembled a patrol made up of men from his platoon headquarters and from part of the squad on the east gun. His idea was to check on how far the enemy had penetrated the town during the darkness and see whether he could put the western gun back in action. With T. Sgt. Willie E. Jones, Pvt. Orwin H. Burkholder, and two other men, Sgt. Carey left his platoon CP and started for the west end of town. The group entered all buildings on the way, looking for enemy. They found none until they reached the Co. H CP on the north side of the street. There Co. H men told the patrol that two enemy medics had been seen poking their heads out past the corners of buildings across the narrow side-street to the west. The patrol crossed this street to investigate and heard groans coming from one of the buildings. On entering, they found two Co. H men who had been wounded.

Carey left the group and soon returned with the German medics whom he had found in a nearby room. On his orders the medics cared for the wounded. Sgt.

Jones, having been called over by a man from Co. F, had gone to that company's CP and there learned from Lt. Leo Rabinowitz that Capt. William Stallworth wanted to talk with Sgt. Carey if he were with the patrol. Jones came back, and Sgt. Carey went over to the Co. F CP. When he returned, Sgt. Carey said that Capt. Stallworth had pointed out to him a building from which German snipers had been making it difficult for the Co. F men to move about. While Sgt. Carey had been gone Pvt. Orvin Burkholder had also spotted some Germans in the same house. Saying that they could take care of that house when they had made sure about the gun and its crew, Sgt. Carey led the patrol to the gun position. They found the piece had been damaged but could still be fired. Some of the gun crew had been wounded.

Sgt. Carey quickly re-organized the crew and put the gun into position so that it would cover the approaches to the Co. F CP. Then he and the patrol removed the wounded to the battalion CP where they could get medical attention. It was now about 1000 and the patrol turned its attention to the enemy in the houses near the Co. F CP. Leading his men around the building which housed the CP, Sgt. Carey paused before the house occupied by enemy. He said, "Cover the doors and windows. I'm going in." As he approached the doorway Sgt. Carey shot and killed two snipers, threw a hand grenade in at the door, and entered alone. Soon he came out with 16 prisoners. The patrol returned to the Co. H CP where the Krauts were searched and then sent back to the battalion S-2.

While unloading a 398th chow truck, Tec 4 William H. Bailey was surprised to see two Jerries walk out of the woods. They explained they had been sweating out dinner call for several hours.





But Sgt. Carey, having reported to Co. H, went over to the Co. F CP and pointed out a group of houses which were occupied by more Germans. In these buildings patrols from Cos. F and H took 41 more prisoners.

This second patrol had returned about noon. In mid-afternoon Sgt. Carey, returning from the western gun position, located a German tank in the west end of town. Arriving at the platoon command post, he sent Pfc. Richard C. Banks to a truck for a rocket launcher and ammunition. Taking the bazooka, Sgt. Carey moved with S. Sgt. Turner C. Benefee, Pfc. Lloyd O. Burtner, and Pfc. William F. Dugan from house to house under enemy fire until they had reached a position to the rear of the tank. Covered by the others Sgt. Carey got into firing position. His first round missed, but the second was a shattering hit which set the tank on fire. Knowing that the crew would try to escape from the flaming vehicle, Sgt. Carey grabbed Sgt. Menefee's M-1 and waited. With the rifle in firing position, Sgt. Carey watched the first German clamber out of the escape hatch, held his fire until the Jerry was far enough out so that he would fall away from the turret rather than back into the tank. Then Carey squeezed the trigger and the German fell clear. The rest of the crew were thus convinced that the first man had made good his escape. By repeating this procedure Sgt. Carey was able to kill three of the tank crew and wound another. To prevent the entry of more tanks, Sgt. Carey stationed his patrol as a bazooka team in a barn near the road and then placed one of his ten-man gun squads near the Co. F CP with a second bazooka as further anti-tank defense.

One of the big guns adds its voice to the choral requiem of enemy resistance at Bitche. Left, an abandoned Jerry forest position.

The first day's attack on Rimling had not been very successful for the enemy. The resistance by the 2nd Battalion had been greatly increased in midmorning when Co. K moved from its reserve positions into the town and set up its CP on a side street just to the south of the Epping-Urbach road.

Besides a two-pronged advance into the western end of Rimling, the enemy had attacked further south and, seizing Moronville Farm on a hill to the southwest of Schlietzen, had taken Schlossberg Hill just south of Schlietzen. Parts of Cos. E and G were forced to withdraw southward toward Guising because they were unable to beat off the German tanks and infantry. On this new hill the Krauts were in a position to advance to the east and, unless stopped, could cut off Rimling from the south.

On 9 January, in the morning darkness, the Germans again entered Rimling from the north and west. This time their drive carried them past the Co. F CP. Approximately 30 men of Co. F were cut off from the rest of the company and captured. Six men of the anti-tank squad placed at the CP by Sgt. Carey were also captured. But the remaining four escaped to the attic of the building. Sgt. Carey went out alone, worked a ladder into place beside the building, and the four men were able to come down safely. Early in the afternoon Sgt. Carey, Sgt. Jones, Cpl. Rollins, Pfc. Burtner, and Pfc. William F. Dugan set out to try to rescue Sgt. Goodwin and his bazooka team who were in the loft of a barn which the enemy had surrounded. In order to attack the barn from the south they went



Advancing through battered Rohrbach, the battle-wise infantrymen avoid bunching up. This is a far cry from close-order drill.

east from the Co. H CP, crossed the Epping-Urbach road, and moved behind the battalion CP. Then they worked back west to the side street which ran in front of the Co. K CP. Here, covered by the others, Sgt. Carey crossed the street under enemy fire and turned to cover the crossing of the others. When all were across, he fired his bazooka into a building in which some Germans were holed up, hoping to drive them out and make an escape route for the bazooka team.

Then, armed with a carbine fitted with a grenade launcher, he crossed the street again. While he was doing so, an enemy sniper almost succeeded in picking him off. Sgt. Carey called back to the others, "Damn, that was close." Once across, Sgt. Carey turned to cover the others. At that instant, a German bullet killed him. His patrol was unable to reach him in the open space and had to withdraw by another route. For his magnificent work during these two trying days, Sgt. Carey was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

When the enemy attack hit our lines, Sgt. Robert W. Senser and 11 men were resting on the top floor of a house across the street from the Rimling church. Senser, a forward observer for the regimental Cannon Company, was attached to the 3rd Battalion. He had been observing from the church steeple since 1 January and had asked permission to remain as observer when that battalion was relieved. Caught in the rapid Kraut drive, Senser and the other men in his party suddenly found their house surrounded by a German patrol. The Jerries threw in three grenades, one land-

ing in the hall just outside the room where the sergeant and his men were relaxing. Realizing that the house could be best defended from the top floor, but unwilling to risk casualties to the others, Sgt. Senser sent them to the basement. Then from the upstairs he fired his carbine into the German patrol which had been directing a stream of machine-pistol bullets into the house. Two of the enemy were killed, and the rest retreated.

After daylight, the Cannon Company CO radioed to Sgt. Senser asking if he could place fire on some tanks in the town. Senser immediately crossed the street under small arms and artillery fire, climbed up into the battered steeple. There he found that he couldn't make radio contact with his company. Using artillery communication located in the steeple, Senser registered a battery of 155s on the tanks, destroying one, damaging another, and forcing the rest to take off. Although his CO said he was sending a relief for Senser, the sergeant refused to be relieved on the grounds that it was too dangerous for anyone to risk coming to the tower and remained at his post.

While the troops in Rimling itself—the men of Co. K and part of the men of Cos. E and F and of the Battalion Headquarters Company—were trying unsuccessfully to drive the enemy from the town, the Germans struck east from Schlossberg Hill, and quickly seized Hill 370, about one kilometer south of Rimling. From here the Germans rushed down the northeast slope toward the Co. H 81 mm mortars emplaced in a creek bed south of the east end of Rimling. To break this attack, the mortars were fired at a range so short as to be dangerous to the mortar-men them-

selvés. Besides their own rifles or carbines the mortar-men even fired a captured Jerry machine gun to smash the assault. The attack collapsed when 29 Germans surrendered after 26 of their fellows had been killed and 11 wounded.

In mid-morning, the 1st Battalion of the 398th, which with Co. B of the 749th Tank Battalion had been attached to the 397th Inf., moved from its positions near Rohrbach to make a counterattack. The intention was to clear the enemy from his new heights south of Rimling and make our troops in the town safe from encirclement. The attackers, with Co. A on the left, Co. C on the right, and Co. B in support, were able to retake Hill 370, freeing the Rimling-Guising road. But the powerful enemy force of infantry, tanks, and self propelled guns resisted strongly and we were repulsed twice in local counterattacks from Schlossberg Hill and Moronville Farm as well as from Schlietzen itself.

The collecting point for the wounded, under 1st Lt. Dwight L. Burton, Medical Administrative Corps, had been set up in a concrete pillbox along the road north of Guising about halfway to Hill 370. In early afternoon, a runner from the collecting point brought news to the aid station in Guising that there were ten seriously wounded men in the pillbox who needed to be moved to the rear for more complete medical attention. The road between the collecting point and the aid station was under enemy fire because tanks and tank destroyers had been moving about in the area. Since a round of heavy mortar or 88mm fire landed on the road about every forty-five seconds, no men were being ordered to go forward to evacuate the wounded. Pfc. Marco Zagha, a litter-bearer and not a driver, offered to take the medical jeep and bring back the wounded men. In spite of the Red Cross markings in the jeep—which must have been clear to the enemy forward

observers who could see the whole stretch of road—the firing did not slacken. Pfc. Zagha, who would take no one with him because of the danger, however, made four trips to bring the wounded back to the aid station.

Casualties had been extremely numerous, and the enemy's emplacements to the front and flank gave him an enormous advantage. Rimling had been held in the hope that the 44th Div. to the west would be able to advance and cover our right flank. But now the division ordered the 397th to fall back to an east-west line running roughly through Guising, where it would be able to tie in with the 44th Div. on a shorter front. The withdrawal from Rimling began just after dark. It was managed so well that, about 20 minutes after the last unit had left the town, the Germans launched a major tank-infantry attack to take Rimling, unaware that it was already empty. Our heavy concentrations of artillery fire, laid directly on the town, caught the Germans unprepared and caused heavy damaged. When the 397th had dropped back to lines running northeast from Kapellenhubel Hill across the highway north of Guising to the left flank of Co. A north of Bettviller, the 1st Battalion of the 398th returned to its reserve positions.

The remarkable defense our division made in stemming the German's savage 10-day drive was aptly summed up by Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers. The commanding general of the Sixth Army Group sent the following letter of commendation to the 100th Div. for holding against the German counteroffensive:

"The rugged American stubbornness of the combat elements of the 100th Infantry Division has played a tremendous part in stemming the tide of attack by superior enemy numbers. In the area of Rimling you successfully repulsed repeated enemy attempts to penetrate your lines; your great accomplishment forced the enemy to give up the offensive action on your front. Inflicting great losses to strong elements of three enemy divisions, you have successfully protected an important sector in the Hardt Mountains. When the force of the powerful enemy drive carried him into a salient in the Bitche area, the prompt and effective extension of your lines to block his advance was a splendid example of skillful maneuver. I heartily commend all members of this division for their outstanding achievements."

The rest of the division zone was quiet on 9 January. But early on the morning of 10 January, Co. F of the 398th Inf., attached to the 399th, began the last offensive action of the division until our great spring





A dogface peers cautiously into the maw of an enemy pillbox. The haze of battle still hangs over the opening.

offensive in the middle of March. The company, with a platoon of tanks from Co. A 753rd Tank Battalion, attacked to drive the enemy from a draw between Signalberg and Spitzberg Hills. The enemy had been sending small, harassing patrols up this wooded draw which separated the right flank of Co. L 399th Inf. from the flank of Co. K to the south. Enemy fire from the forward slope of Spitzberg was so intense that after a short advance Co. F returned to its original positions. About dark, the Germans, under cover of a smoke screen, counterattacked against Co. I 399th Inf., to the south of this area. Waiting until the smoke had lifted, Co. I laid down such effective fire that the Germans withdrew.

From 10 January until 15 March, the division remained in the static defensive positions of a winter line. Since the 100th had been the only division on the Seventh Army front not to fall back under pressure from the enemy, it was ordered to hold while other divisions on the Army front were regaining positions from which they could jump off in the spring offensive. When late in January the 44th Div. to the west had relieved the 398th Inf. and that regiment had moved to the east on the division right around Goetzenbruck and Sarreinsberg, the division zone, except for minor adjustments, was established for the period. In general, the division front lines extended from near Bettviller northeast to a point north of Hottviller and then south to the vicinity of Sarreinsberg, passing east of Hottviller, skirting Legeret Farm and across Signalberg and Spitzberg.

This, then, was the locale for the long boredom of winter warfare. The endless cold and misery of foxholes, trench foot and nervous kidneys. The routine

shift from foxholes to reserve positions in crowded, smoky houses. The reluctant shift back to the foxholes again—foxholes that we logged over, and propped up and floored under until they took on the aspect of permanent habitations. The walking or driving along roads deep in snow or slush. The two “hot” meals coming luke-warm from the marmite cans and half frozen before you could wolf them. And the desire to puke at the thought of K-rations. The thawing weather early in February. The streams swollen, the draws flooding, and the foxholes and emplacements filling with icy water. Everything was wet, and always everything was muddy. The old mud was hardly caked before it was slimed over with new mud.

And the military duties? We strung concertina wire across all the likely approaches and then across all the unlikely ones. We dug new emplacements for weapons. We repaired communication wire which otherwise harmless mortar fire was endlessly knocking out. We shored up the sides of our holes. And when we went into reserve, we took training on how to use the weapons we had learned to live with. Or we trained the replacements whom the army called “reinforcements.”

Or we went on night patrols.

One night patrol is just like another. The sense of uneasiness before you start, the slight, gnawing anxiety as you set out, an anxiety you don’t define in terms of mines or machine guns, an anxiety you don’t quite admit to full consciousness. Darkness is a distortion in which all distances are wrong and all directions doubtful. There is always the moment when you are sure that you are lost. This is the basic pattern, unchanged by the variations on it—sometimes you were part of a big combat patrol, sometimes of a sneak patrol. The terrain was wooded and difficult or open and dangerous. In the snow you might wear camouflage coats and hoods; in a thaw you might give yourself away by slipping or by the sound of mud sucking at your footsteps. Sometimes you went out under “artificial moonlight,” and sometimes you took a flame-thrower along. Maybe you were supposed to bring back a prisoner, maybe only to look and listen to find where the enemy was, or maybe you went out to shoot up a few Krauts for the hell of it. But you didn’t like patrols, even if you were a part of a Raider Platoon which some of the outfits organized specifically for



A 399th patrol was returning "Indian file" from a night raid when Sgt. Nelson Spangler, walking behind Pfc. Alex Kowlek, banged his eye against Kowlek's gun. Alarmed, Kowlek swung around and connected with Spangler's other eye. Box score: Jerries, 10 killed and 15 wounded; Our Side, 2 black eyes.

patrolling. It was the kind of stuff that takes the heart out of you and you got a little sick of the smug news reports which said, "Activity on the Seventh Army front was limited to patrolling."

At 0100 on 28 January, 2nd Lt. Marvin L. Larson, who had been 1st Sgt. of Co. I of the 398th and had received a battlefield commission, led a patrol through the lines of the 1st Platoon and toward the enemy positions. In the patrol were Sgt. Donald W. Wheeler, Sgt. Thomas M. Light, and seven other men. Lt. Larson had made a reconnaissance of the area during daylight. The 1st Platoon lines were on a wooded slope overlooking the Lemberg-Bitche road. Beyond the road to the east were the enemy positions.

The patrol moved cautiously along a thin strip of woods which projected to within 50 yards of the road. Snow covered the ground, and an overcast moon cast a fickle light through the close-packed trees. Lt. Larson crossed the road and the open field on the other side until he reached the woods beyond. One by one the men followed. As they entered this wood they could hear Germans coughing in the outposts to either side. With breath-holding care the lieutenant maneuvered his men to a point about 50 yards past these positions. There they halted, while Lt. Larson and one man moved to the right looking for a place where they could penetrate to the rear of the enemy lines. This route was discarded as impassable when Lt. Larson inadvertently stepped on a Schu-mine which luckily was defective and didn't explode. Painstaking prodding revealed a broad minefield and the two men returned to the patrol and made a similar reconnaissance to the left or north.

Finding this way seemingly clear, Lt. Larson led his patrol obliquely to the left, hugging the shadow

at the edge of the woods. Suddenly the patrol heard a German sentry, apparently having detected the patrol, work the bolt of his rifle. The patrol halted. It was in no position to get into a fire fight. Lt. Larson began to work his way silently forward, hoping to kill the sentry without alarming the other Krauts. Almost to the sentry, Lt. Larson stepped on a Schu-mine. This time his luck deserted him. The mine exploded and blew his foot off at the ankle. Alerted, it seemed as if the entire enemy front began firing in the direction of the patrol. Knowing that they could not fight so overwhelming an enemy force and realizing that the patrol might never reach their own lines if they tried to carry him with them, Lt. Larson ordered Sgt. Wheeler, his second in command, to lead the patrol back. The lieutenant began firing his carbine to draw German fire on himself and so divert attention from the patrol. Left alone Lt. Larson fired until he began to run out of ammunition. Four Germans left their positions to try to capture him. Coolly, Lt. Larson waited until the Krauts were almost upon him, then fired, killing three of them. The other escaped. Lt. Larson wrapped his trouser leg around his wound and fastened his belt around his leg as a tourniquet. Then he crawled on his one leg, dragging his painful stump, until he was past the enemy outpost. Here Sgt. Light, who had asked Sgt. Wheeler for permission to return, met the lieutenant and helped him to our own lines.

Toward the end of January the Russian drive was going so well that we began to make jokes, not very good jokes, about how the Russians would soon be meeting us. Toward the end of February German morale seemed to have dropped and occasional deserters began to come across to our lines. Early in March, taking advantage of this condition, the division began to stage propaganda broadcasts, telling the Germans to desert and describing the luxurious food and clothing which awaited them as American prisoners. A sizable number of Jerries came over.

One of the interesting activities of this period was the construction of a tunnel to a very advanced observation post in the 399th Inf. area. The 3rd Battalion of the 399th had been defending the reverse slope of Signalberg Hill. The Germans held the opposite slope. Between the two forces was the unwooded crest of the

hill, a no-man's-land to our troops. When by a careful study of maps of the area the battalion commander had found the most useful place for the OP, the men who were going to make the tunnel to it practiced their action on similar terrain in a rear area. Then during the rainy night of 15 February they began their tedious labor. The 925th F A Battalion began firing into the woods held by the Germans on the forward slope to keep the enemy buttoned-up while Lt. Roy E. Simmons with 15 men from Co. L moved over the crest to form a security screen facing the Jerry lines.

Sgt. Bernard L. Lonas followed, dragging a 60-foot cord behind him along the course over which the tunnel was to lead to the OP. This cord was knotted at three-yard intervals to mark where holes were to be dug for dynamite charges. Five other men from the A & P Platoon, Pfc. Richard D. Page, Floyd A. Denis, John P. Reilley, John P. Calliendo, and Ernest J. Rosa, began digging. As the holes were dug, Sgt. William C. Goodnight tamped a six-pound charge of dynamite into each cavity. Then, when the men from the A & P Platoon had withdrawn, flares were fired to call the Co. L men back to their lines. The A & P Platoon leader, Lt. William A. Paterson, ignited the charges while the artillery fired again to conceal the sound of the explosions. Sgt. Goodnight had to go out twice to re-connect the primer cord before all the charges went off. The Co. L men then shoveled out the debris left between the holes to clear the trench which the A & P men covered over with logs and sod, giving us a sheltered OP in an otherwise untenable position.

During this period of winter defensive action the army began to set up rest centers where men could go for a few days of relaxation from the cold monotony of foxholes. These rest centers were established on every echelon of command down to battalion level. Our division opened its rest center in Sarrebourg when it set up the Robert L. Ethridge Hotel, named in honor of the division's first winner of the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously. Later, too, the division was given quotas for passes to Paris and Brussels, a pass-program which was later expanded to include other places of interest. The Hotel then became a place where we could stop over for the night or for a cleaning up on our way to and from passes.

On 13 March, while the patrolling that had piled up so much information about the enemy lines continued, the first steps in the execution of the division's plans for its part in the Seventh Army spring offensive were carried out. The offensive was to begin in March. The

division was to attack from positions near the center of its defensive lines and move east to take Bitche, the high ground surrounding the town, and Camp de Bitche to the east. On the Seventh Army front the XV Corps, of which the 100th Div. was a part, was to make the main effort to crack the Siegfried Line and those parts of the Maginot Line still not taken. On the left or western flank of the corps area, was the 3rd Div.; in the center, was the 45th Div. These two divisions were to attack northward in the chief offensive. To the right, the 100th was to advance eastward, and, on the extreme right, the 71st was to hold eastward-facing positions. After taking Bitche, the 100th was to pivot northward, and leaving the 71st as a holding force in the Bitche area, was the attack north against the Siegfried Lines on the right of the 3rd Div.

In preparation for these moves, the 44th Div. (through which the 45th and 3rd Divs. were to attack) relieved the 397th Inf. on the right of the 100th Div. front. The 71st Div. relieved the 398th and the 2nd Battalion of the 399th to shorten our division front on the right or southeast. When these reliefs were completed, the 100th Div. had a front only one regiment wide.

On the clear, warm day of 13 March, the 324th Inf. of the 44th Div. took over all the front line positions of the 397th from just north of Hottviller westward. On relief the 1st Battalion moved by motor shuttle to Bining and the 3rd Battalion shifted to Rohrbach. The 2nd Battalion remained in reserve lines near Petit Rederching with Co. G near Hottviller. The following day, while the regimental CP was established in Holbach, the three battalions, with the exception of Co. K which stayed in Rohrbach, moved into the Hottviller area from which the attack was to begin.

On the other edge of the division sector elements of the 71st Div. took over from the 398th Inf. on the Sar-

Pfc. Walter Scribner was stringing wire when he noticed a Kraut watching him through binoculars. Scribner stuck his thumbs in his ears and wiggled his fingers at the Kraut. The enemy laid down his glasses and wiggled back at him.





Left, doughfeet pass through a section of the Camp de Bitche. Above, the same Nazi-held strongpoint after a severe air bombing.

reinsberg front so that the regiment could move to Holbach in position for its attack in the division center.

The next day the 66th Inf. of the 71st Div. relieved the 2nd Battalion of the 399th in the Spitzberg area and the battalion moved back into regimental reserve with the 3rd Battalion. The division right boundary now ran between Lambach and Glassemberg.

Strategy called for the division to take Bitche, the Camp de Bitche, and the Maginot Forts, to protect the right flank of the Corps until the Siegfried breakthrough. The 100th was then to follow the 6th Armored Div. through the gap and advance to the Rhine. In this master-minding, we faced certain disadvantages. The 45th and 3rd Div. had had a rest before their attack; the 100th had been in foxholes all winter. The 45th, on the left, was to attack due north, the 71st on the right to hold; both flanks of the 100th would thereby be exposed after a very short advance. To make matters worse, the high ground north and west of Schorbach was covered with mortar and nebelwerfer positions which the division would have to capture in order to hold Schiesseck Hill. In addition the enemy had had two months to perfect field fortifications and defensive weapons like road-blocks, entrenchments, mine fields, and wire entanglements.

But on our side of the ledger, the division had heavy artillery, and a battalion of self-propelled M-12s, while one company each of tanks, tank destroyers, and 4.2-inch chemical mortars was attached to each regiment. Since the three regiments were to attack abreast on their narrow fronts, the division had in reserve only the 100th Rcn. Troop and what was left of the 781st Tank Battalion after its three medium companies had been attached to the regiments.

The 3rd and 45th Divs. to the west were to attack at 0100 on 15 March, but General Burress chose to begin his attack at 0500. Because the location of enemy minefields and defensive works were known only for a limited depth to the division's immediate front, the general didn't want the attack to advance too far in the dark, lest it run into uncharted minefields and defense works, and bog down before daylight. At 0500, too, the Air OPs were sent aloft to locate gun flashes of enemy batteries. These planes had an anti-aircraft searchlight for their orienting point. To avoid forewarning the enemy of our attack the artillery fired only its normal missions during the night and until the drive had started.

On the first day of the attack, while Co. E of the 397th moved out to seize high ground and a blocking position northeast of Hottviller, the 397th, on the north of the division front, advanced slightly north and then east in a column of battalions. Cos. A and B, in the lead, moved forward along the ridge east of Hottviller and by 0900, four hours after the start of the action, had taken the high ground to the northeast of Schorbach, having by-passed the town. Cos. I and L, the attacking companies of the 3rd Battalion, acting as support, moved past Hottviller which had been receiving much enemy mortar and rocket fire, probably drawn by the armored columns which moved through the town. Shortly after noon Cos. I and L entered Schorbach; while Cos. A and B, having resumed their attack from northeast of Schorbach, cut the road east of town near its junction with the Bitche-Hanviller road.



Jerry PWs carry their own wounded through Bitche as French civilians watch pitilessly. Right, a column of Centurymen presses on toward Germany.

The regiment had received little small arms resistance though it encountered a good deal of artillery, mortar, and rocket fire. Casualties were caused chiefly by Schu-mines. The advance was also slowed by the bad condition of the roads, a condition caused by our own artillery fire during the winter. This action of the 397th, a drive of six or seven thousand meters, besides capturing many enemy mortar positions and the remnants of a nebelwerfer regiment, removed pressure from the attack on the Maginot Forts and, by eliminating supporting fires, caused the defense of the Maginot area to collapse.

The attack by the 398th Inf. in the division center had been expected to be the main effort, and priority of artillery fire was assigned to it. The 2nd Battalion, moving against Freudenberg Farm from near Legeret, ran into very heavy enemy small arms fire and was severely hindered by mines. By swinging north through the Simserhoff area, the 1st Battalion of the 398th by-passed this resistance, captured the hill north of Schiesseck, and then continued east to take high ground southeast of Schorbach. Before the end of day, the 2nd Battalion had taken Freudenberg Farm, Fort Freudenberg, and all the units of Fort Schiesseck. It found that the complete job of destruction which the 3rd Battalion and Co. B of the 325th Engineers had done on the forts before our withdrawal to defensive lines in December, had been so effective that the Germans were unable to use the forts for defense.

Like the 397th to the north, the 399th Inf. on the southern part of the division's sector was to have the

task of protecting a flank after it attacked. The regimental plan for the 399th envisaged a two pronged drive which would encircle the Germans in their positions on the forward slopes of Signalberg and Spitzberg in the area west of the junction of the Reyersviller road and the Lemberg-Bitche road. The 3rd Battalion was to clear the ridges north of the Reyersviller-Siersthal road, attacking southeast. The 2nd Battalion was to advance northeast on Spitzberg Hill parallel to the Lemberg-Bitche road. The two battalions would close their trap at the junction of the Reyersviller road with the Lemberg-Bitche Highway.

With Co. K on the north and Co. L to the south, supported by Co. I, the 3rd Battalion of the 399th, each company with a platoon of tanks, moved out at the attack hour. They passed through Fromuhl Woods and through the lines of Co. B, working across a series of ridges and wooded ravines. In less than an hour the sweating infantrymen had climbed the eastern slope of the last ravine and fanned out on Kirscheid ridge, north of the Siersthal-Reyersviller road, just northwest of Reyersviller itself. An hour later the troops had taken Schimberg Hill, and Co. K had occupied Schoenberg. The battalion had now by-passed Reyersviller and encircled from the rear the German positions on Steinkopf, Signalberg, and Spitzberg Hills where the enemy had caused so much trouble for two months. The battalion had also reached its point of rendezvous where it was to meet the 2nd Battalion. For the next few hours the 3rd Battalion mopped up the north of the Reyersviller road.

In the area of the 2nd Battalion of the 399th, while Cos. G and E remained in position to the southwest of the Spitzberg ridge, Co. F with a platoon of tanks



Left, jubilant Centurymen roll into Bitche proudly displaying a liberated road sign. Above, French inhabitants happily welcome 100th dogfaces.

began its attack at 0600. Because the top of Spitzberg was bare and the Germans had had more than two months to perfect their defensive positions in thick woods on the forward slope of the hill, the attack was not easy. Patrols had already located mine fields, defensive wire, and machine-gun emplacements on the hill. But only later did the regiment learn, from a captured map prepared by German engineers, that there were nearly 4000 mines of various kinds on Spitzberg alone. Co. F with a section of medium tanks began the 2nd Battalion drive by skirting along the woods on the southern slope of the hill, passing through the positions of Co. C of the 66th Inf. The tanks were in the lead to knock out the Schu-mines, and Co. F men rode on the tanks to protect them from enemy fire. Just at the line of departure the leading tank slipped off the side of a hill and threw a tread. Within a few minutes the remaining two tanks of the section had been stopped by anti-tank mines. A reserve tank was rushed forward to where the men were being held up by mortar and machine gun fire.

S. Sgt. Richard Trapani, a mortar observer of Co. F, had advanced with the company headquarters group when the action began, but he soon moved up with the riflemen of the 2nd Platoon which was in the lead. When he saw how the extraordinary accuracy of the enemy mortar fire was causing casualties, Sgt. Trapani determined to eliminate the German mortar observers and gain positions from which to direct his own fire more effectively. While the company waited for the reserve tank to come up, Sgt. Trapani went ahead alone armed only with a pistol, half crouching, making short rushes from tree to tree. Later members of the company could see him crawling very close to enemy

positions where he seemed to escape German observation because of the action of the rest of the company.

In mid-morning, after the 3rd Platoon of Co. F, now leading the attack behind the newly committed tank, had broken a gap through the wire and a deep mine field and begun to advance, Co. E was sent in on the left. The attack moved very slowly. About an hour before noon Sgt. Trapani returned from his reconnaissance. In spite of the threat of enemy fire and of Schu-mines, he went up to one of the men riding on the tank and obtained an M-1, bandoliers of ammunition, a pocketful of clips for his pistol, and four hand grenades.

Seemingly unmindful of the danger, Sgt. Trapani turned and walked toward an enemy machine gun, about 25 yards away, which was firing uninterruptedly upon our troops. The sergeant approached the dug-in position from the right rear. When he was quite close, the German gun crew noticed him and two of them began to fire machine pistols at him. Sgt. Trapani fired his M-1 from a crouch until they ducked. Then he threw two hand grenades into their hole and wrecked the gun. Three of the crew surrendered and the sergeant took their helmets and weapons from them and sent them toward our lines with their hands above their heads. Still out in front of the riflemen Sgt. Trapani moved against another machine gun position about 30 yards away, surprised the crew, and threw in his remaining grenades. The gun was demolished, three crew men killed and the other wounded. The destruction of these two guns allowed the company to



Above, an American column rolls past Hindenberg-Kaserne, a former French military barracks taken over by the Germans and liberated by the Century. Right, street scene in Bitche.

move forward slowly. Sgt. Trapani continued to move ahead of the lead elements and in the thickening woods was lost to view. At 1230 the leading platoon came upon his body lying face downward. In a half-circle around him were three enemy dead.

When during the morning Co. E of the 399th Inf. attacked on the left of Co. F, the 3rd Platoon of Co. E, led by 2nd Lt. Herbert S. Verrill, had to take three enemy pillboxes. As Lt. Verrill, after deploying his platoon, moved out ahead of his leading element, he came upon a field of Schu-mines, laid during the winter and now exposed by the melted snow. Beyond was a wire entanglement, behind which the three pillboxes were firing heavily. Since to stop would be disastrous, Lt. Verrill chose to move forward by stepping between the mines while his lead element followed his example. Suddenly Lt. Verrill stepped on a mine which had been cunningly buried among those visible on the ground. The explosion tore off his right foot and injured his left one. Because the lieutenant was ahead of them, the men were alerted to this new danger. Lt. Verrill retained consciousness, and lying on the ground continued to issue clear and precise orders for the withdrawal of his men from the minefield and then by hand and arm signals directed them into a defilade position. Only then did he allow himself to be given medical aid and removed from the area. Later the company advanced and destroyed the three pillboxes.

Slow though their progress was, Cos. F and E were gradually completing the encirclement of the Spitzberg positions which the 3rd Battalion to the north

had already outflanked. On Schoenberg above the Reyersviller and Lemberg road junction, Co. L held the southern slope, Co. K the northern one, and Co. I faced northeast between them. The executive officer of the 3rd Battalion, Maj. Angello Punaro, led a platoon of tanks into by-passed Reyersviller at 1300 and met no resistance.

While Co. G with two Sherman tanks advanced to clear Signalberg ridge to the west of Co. E, the 1st Battalion of the 399th, approaching Reyersviller from the west, removed a roadblock from the western end of town. With a Co. C platoon, 1st Lt. Robert E. Lynch attacked the German positions on Steinkopf from the northeast by going through a minefield. The Co. C men forced two Germans whom they captured in the first few minutes of action to lead them through the rest of the minefield. This strategy enabled them to snare 18 more Germans without a fight and gained them control of the ridge. By 1600 Apitzberg was cleared and the 2nd Battalion of the 66th Inf. relieved the 2nd Battalion of the 399th there. The 2nd Battalion 399th Inf. then moved into reserve in Reyersviller, and the 1st Battalion moved into positions on Schimberg Ridge west of the 3rd Battalion. At 1345 a patrol from Co. C had moved into Bitche without encountering any enemy. Two hours later a Co. A patrol pushed into the outskirts of the town, discovering five enemy machine guns guarding the south and southwestern approaches to the fortress city.

The second day of the attack, 16 March, saw the complete reduction of Bitche, its Maginot Forts, and the Camp de Bitche. To the north, the 2nd Battalion of the 397th attacked through the positions of the 1st Battalion northeast of Schorbach. The 2nd Battalion,



Above, the camera looks northeast from the parapets of the Citadel of Bitche. Left, an aerial view of the Citadel and surrounding terrain. We waited three months for the climb to the top.

with Co. G leading, advanced eastward toward the crossroads where the road east from Schorbach and the road north from Bitche join the roads north to Breidenbach and Hanviller. To this point the resistance was very light although the enemy had partially destroyed a bridge on the Bitche road just south of the crossroads. By noon Co. G had taken the hill just east of the crossroads, and Co. F had moved to the higher hill to the east.

In occupying these two peaks on the Woustvillerberg the two companies had been harassed by small arms and automatic weapons fire from an enemy strongpoint, the most determined resistance of the day in the regimental area. The 3rd Battalion continued to block to the north and northwest on the division open flank, and the 1st Battalion moved to positions overlooking the Breidenbach road from the west above the crossroads.

While the northern approaches and escape routes from Bitche were thus being closed, the 398th in the center again advanced to the east. The 1st Battalion, on the regimental north flank, took a series of forts on the ridges north of Bitche—Ramstein, Petite Otterbiel, Grande Otterbiel, Fort Otterbiel. The forts were practically undefended though the battalion encountered rather stiff resistance from Krauts in field defenses surrounding the forts. The attack, however, was completed by noon. At 0620, Co. E of the 398th Inf. had entered Bitche, followed by the rest of the battalion. Resistance consisted of scattered small arms fire against the first attacking force ever to enter the fortress city as the troops cleaned out the few enemy riflemen from the western and northern end of the town. The 3rd Battalion followed and passed through

the 2nd Battalion in Bitche at mid-morning to take the fort called Petite Hohekirkel to the east and slightly north of the town. In moving east from the fort, the battalion ran into enemy resistance just west of Camp de Bitche.

In the 399th sector to the south, the 3rd Battalion remained in positions on Schoenberg to protect the division's right flank, and the 2nd Battalion continued in reserve in Reyersviller. But the 1st Battalion attacked northeast toward Bitche. While Co. C advanced up the Lemberg-Bitche highway toward the College de Bitche, Co. A, to the left and a little to the rear, attacked almost straight east from the nose of Schimberg Hill, while Co. B followed in support. Within an hour, at 0700, Co. C had taken the college, so long a scene of patrol actions, and half an hour later, without opposition, entered the city from the south.

First to enter the towering Citadel of Bitche were 1st Lt. Elwood H. Shemwell and six volunteers from Co. C who, guided through a minefield by a civilian, climbed a narrow path leading to the Citadel from the south. The Citadel was clear of enemy. In fact, the Krauts fired only five rifle shots to defend the town after the 399th entered. Co. C remained in Bitche while Co. A with tank support attacked eastward toward Camp de Bitche. Co. B, also with tanks, moved southeast along the Bitche-Strasbourg road.

As Co. B advanced toward Camp de Bitche, they began to receive mortar fire from the woods ahead and machine gun fire from two concrete pillboxes on the slope north of the road. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons of



Birdseye view of the College de Bitche from atop the massive Citadel walls. Right, stone ramp leading to the ancient castle. Note the moat at the base of the Citadel walls.

the company were moving forward with two tanks across the flat, open ground south of the road, and the 1st Platoon was to the north of the road. In the midst of the mortar fire the two lead scouts radioed to the company commander, 1st Lt. Harry G. Flanagan, that they had sighted the pillboxes from which the machine guns were firing. Lt. Flanagan ordered the 1st Platoon to maneuver to the north and rear of the pillboxes while the other platoons and the two tanks assaulted the positions frontally from the southwest. The 1st Platoon, under 2nd Lt. William E. Sullivan and T. Sgt. Wenston G. Coburn, began to deploy for its part in the attack by working up the slope behind the fortifications. They placed Sgt. Andrew M. Silvay and a light machine gun squad from the 4th Platoon with a squad of riflemen to fire on the entrance to the first pillbox from the right rear. The rest of the platoon moved further east.

The platoon began firing from these positions in co-ordination with the tank and infantry attack from the southwest, the tanks throwing anti-personnel and high explosive shells against the pillboxes. Lt. Sullivan, with two volunteers, Pfc. Michael Abraham with a BAR and a man with a bazooka, accompanied by S. Sgt. Arthur E. Weiss, crawled forward to the edge of the wire obstacle above the rearmost machine gun turret. Though they were in danger from both enemy and friendly fire, Pfc. Abraham poured rifle fire into the turret openings while the bazooka-man threw in a round which blew the turret off. Lt. Sullivan heaved a white phosphorous grenade which started a fire. As

the rest of the company, having silenced enemy resistance, began to close in, Lt. Sullivan and Sgt. Weiss crawled down the hill, skirting the wire obstacle. As they approached the gate leading into the enclosure at the rear of the two interconnected pillboxes, five Germans who had come out during a lull in the firing to man a gun in the yard, saw the two Centurymen and began to fire. Sullivan and Weiss charged, firing their carbines. The lieutenant killed one of the enemy, wounded another, and caused the rest to flee into the fortifications.

Holding a grenade, its pin already drawn, Lt. Sullivan walked boldly up to the door of the pillbox and called out to the occupants in German to surrender. A Jerry NCO came out. The lieutenant stopped him, and using him as a hostage, went up to the opening and repeated his demand. This time the Germans began to file out in a stream.

The catch included the battalion commander of the 2nd Battalion 225th Volksgrenadier Regiment, four officers of his staff, and more than 70 NCOs and enlisted men. The rest of the 1st Platoon of Co. B closed in and took the prisoners down to the road where the German Battalion CO formally surrendered to Lt. Flanagan.

In its attack along the road from Bitche to the Camp, Co. A had first been slowed by enemy resistance from a roadblock at the western end of the Camp. But with the help of part of Co. C of the 325th Engrs., the company had continued to move eastward.

The Germans at this point apparently decided that they had retreated far enough when they reached the eastern edge of the Camp. It was already late in the afternoon, and Co. A had completed the clearing of



The Citadel and city of Bitche on the road leading from the northwest.



Bitterly defended Rohrbach while fighting was still in progress.

the garrison area and had knocked out two German tanks. As the company reached the street on the extreme eastern edge of the Camp, the Jerries began firing from behind roadblocks in the area. Suddenly, four Tiger tanks and several self-propelled guns mounted on Mark VI chassis, moved in from the northeast and attacked south toward the company.

The 1st Platoon, under 1st Lt. David W. Ballie, had been on the left in the attack across the Camp. To the south, at the other end of the block, were the other two rifle platoons. Under the fire from the tanks, all took cover. Because they were outgunned, Capt. Richard G. Young, the Co. A commander, ordered the section of Sherman tanks which had been with the company to draw back. Then he and his runner, Pfc. Richard W. Montgomery, entered one of the buildings with the riflemen.

The Weapons Platoon, under 2nd Lieutenant Thomas E. Plante, moved into a stable just south of the 1st Platoon. Once inside and slightly protected from the enemy fire, Lt. Plante, Pfc. Jack A. Pascoline, who was a mortar gunner, and others of the platoon tried to set up defensive fires. But the German tanks came on, their 88s hurling shells directly into the buildings where the troops had taken cover.

The leading tank fired its cannon and machine guns almost point blank into the stable. Two bazooka rounds shot by the Weapons Platoon had both missed the tank. Lt. Plante seized the bazooka and ran out of the building. He threw himself to the ground just ahead of the advancing tank and fired the bazooka. The round blew off a tread of the tank and stopped it. Lt. Plante leaped up and rushed forward to throw a grenade into the turret, but the machine gun on the tank fired a

heavy burst and mortally wounded him. The company was forming to fall back and mount an attack when the German tanks turned tail and fled along the railroad to the southeast.

One of the tasks which always followed the taking over of towns in France was the establishment of a government. In a division zone the G-5 of the division had the responsibility of working with local governments in the distribution of French food supplies, the evacuation of civilians, and other governmental functions. On the liberation of Bitche, Major Hamburg, our Division G-5, with Capt. Henri Lagailarde, French Liaison Officer, and two representatives of the CIC went into the town and appointed a new mayor, a secretary, and a chief of police. The appointments were made on the basis of a "white" list previously prepared by CIC.

In spite of the damage done by shell fire, about 3600 civilians were still in the town where they had been living in cellars. They were poorly fed, and their sanitary conditions were very bad. Advance information from the Underground and from the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) had caused the G-5 to set aside a stockpile of food for the city. On the day of liberation five 2½-ton trucks with canned goods, medical supplies and drugs, and 1000 loaves of bread baked by the bakers of Siersthal for their countrymen, rolled into Bitche. There was also a mobile soup kitchen.

Later, the Civil Affairs Detachment, commanded by 1st Lt. George K. Culver, set up headquarters in the town to supervise the government and dispensation of relief. The French sent in four doctors, four ambulance drivers, and two ambulances to help the local



The citizens of Bitche crowded the streets to welcome the Yanks.



We acknowledged the cheers of the Frenchmen and pressed on.

hospitals and the civilian doctors in the care of the sick and wounded. After five long years Bitche had become French again.

The division pivoted and attacked to the north on 17 March, the third day of the attack. The enemy was no longer fighting even a delaying action. Resistance consisted of sniper fire. The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 397th, on the division left, slashed forward from the vicinity of Schorbach and took Breidenbach to the north; the 3rd Battalion taking the town itself and the 1st Battalion the ground to the southeast. The 1st Battalion then turned east and captured Waldhausen while the 3rd Battalion moved north to clear a few snipers out of Dorst. In moving toward Walschbronn just east of Waldhausen the 1st Battalion ran into some sniper and machine gun fire. In all the towns the Germans had destroyed or tried to destroy the bridges. The 2nd Battalion moved into billets in Waldhausen for the night.

The 399th Inf. also attacked to the north on the division's east flank. The 3rd Battalion, relieved during the night by the 1st Battalion of the 14th Inf., struck north with Cos. K and L in the lead, quickly took Hanviller and Bousseviller, and turning east occupied Liederschiedt and Schweix. Schweix was the first town in Germany to be entered by any element of the division.

Co. K of the 399th crossed the border into Germany at 1431 on 17 March on the road between Liederschiedt and Schweix. With the area around the Camp de Bitche taken over by the 398th Inf., the 1st Battalion of the 399th also attacked north. The battalion moved by truck to Haspelschiedt to the northeast and then took Neudoerfel and Roppeviller. Cos. A and B

went on to dig in on the high ground west of Hilst so that they were astride the border.

In its holding positions near Bitche, the 398th cleared out a few Germans around Hohekirkel.

The 398th and 399th Inf. went into assembly areas around Bousseviller, Briedenbach, and other towns to the north of Bitche. The two regiments occupied these assembly areas from 18 to 22 March. For two days the 397th Inf. held the division left flank and conducted patrols until the 106th Cavalry Group relieved them on the night of 19 March.

In the next two days the division made a motor march to the Rhine River at Ludwigshafen, a distance of 92 miles. The almost unbelievable fact about this motor march is that it was made by the division in its own vehicles or, as the army says, "employing only organic transportation and that of attached units." This move was made under the direction of the XXI Corps, which took over control of the 100th Division and of the 71st Div. on our right. The plan was for these two divisions to advance northeast. The 100th, with the 399th on the northwest, the 397th, next to the 71st, on the southeast, and the 398th in reserve, was to capture Neustadt and then Ludwigshafen. At Ludwigshafen we were to seize all available means of crossing the Rhine River. Because the Third Army had been driving south along the Rhine towards Mainz and Worms, the enemy resistance had disintegrated, and the division's advance by truck was slowed only by occasional blown bridges and roadblocks.

Great numbers of freed Russian, Greek, French and Polish slave laborers appeared along the highway. Most of the DPs seemed bewildered by their sudden liberation from bondage by the onrushing Americans.



Dressed in nondescript, tattered clothing arranged in a pitiful effort to maintain some vestige of their colorful nationalities, they trudged along the weary miles of road westward, away from the battlefronts and the horror that was Nazi Germany. A stocky Russian girl with a bright red bandana covering her head and carrying an infant in her arms, paused to rest against an embankment. Four Greeks in slave uniforms with the letters GK stamped on their backs, pushed an overloaded cart crammed to collapsing with bedding and the precious junk of the destitute.

From around a bend in the road came the sound of a horn blowing a clarion call of victory and a confiscated German truck loaded with French men and women and with the Tricolor dancing on a rough, wooden staff lashed to the bumper, careened down the road toward France and freedom.

Freedom! You could see it shining in the eyes of the impassive Tartar from Siberia. It was in the step of the burly Russian in the cassock and worn, fur hat. It beamed from the prematurely hardened faces of the three pretty Polish girls, the weak V-signs of the old couple with backs bent through years of toil, the elated waves of the cosmopolitan group bathing their tired feet in the mountain brook. It didn't seem possible that these people could ever jeopardize their liberty again. Watching them, made the cold and the blood and the death and the inhuman hardships we had suffered seem worthwhile.

There were other signs of war in the mass of abandoned and wrecked equipment left by the trapped Wehrmacht. Uniforms, discarded by the Jerries attempting to avoid capture by donning civilian cloth-

Ceremonies celebrating the liberation of Bitche. Left, Maj. Gen. Burress and Brig. Gen. Murphy listen to 100th Div. band following Gen. Burress' designation as an honorary citizen. The mayor of Bitche stands at the general's right.

ing, littered the roadside for miles. An occasional German corpse sprawled grotesquely in a ditch. Cut off from their units by our rapid drive, hundreds of Krauts we didn't even stop for, attempted to surrender.

Strategy called for the 398th to follow the 399th to Appenthal and then swing slightly north to approach Ludwigshafen from that direction while the 397th continued to a point southwest of Neustadt before becoming the regiment in reserve. But this plan had to be changed because, when the 399th Inf. reached the outskirts of Ludwigshafen, it met elements of the 94th Inf. Div. of the Third Army which had driven down from the north. Since in its opening assault on the city the 94th Div. had encountered only stragglers and a few snipers, it requested the 100th to stay out of Ludwigshafen to avoid confusion among friendly troops. Later the 399th was asked to aid in the mop-up.

On 24 March, because of this change in plan, the 397th and 398th became a division reserve, and the 399th was given the mission of seizing the west bank of the Rhine south of Ludwigshafen. The 3rd Battalion of the 399th was the first unit of the division to reach the Rhine. The battalion entered Altrip, south of Ludwigshafen, during the morning. The rest of the 399th, with one battalion of the 397th attached, took over the city from the 94th and continued the task of mopping up resistance within the city. The balance of the 397th later relieved the elements of the 94th Div. south of the Isenach River within Ludwigshafen and patrolled the Rhine to the south.



The following day the division came under the control of VI Corps and spent the day making a house-to-house search for snipers and stragglers in its zone. On 27 March the 71st Div. took over the area, and the 100th Div. went into Corps reserve with orders to be ready to move on 24-hour notice. The move came on the last day of March.

Heilbronn

*Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.
Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
They think of firelit homes, clean beds, and wives.*

—SIGFRIED SASSOON, *Dreamers*

Refreshed by a four-day period in VI Corps reserve, our weapons oiled, our equipment cleaned, well-oriented on the overall situation and still confident from our dash to the Rhine, we found ourselves once more thrown into the pursuit of the Jerries. Before six o'clock on the morning of 31 March, elements of the division had moved out of their areas to cross the symbolic river and go on into Hitler's secondary defenses.

The day we crossed the Rhine was overcast and cool. The great river was a cloudy green flood, flowing between the rubble of two great cities, Ludwigshafen on the west and Mannheim on the east. The power of the stream was brought to us as it washed through the pontons of the bridge, right beneath the wheels of the trucks, whose weight caused the individual floats to sink slightly and then bob up again as each vehicle passed on. None of the "Castles on the

Rhine" were visible. All was a mass of traffic, with the MPs doing their best to control the long lines waiting to cross. That day it seemed that the entire American Army was gathered at this point, each unit waiting its turn to pour into inner Germany and continue the chase.

Passing through battered Mannheim, we fanned out to the south, relieving elements of the 63rd Div., who took positions on our left. With the 100th Rcn. Troop out in front acting in conjunction with the 63rd, we pressed on with combat teams in line echeloned to the right rear, the 399th on the right, next to the river, encountering small arms fire. The 397th reached its objective with no opposition, meeting the Germans only when coming to the woods along the Hardt Creek, some nine kilometers to the southeast.

The 398th, in division reserve, was motorized and moved into the vicinity of Schwetzingen. The 375th F A, grouped with the 925th F A in support of the 399th, also maintained its CP at Schwetzingen.

At Schwetzingen, as well as in many other towns throughout the area, we found wounded German soldiers abandoned by their comrades. Stragglers surrendered to us wholesale.

Easter Sunday, 1 April, was just another day to us. As much as possible was done by our chaplains, but our sudden movement nullified detailed plans for religious services. In some cases, however, ceremonies were conducted in the woods where apple blossoms and early spring flowers were laid out as altars. Others were permitted a few moments to worship in bombed churches where patches of sky were visible through torn roofs.



On the fighting front, with the Rhine bridgehead well established, relief of the 63rd Div. was completed. Then, with the 63rd Div. on our left and the Rhine on the right, we attacked southeast across the plain in the direction of Hockenheim-Walldorf behind the spearheads of the 10th Armored Div.

Moving with all possible speed in order to prevent the reorganization of the defeated German forces, we drove forward, the 399th, on the right, seeking to establish contact with the II French Corps advancing down the left bank of the Rhine. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 399th jumped off with the 2nd Battalion, on the right, heading for Hockenheim and the 1st Battalion, next to the 397th, on the left. Attached to each of these battalions was one platoon from Co. A 781st Tank Battalion. Plans were for the 1st and 2nd Battalions to pass through the 3rd Battalion, holding front line positions at the time. The 3rd Battalion was then to retire for special VI Corps duty.

Roadblocks and blown bridges formed the only appreciable defense made by the Germans in this sector, but they used these to fullest advantage. Despite the obstacles, the two battalions pushed ahead and by 1042 hours the 2nd Battalion, with F Co. on the right, G on the left, and E in reserve had pushed on into Hockenheim. By 1530 the town was cleared and the objective secured.

The 1st Battalion, to the left of the 2nd Battalion, occupied the town of Reilingen the same day. Having progressed through flat wooded lowlands across the Hardt Creek with B and C Cos. out in front, the battalion entered the town, and while A Co. mopped-up, B and C Cos. cleared the surrounding woods.

During the afternoon, the 399th made contact with the II Corps, First French Army, on the right. The

liaison was established about three kilometers south of Walldorf, where an Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon jeep met the French expanding from their beachhead in the vicinity of Speyer. This was the first junction made by American and French forces on the east side of the Rhine.

Paralleling the Easter Day attack of the 399th, the 397th moved southeast with the 1st and 2nd Battalions passing through the lines held by the 3rd Battalion in the vicinity of Oftersheim-Bruchhausen. The 2nd Battalion 397th was subjected to a terrific artillery barrage before advancing to take the towns of Sandhausen, Nussloch, St. Ilgen and Weisloch. The 1st Battalion, its attack spearheaded by a platoon of tanks from Co. C of the 781st Tank Battalion, advanced 15 kilometers through scattered small-arms fire to reach Walldorf at 1135. The rapid advance made possible the capture of 337 prisoners, two well-equipped hospitals, a battery of 105s, three buildings full of weapons and ammunition, a complete searchlight and radar unit with power plant, and a Gestapo Headquarters. Altogether, on 1 April, we made an advance of some 16 kilometers on a wide front, and were still going strong at the end of the period.

On 2 April, the pursuit continued toward the important railroad and communications center of Heilbronn, a city of 100,000 prewar population. The 399th relieved elements of the 397th in the vicinity of Walldorf during the morning, and the 397th shifted to the east. Elements of the 1st Battalion accomplished the relief with Co. G of the 399th reinforcing the 1st Battalion troops still in Reilingen.

The 397th continued in the attack, the 1st Battalion jumping off in the afternoon to take the towns of Rotenberg, Tairnbach, Muhlhausen, Eschelbach and



The industrial city of Mannheim on the east bank of the Rhine had been badly battered by constant air bombardment.

Eichtersheim, an advance of about 16 kilometers, against minor enemy opposition such as roadblocks, mines, and sniper fire. The 2nd Battalion, crossing the line of departure at the same time, cleared Horrenberg, Hoffenheim, and Sinsheim, after a 30-minute artillery preparation. Some opposition was encountered along the roads in this sector in the form of light artillery fire and sniper action. The 3rd Battalion, in reserve, followed the lead of the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The extraordinary number of 1,080 prisoners were taken during the day's action by the regiment; almost as many as in the previous six months of combat.

The 399th, guarding our division's right flank and rear, made no contact with the enemy, but liaison was maintained with the 397th and the French. The usual mopping-up operations were carried out, with a few PWs being taken. The regimental CP opened at Walldorf at 2000 hours.

The 398th remained in division reserve, maintaining its CP in Schwetzingen. The 375th F A Battalion returned to control of the 398th after being attached to the 399th for one day.

A radio net was put into operation by the 100th Signal Co. to maintain contact with the 10th Armored, out in front of the Century Division, and the French, who were coming up on our right.

The rat-race continued on 3 April, with road blocks, mines and blown bridges hampering our advance through the hilly country leading to Heilbronn. The 397th, shuttling its troops into position, moved 32 kilometers in some cases. The 1st Battalion slashed from Michelfeld to Ittlingen, where they billeted for the night. The 2nd Battalion, with the support of tanks, mopped up the towns of Weiler, Hillsbach, Reichen,

Bockshaft, Kirchardt, and spent the night in Furfeld. The 3rd Battalion reeled off 33 kilometers from Muhlhausen to Kirchardt, an advance slowed more by poor roads than enemy resistance.

Also against negligible enemy opposition, the 399th Inf. pushed forward through the rain of 3 April. The 1st Battalion, motorized, proceeded to Steinsfurth during the afternoon. The 2nd Battalion, having left its CP back in Rauensberg, followed. At the end of day, the 2nd Battalion had reached Sinsheim, just northeast of Steinsfurth, while the enemy continued withdrawing southward.

The 398th moved from its CP at Schwetzingen to the vicinity of Bad Rappenau, closing in during the early evening. Meanwhile, the Krauts had relinquished the town of Neckargartach, on the west bank of the Neckar river and north of Heilbronn, to the front-running 10th Armored Div. After fighting a stiff rear-guard action for this important town, the enemy withdrew across the river into the factory district to the north of Heilbronn, blowing the bridge across the river at that point.

Because the French, on our right, were lagging behind, leaving our right flank entirely exposed to possible counter-thrusts by the Jerries, the 399th continued to guard our division against possible counter-thrusts from the right flank and rear. While the rest of the 100th pushed ahead, the 399th was assigned the mission of clearing the area around Gemmingen and Schwaigern, some 16 kilometers east of Heilbronn.

Accordingly, the 1st Battalion 399th, supported by a platoon of tanks, a platoon of TDs and a platoon from Co. C 325th Engr. Battalion, moved by motor from Steinsfurth to Gemmingen. Until reaching the town, no opposition was encountered, but on the out-



Left, an aerial view of Mannheim showing complete devastation. Above, wrecked Rhine bridge connecting Mannheim with Ludwigshafen. Army ponton span is in the foreground.

skirts of Gemmingen the Germans made a stand on the rough, hilly ground east of the little village. With the Krauts in command of all the roads leading to towns along the route, as well as the large woods to the south, heavy mortar and artillery fire began dropping among the 1st Battalion troops.

Unable to proceed further by motor over roads which came under perfect enemy observation, the 1st Battalion detrucked and with Co. A leading and Cos. C and B following in a column of companies, advanced on foot, supported by the tanks. The attack moved slowly over the open, rolling terrain while the Krauts poured unrelenting fire upon our troops from the high, wooded ground to the south, and fought stubbornly to protect the highway which passed through the woods and continued to Heilbronn only 15 kilometers to the east.

Our coordinated tank-infantry attack proved too much for the enemy, however, and by early afternoon our spearheads had penetrated to the eastern edge of the forest barrier. Co. A now continued toward Schwaigern while Co. C remained behind to clear the woods which were infested with Jerry mortar, artillery, and small arms positions. By late afternoon, Co. A had captured Schwaigern, against only spotty small arms resistance at the eastern edge of the town. Co. C joined them there, after having cleared the woods in less than an hour.

Co. B was ordered to return to Gemmingen to protect our right flank and rear. The French still not having come up from their positions around Eppingen, this dangerous gap had to be plugged.

The 2nd Battalion 399th, following the lead of the 1st Battalion, began clearing the woods north of Gemmingen. By afternoon, Co. F had completed the task

and was on the way to Schluctern and Grossgartach, between Schwaigern and Heilbronn.

Trouble was encountered by the 2nd Battalion when they tried to take Schluctern, an important rail and communications town. Exposed to heavy artillery and mortar fire along the road from Schwaigern, the battalion shifted to the north, attacking Schluctern southeast from the direction of Massenbach. By late afternoon, Schluctern was in the hands of the 2nd Battalion, and Co. F was on the road to Grossgartach, only a kilometer away.

Capturing this important little rail town was more of a job than we had figured. For four hours the doughs of Co. F battled it out with the enemy with small arms. Finally, about midnight, the Germans withdrew, leaving us in possession of the town.

The vital city of Heilbronn on the east bank of the Neckar river, now lay before us. Our major objective since crossing the Rhine, some enemy resistance had been expected at this important rail and communications center. But indications were that no determined stand was planned by the Germans. Repeated reconnaissance of the city by our observation planes reported little enemy activity. The Krauts seemed far busier in the vicinity of Neckarsulm, some few miles to the north.

For the enemy, however, Heilbronn was an ideal spot for a last ditch stand. The deep, swift-flowing Neckar made a formidable defense barrier. With the three road bridges and one railroad bridge leading into the city blown, crossing the Neckar would be a major operation. Forming a semi-circle behind the city



Above, allied PWs of several nationalities pound the long road back to home and loved ones following liberation. Right, German civilians return to their battered "castles".

were a group of easily defended hills, bare almost to their summits, with thick woods at the crests which afforded excellent concealment for German artillery and gave the enemy unbroken observation of every inch of the river from Neckarsulm, on the north, to Sontheim on the south.

Despite several previous air-raids, Heilbronn was relatively intact at the beginning of our assault. The thick, stone walls of the numerous factory buildings were miniature fortresses in themselves. Beneath the buildings, a labyrinth of tunnels connected the various parts of the city. These tunnels enabled the Krauts to infiltrate behind our lines into buildings already overrun by our troops. During our assault upon Heilbronn, an intricate plan for defending the city block by block in a series of zones, was found on a captured German.

Another factor in the decision of the enemy to defend Heilbronn was the number of troops available at the time. To many battered Wehrmacht units and individual stragglers in retreat from the Rhine, Heilbronn was a natural center for regrouping. When we reached the city, there were several thousand enemy troops in Heilbronn in addition to numerous local Volksturm organizations.

Here, then, at the head of the great Neckar valley and the roads leading south toward Stuttgart and east toward Ulm and the vaunted German "National Redoubt," the enemy made one of his most desperate stands of the war.

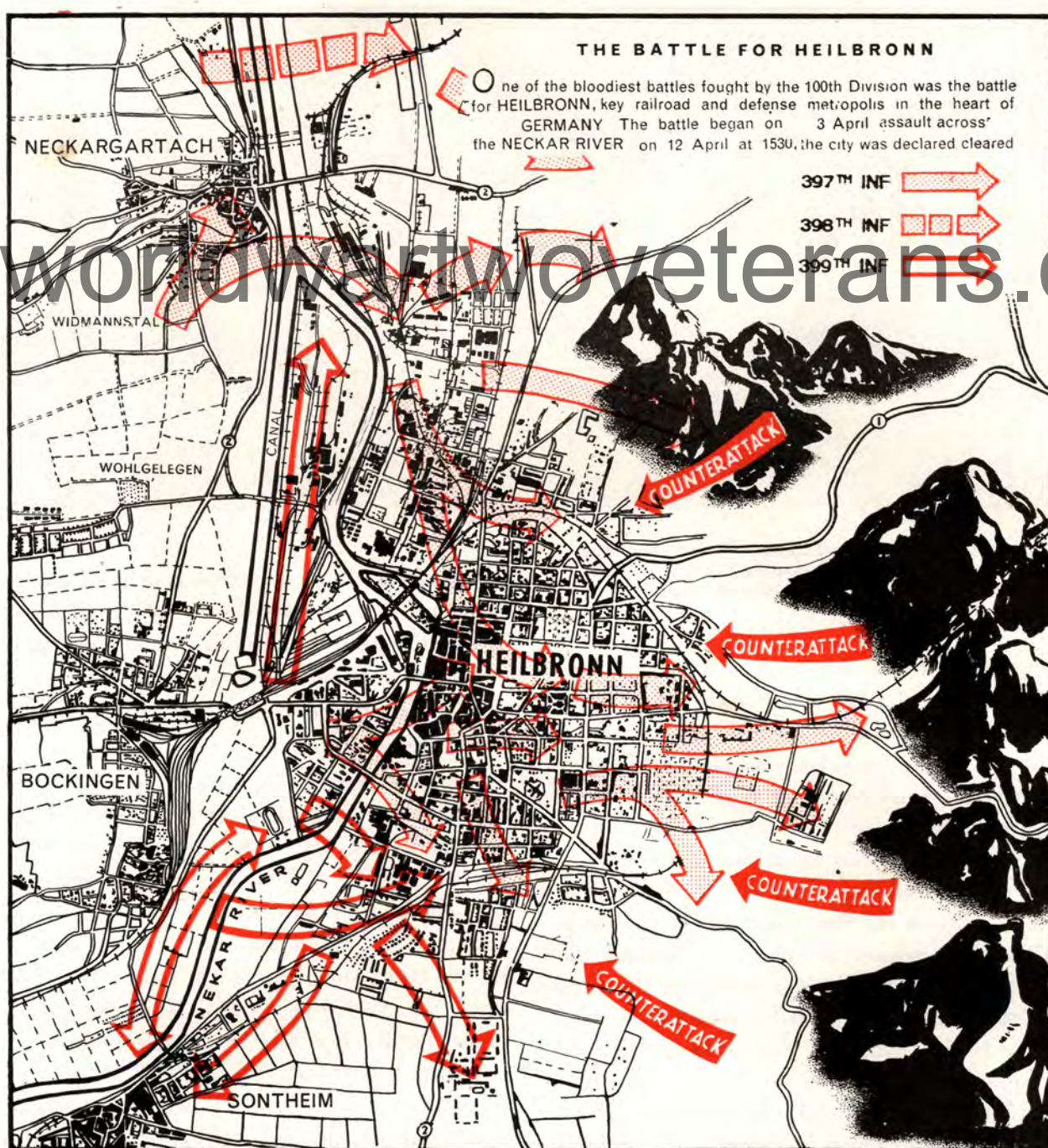
As we advanced toward Heilbronn, Gen. Burress planned his tactics carefully. A study of the ground

and general enemy situation, convinced him that the Neckar and Kocher Rivers, at their confluence on the northern outskirts of Heilbronn, was pivotal ground for the enemy and a most favorable point to stop our onrush towards the so-called strongholds in the mountains of South Germany.

Our right flank being seriously exposed because of the lagging French, and our mission being to protect the right flank of the Seventh Army, Gen. Burress decided against maneuvering for an opportunity to encircle the Heilbronn area from the north and south. Instead, the General chose to throw the main strength of the 100th in on the north beside the 63rd Div., cross the Neckar near Bad Wimpfen, swing south across the Kocher, and come at Heilbronn from the rear with CT-397 and CT-398. CT-399 was to move straight towards Heilbronn to hold the enemy in place and create a diversion for the main assault on the left while protecting the division and army against attacks from the south.

But, as is too often the case, subsequent developments prohibited Gen. Burress from carrying out this masterful strategy. At 1700 hours of 3 April, while our division was still about 24 kilometers from the Neckar River, Gen. Burress was ordered by the VI Corps CG to detach one battalion of infantry and rush it forward with all possible speed to join the 10th Armored Div. in the vicinity of Heilbronn. The 10th Armored had reached the Neckar ahead of us by circling from the north, and the battalion of Centurymen was to assist the 10th in establishing a bridgehead to cover the crossing of the 100th and other troops to follow.

Accordingly, during the late hours of 3 April, the



3rd Battalion 398th Inf., under command of the 10th Armored CG, advanced into Neckargartach and took up positions along the bank of the river some 300 yards north of a blown bridge. Tensely, the infantrymen peered through the cold drizzle for some sign of the enemy on the invisible far bank, or huddled in blacked-out houses awaiting the order to board the assault boats.

So as not to alert the enemy, the crossing was to be made without artillery preparation. At 0300 of 4 April, Co. K crawled into 14 assault boats, each manned by three engineers from the 55th Engr. Battalion of the 10th Armored Div., and made the first crossing of the dark, swift flowing Neckar. The wet earth beneath their boots felt friendly and reassuring

as the Co. K men scrambled from the sturdy boats and, led by nine men from the Raider Platoon, deployed along the river. The crossing had been negotiated without firing a shot.

Swiftly, the 3rd Battalionites got their bearings and began moving inland. Before them loomed the silhouette of an enormous power plant. As the leading Raiders approached the steep bank which points to the factory district, they drew one sniper shot. Taking cover on the bank, they returned the fire and waited for Co. K to come up to them. Then the entire force advanced into the deserted power plant.

Despite the fact that the enemy was now fully alerted, Co. L made the crossing, followed by Co. I. The last boats to cross drew fire from an enemy burp



Above, doughfeet trudge deeper into Germany toward Heilbronn. Right, a column of Centurymen slashes through a segment of the vaunted Ziegfried Line.

gun, but a Co. K machine gun, set up in the power plant, quickly silenced that opposition. Within one hour, the entire 3rd Battalion had navigated the river and assembled in and around the power plant.

At the first streak of dawn, Cos. K and L, each with a platoon of heavy machine guns from Co. M attached, moved toward their objectives. The plan was for Co. L to branch out to the north as far as a group of lumberyards situated along the railroad line from Heilbronn to Neckarsulm. Co. K was to advance south about 300 yards to the edge of the factory district, and then turn east along the Neckargartach Bridge road and into the hills southeast of the town. The 1st Platoon of Co. K was assigned the mission of taking Tower Hill, a height whose steep, barren slope, devoid of cover or concealment, was topped by the skeleton of an old tower. The 3rd Platoon was to take Cloverleaf Hill, directly south of Tower Hill, while the 2nd Platoon was to clean out the glassworks just south of the landing site. Co. I, meanwhile, dug in on a line parallel to the river about 300 yards to the front of the power plant.

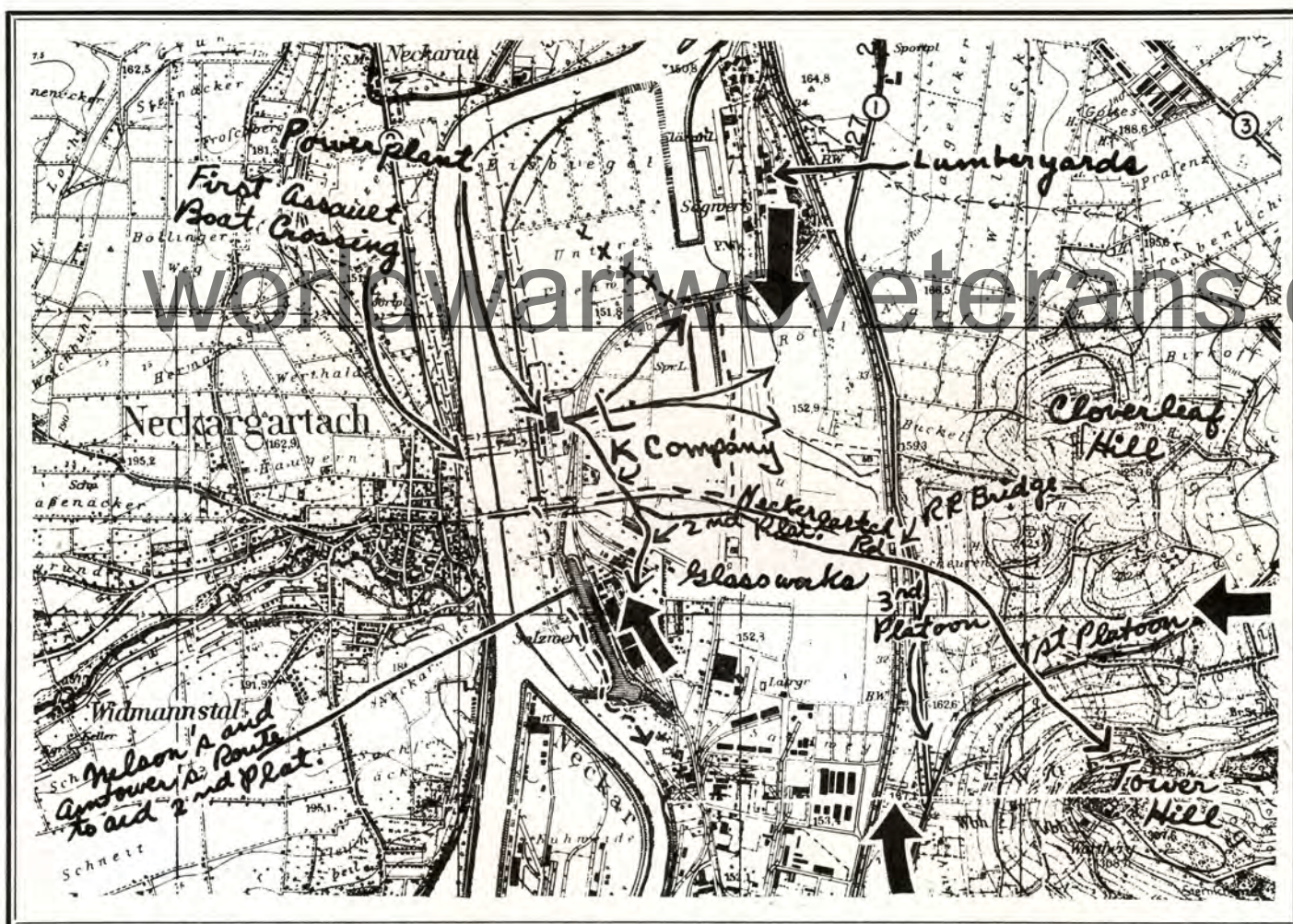
By 0900 of 4 April, the advance was well under way. Co. L had progressed some 500 yards to the northeast, was skirting a large, water-filled ditch about half-way to the lumberyards, and had reached the railroad and the highway which ran alongside it at the junction with the Neckargartach road. On Co. L's right, the 1st Platoon of Co. K had begun to climb Tower Hill; the 2nd Platoon had entered the factory district to the south; and the 3rd Platoon was advancing southward along the road running parallel to the river on

the far side of the factory district against only sporadic sniper fire.

Suddenly, the Jerries launched a counterattack along the entire battalion front with a force estimated at between 500 and 1,000 men. The Germans, probably having infiltrated our lines through underground passageways, first appeared in a building on the northern edge of the factory district behind the southward-moving 2nd Platoon of Co. K and cut off the platoon. Another enemy force turned up east of the highway and cut off the platoon struggling up Tower Hill. A third group of Germans attacked the men of Co. L and the 3rd Platoon of Co. K along the highway itself. From the lumberyards to the north, a fourth enemy attack caught the men in the center of the 3rd Battalion front in a cross-fire with the German force in the factory buildings to the south.

Lt. Almon Brunkow, commanding a section of heavy MGs attached to the 3rd Platoon of Co. K, was hit when he walked out onto the road to reconnoiter a new position for his guns. As he lay helpless in the open field beyond the road, Pfc. Leland L. Zeiter and other members of his machine gun squad made an effort to reach him. But the enemy fire was too intense and the squad was forced to give up the attempt and withdraw northward with the remainder of the platoon to the railroad bridge at the junction of the east-west Neckargartach road.

Here, together with the elements from Co. L, they made a gallant attempt to hold against the enemy who were attacking from three sides. Faced with the possibility of being surrounded, however, and armed only with rifles and the section of machine guns against an enemy liberally supplied with panzerfaust and 88s, the outnumbered and outgunned defenders of the



Positions of 3rd Battalion 398th Inf. on 4 April 1945 after the first day of the battle for Heilbronn.

bridge were forced to withdraw in small groups to the previously prepared defenses of Co. I in front of the power plant. The 1st Platoon of Co. K on Tower Hill and the 2nd Platoon in the factory district were now completely isolated.

Our mortars and artillery, which up to this time had been unable to fire due to the proximity of our forces to the enemy, now began to send rounds into the Jerry lines from the west side of the river. The 81mm mortars of Co. M had originally been emplaced on the east bank of the Neckar, but had been forced to move back to high ground on the western side after Jerry artillery had knocked out one of the tubes.

With the support of these guns, the battalion regrouped and succeeded in regaining some lost ground. Led by Co. I, the 3rd Battalion again advanced across the open field to its front with Co. L on the left rear of Co. I, and Co. K, now numbering about 20 men, off to the right as protection for that flank. Intense enemy fire continued to blanket the field across which the battalion was advancing, but with the accurate support of our own artillery and mortars the battalion managed to push forward against heartbreaking opposition.

Seven men from Co. I were killed in the attack, as

well as two company aid-men who were shot down by the enemy despite prominently displayed Medical Corps arm-bands. Tec. 5 Joseph P. Nebesney, one of the aid-men killed by the Krauts, was wounded while advancing with the infantrymen of his platoon. Disregarding his own injury, he continued to treat the riflemen of the platoon, unhesitatingly exposing himself to enemy fire while moving from victim to victim. Hit twice again while performing his duties, he still refused to be evacuated and was bandaging a wounded comrade when a fourth bullet mortally wounded him.

As a result of our determined attack, the 3rd Battalion found itself on a line along the far edge of the big, water-filled ditch which Co. L had passed earlier in the morning. There the battalion prepared for a stand.

By now, it was evident that the enemy was far stronger than had been anticipated. The piecemeal enemy units we had encountered were fanatical in their resistance. From the lumberyards to the north and the factories to the south, enemy reinforcements were constantly pouring into the front lines. German artillery, emplaced on the two great hills to the east, had perfect observation of the entire site of our bridge-



Crayon sketch of railroad spur passing through Heilbronn factory district. Right, summit of Tower Hill.

head, and continued to pour devastating fire on our troops. To make matters worse, the 10th Armored had failed to construct the promised ponton bridge behind the 3rd Battalion, and the accurate enemy artillery fire made any immediate completion of such a project most unlikely.

Piling worry upon worry, efforts to reestablish contact with the isolated 1st and 2nd Platoons of Co. K confirmed the fear that these two gallant platoons had been overrun by the enemy. A runner from the 2nd Platoon ran the gauntlet of enemy fire to report to Capt. William E. Nelson, Co. K commander, that the platoon's handy-talkie had failed and that they were desperately short of ammunition. When the runner had left the platoon, they were barricaded in a house about 1,000 yards to the south and fighting off repeated enemy attacks. The runner led Capt. Nelson and several Co. K men toward the house, but before they could reach the building they were immobilized in a ditch by enemy fire and forced to return. Later, Sgt. Leslie Amtower and two men succeeded in entering the house. They found only the useless handy-talkie and 25 American gas masks pulled from their cases. While they were searching the building, they noticed a group of eight or ten Jerries outside. The three men opened fire and the enemy immediately stormed the house. Sgt. Amtower and the two men in his patrol retreated across the moat bridge to the rear of the structure and returned to the company CP.

The 1st Platoon of Co. K had advanced up Tower Hill before daybreak, surprising and capturing 14 Germans on the edge of the woods at the top of the hill. In the fierce fire-fight with the counterattacking Jerries which followed, the outnumbered platoon was cut off. Despite a shortage of ammunition, Lt. Alfred

J. Rizzo radioed that he was confident they would be able to hold out and work back to the rest of the battalion after nightfall. The last heard from the platoon was a handy-talkie request for fire on an enemy gun to the east which was giving them trouble. A group of Raiders tried to reach the platoon after dark, but were immobilized upon attempting to cross the highway. A patrol from Co. K was also forced to turn back without making contact.

Several days later the German officer who had commanded the force which had surrounded the Co. K platoon, was captured and told the story of the gallant platoon's stand. Even though outnumbered, surrounded, and burdened with their prisoners, the enemy officer testified, "they fired every weapon they had, and threw hand grenades until we were within four or five yards of them. It finally took all of the 90 men in my company to subdue them." When we finally had fought to the top of Tower Hill, the graves of three of the 1st Platoon riflemen were found by our men. They had been buried by German civilians.

It was at this dark moment, that Gen. Burress received word the 10th Armored had been relieved of its mission to support the capture of Heilbronn and was being shifted to the north flank of VI Corps, presumably to take advantage of a break there and encircle the Germans by driving back west, in the rear of Heilbronn.

This changed the situation completely and left Gen. Burress weighted by a staggering tactical problem. By action of higher authority, the General had become committed in an unplanned maneuver with a battalion of Centurymen on the east side of the Neckar and being violently attacked by vastly superior forces of enemy. To attempt to withdraw the 3rd Battalion 398th Inf. back across the river, Gen. Burress estimated, would not only be disastrous for it but such



Centurymen rush for available cover as enemy artillery "comes in".



The Jerries fire Heilbronn oil reserves in the path of our advance.

an enemy success at the time would increase his will to resist and would eventually prove more costly. Another important consideration was the effect upon division personnel of not going to the aid of brother Centurymen in distress. Gen. Burress, therefore, abandoned his original scheme of maneuver and began rushing the 397th Inf. across the Neckar to reinforce the 3rd Battalion 398th. What would have happened had Gen. Burress been permitted to carry out his original plan of maneuver, can never be known. But that he did the best he could with a situation which was neither to his liking nor choosing, is self-evident.

At 1400 of 4 April, the 2nd Battalion 397th Inf. began to cross the Neckar. Responsibility for getting the two battalions across was given to the 100th's 325th Engrs. At first there was some disorganization because of the inexperience of the infantry troops with assault boat crossings. The boats also had been scattered along the west bank by the 10th Armored Div's. 55th Engrs. following the crossing by the 3rd Battalion 398th and some were in damaged condition from enemy artillery fire.

By 1740, however, the 2nd Battalion 397th was on the right bank, having negotiated the crossing without casualties. Attached to each company of the 2nd Battalion was a section of heavy machine guns from Co. H. The battalion's heavy mortars were set up on the west side of the river next to those of the 3rd Battalion 398th.

Smoke laid over the crossing site by Negro troops of the 163rd Chemical Smoke Generator Co., did much to make our crossing possible. While the smoke screen hid our troops from the enemy, however, it also enabled the German artillery to zero in on the general

crossing site and any bridge or raft-making activities of our engineers. This observed enemy fire was so accurate as to force abandonment of an attempt to build a treadway bridge by Co. A of the 31st Engr. Battalion under command of Capt. Kenneth R. Franklin. The enemy knew that it was of paramount importance to prevent our armor from crossing to the east bank, and on 4 April the German efforts were successful.

Immediately after landing at 1425 hours, Co. E of the 397th pushed toward the factory district. With the 2nd Platoon in the lead, Co. E advanced through a breach in the concrete wall which surrounds the factory district on the north, and headed for the first factory, a red brick building 200 yards across an open loading yard. The assault was made in the face of heavy crossfire from their objective and another factory building off to the left. Once at the factory doors, the Co. E men had little difficulty convincing the few Germans who had remained in the structure after our artillery preparation, to surrender. The factory building to the left, a former glassworks, where a considerable force of Krauts was holed up, was more troublesome.

Hugging the wall, the 3rd Platoon of Co. E crawled toward this sturdy, red-brick building. Despite heavy machine gun fire, one squad battled its way into the structure, but the other two squads of the platoon were immobilized and unable to move beyond the protecting wall. The squad which entered the factory slowly fought its way through the building until just before nightfall when they were joined in this difficult operation by Co. F.

Having cleared out these first two factory buildings,



A wounded infantryman is carried from the bridgehead battleground.



Loading into an assault boat for the hazardous Neckar crossing.

the Centurymen turned their attention to two shell-pocked houses off to the right and slightly behind the first factory building. Unable to approach the nearest house directly because of intense enemy fire, the 3rd Platoon of Co. E crawled along a catwalk to the rear of the house. From there, with the help of men of the 1st Platoon who had remained behind the concrete wall, they cleared the structure.

At this point, darkness called a halt to further operations. Co. F remained in the factory next to the wall in the northeast corner of the district and Co. E bedded down in the battered house they had just captured. Their situation, however, was very precarious since the enemy was still in the second house across a narrow courtyard and all through the night kept throwing hand grenades and sniping at the E Co. men. One sniper's bullet hit Lt. Peter Petracco, 1st Platoon leader, while he was planning the attack with another E Co. officer.

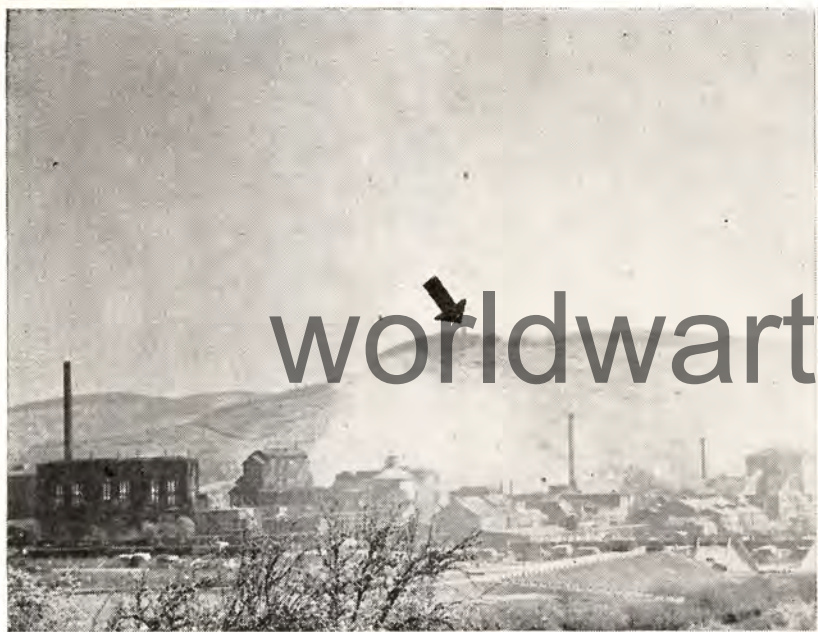
Precious little rest was gained by the weary Easy Co. men that night. Shortly after midnight, a number of Jerries, who had sneaked into the loading yard in the darkness, opened fire on the Co. E troops with machine guns, burp guns and panzerfaust. At the same time, they were attacked by Krauts on the south side of the house. Cut off from the Neckargartach road and the Co. F men in the factory building to the left, Co. E managed to fight off the first German assault. But many of the Co. E men were badly hit or deafened by the percussion grenades used by the enemy.

Caught in an untenable position, Co. E was forced to attempt a withdrawal. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons managed to get back over the catwalk to the factory they had captured earlier in the battle. From this

building they found they could join forces with Co. F where the attack was less intense. The 1st Platoon, together with the mortarmen of the Weapons Platoon who had joined the company earlier, were in a less fortunate situation. T. Sgt. Thomas Convery, in command following the death of Lt. Petracco, 1st Platoon leader, wounded himself, ordered his men to withdraw to the Co. E CP across the loading yard the best way they could. Most of the Co. E men were wounded. But somehow they managed to fight their way across the Neckargartach road and to the company CP and comparative safety. Every one of the returning men was wounded. Ten men were missing. In all, Co. E suffered 54 casualties that night.

Meanwhile, the major enemy force which had counterattacked the 2nd Battalion elements holding the glassworks, were making it hot for the Centurymen. Armed with a considerable number of panzerfaust which they used to telling advantage against the brick building, the Krauts took a heavy toll of our troops. Despite the fact that the opposing forces were so close together that use of artillery was almost as dangerous to our own men as to the enemy, Lt. Carl Bradshaw, Co. F commander, decided to call on the big guns for help. Waiting until all elements with the exception of Co. F had withdrawn, Lt. Bradshaw called for artillery support. This request was granted, and he directed the fire of an 8-inch gun so effectively that the enemy was thrown into confusion and broke off their assault for the remainder of the night.

To the north, the 3rd Battalion 398th was having its own difficulties. Attacked by a determined enemy force along the 500-yard line they had established from north of the Co. F glassworks to the big, water-



Site of our initial Neckar bridgehead. Arrow points to tower on Tower Hill. The troublesome glassworks is in the left foreground.



One of the sturdy steel and concrete bridges across the Neckar which was destroyed by the enemy. Demolition was efficient.

filled ditch, the 3rd Battalion was engaged in driving off repeated fierce assaults against their positions. Several of these enemy counterattacks were led by tanks. But with the support of two TDs and two tanks which fired at the Germans from the left bank of the Neckar, the 3rd Battalion beat off every enemy effort to drive them from their positions.

The 3rd Battalion maintained this line for the remainder of the battle for Heilbronn, resisting the gradually weakening German attacks with the help of accurate fire of the 374th and 242nd F A Battalions whose batteries were emplaced near Frankenbach. Outstanding in the 3rd Battalion's successful defense of this sector, was the work of the Raider Platoon, nine men armed with machine guns who held the segment of the battalion front north and east from the big, water-filled ditch.

After dark on 4 April, Co. A of the 31st Engrs. again attempted to complete a treadway bridge or raft capable of carrying tanks and TDs to the east bank of the Neckar. Enemy artillery concentrations upon the bridge site were so accurate even in the darkness that the project was once more abandoned. Inspired by the necessity for getting armor across the river to the hard-pressed Centurymen, the 31st Engrs. grimly continued their efforts although silhouetted by fires caused by enemy artillery in Neckargartach and the factory district on the east bank of the river. Fourteen engineers were hit by shell-fire during the first hour of work. Each attempt to launch ponton floats was met with an uncannily accurate artillery concentration which punctured the floats and caused several additional casualties among the engineers. The site of the bridge

was changed, but here, too, the German fire was so intense that the engineers finally gave up for the night. Capt. Franklin, engineer CO and every man who worked with him, was positive that civilians were directing the fire of the enemy guns.

Because of the continued enemy shelling of the river bank, no attempt at building the bridge was made on 5 April. Fog oil was brought a great distance from supply depots by trucks of both VI Corps QM and the 100th QM Co. The Negro 163rd Chemical Smoke Generator Co. was of great service in maintaining the smoke screen over the river under cover of which the trickle of supplies we could ferry across succeeded in reaching our troops.

On the more active side of the river, Cos. F and G of the 397th jumped off into the attack again before dawn, moving southward. Co. F, surging out of the factory building in which it had spent the night, took over the factory between it and the building that Co. E had taken the previous day. While reconnoitering for a suitable way out of the first factory building, Lt. Bradshaw, Co. F commander, was killed by a sniper. The company, having found an easier way, left the building, moving to the in-between factory and later to Co. E's factory where they waited for Co. G to move up from their positions beyond the concrete wall and join the concerted drive.

Throughout the morning, Co. F had been continuously engaged in a fire fight with the Jerries in the loading yard north of the buildings they were in. The shacks and loading platforms were excellent cover for the enemy in the yard, and it was difficult to fire on them, because their comrades covered them from the



With the enemy knocking out bridges as soon as we put them in, supplies had to be ferried across by boat or any other means.



Even amphibious tanks were utilized to keep vital supplies floating across the Neckar to the hard-pressed bridgehead.

two neighboring houses from which Co. E had been forced to retreat the night before.

Co. G advancing with the 2nd Platoon, commanded by Lt. John H. Slade, in the lead, did not know that there were Jerries in the loading yard. As they ran across the field in front of the concrete wall, a burst of machine gun fire, sounding as if it came from one of the houses, wounded one man. Gaining the protection of the wall, the platoon lay behind the bank on which the wall is built, and formed a skirmish line, preparing to attack through the railroad gate that is at the northern end of the loading yard.

Suddenly, Sgt. Dalton Yates was surprised to see a German stick a gun through a hole in the wall. That was their first indication that there were Jerries on the other side in the yard. The platoon began to toss grenades over the wall into the laps of the Jerries on the other side. The Jerries returned the compliment with *potato mashers*, a concussion grenade so called because of its shape. For a few minutes a lively game of catch ensued over the 6-foot-high wall. Some of the George Co. men climbed the embankment to get behind the wall and fire at the Jerries through holes. One man opened a gap in the wall with a grenade, and another helped enlarge it with his rifle butt. Looking through this hole, they saw some 40 Jerries well dug in in the loading yard, some of them not more than 15 yards from the wall.

By this time, six men of the 2nd Platoon lay dead, and Lt. Slade, seeing that something drastic had to be done, called for mortar fire on the Jerries in the yard, despite their proximity to his own troops. At his message, the 60mm mortars behind the Neckargartach road, and the heavy 81mm mortars on the other side

of the river opened fire, while the men of the 2nd Platoon hugged the earth in a shallow depression just behind the wall over which the shells were landing.

After several minutes of this firing, the Jerries lost interest in continuing the fight. Leaving their holes, they ran toward Lt. Slade's men with their hands in the air and the cry *Kamarade* on their lips. At the first break, six of the Germans were shot by their own officers as they attempted to give themselves up. Thirty-seven young Germans poured through the railroad gate into the hands of the 2nd Platoon, weeping, bleeding and screaming hysterically. "They wasn't nuthin' but kids," said Lt. Slade after the battle. "Before the mortars had hit them, they had fought like demons, but now, they were only a disorganized mass of 14 to 17-year-olds."

The loading yard cleared, the 2nd Platoon prepared to attack its original objectives, the two houses just to the right of the factory where F Company was waiting for them. But as one squad went through the breach in the wall and began moving toward the houses, four men were killed by intense fire from the enemy position. As Lt. Slade called for smoke to be fired on the houses, S. Sgt. Henry S. Hohn, leader of the squad, himself badly wounded, led his men from the yard, and the 2nd Platoon withdrew out of danger.

Meanwhile, efforts were being made to bring reinforcements over to the bridgehead. The artillery fire all along the river was still too intense for the building of a bridge, or even for the construction of a larger raft or a ferry. The only transportation across the river was by assault boat and small rafts operated by Co. A 325th Engrs. On these, supplies and rations were brought across to the beleaguered attackers, and pris-



The engineers attempt to salvage the remains of a ponton bridge.



Dense smoke screen covers movements of our troops from observation.

oners and casualties were evacuated. But the vital tanks and TDs still could not join the fight.

Direct communication was established between the Division CP and the bridgehead when the 100th Signal Company laid a wire from the bridgehead to the CP at Bonfeld. Despite continuous artillery fire during the laying of this line, the wiremen took the time to overhead it, so it would stay in longer under constant fire of the enemy's guns.

In the absence of tanks, Lt. Col. Gordon Singles, commanding the forces on the bridgehead, called for artillery fire. Particularly bothersome to the men crossing the loading yard were two long warehouses that ran north and south along the lagoon on the western edge of the factory area. Accordingly, the 155s of the 373rd F A Battalion were adjusted on these buildings, and with traversing fire at 50-yd. intervals, the entire length of the warehouses was blasted. In addition, selected targets were given to the 374th and 242nd F A Battalions. This medium artillery drove the Germans from their positions, out into the open where they were cut down by light artillery and mortar fire. The two houses which had caused so much trouble to the men of Lt. Slade's platoon were reduced to shambles. The two huge warehouses were set afire. The Germans who somehow remained alive in the cellars of these buildings and among the battered ruins of the glassworks after an hour of pounding by our artillery, were glad to surrender when the infantry moved in.

Although the German artillery still commanded the city and both banks of the Neckar, the artillery of the 100th and attached units effectively offset this advan-

tage with excellent observation from the ridge that runs from Neckargartach to Bockingen along the western bank of the river. Observation posts were established in an old watch tower behind Bockingen, commanding the southern approach to Heilbronn; at a crossroads directly west of the center of the city; on a hill southwest of Neckargartach; and on the highest point of Neckargartach itself. Although these positions were inferior to those of the enemy in the hills east of Heilbronn, they were supplemented by Cub plane observation, which the enemy did not have, and were comparatively free of enemy counterfire. Enemy artillery concentrated almost entirely upon the banks of the river where the engineers still were struggling to build bridges and rafts as a prerequisite to getting armor, supplies and reinforcements across.

By the time the battle was in full flood, we had amassed a preponderance of artillery on the site. In addition to the 374th, 375th, 925th, and 373rd F A Battalions, organic division units, there was the Seventh Army's 242nd F A Battalion of 105mm howitzers. To the north, directly supporting our troops in their attack, were the 967th (155mm rifles), the 938th (155mm howitzers), and the 194th (8-inch howitzers) F A Battalions. Cos. B and C of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, also attached, did Trojan work in smothering enemy observation with smoke shells and fired many rounds of high-explosive ammunition from their positions in Neckargartach.

Accurate counterbattery fire on the enemy guns was difficult due to their skillful concealment. Only by occasional flashes or the sound of one of their guns could the German positions be located. Most of our



An engineer probes for wreckage of short-lived treadway bridge.



Hitler "Jugend," too young to shave, captured at Heilbronn.

firing, however, was concentrated on buildings in the city, just ahead of the infantrymen, and on enemy tanks, supply columns and troop assembly points ferreted out by our air observers.

The 12th Tactical Air Corps lent its valuable support, bombing and strafing Heilbronn on 5 April and harassing the Krauts entrenched in the hills surrounding the city. The 12th TAC attacked the enemy repeatedly during the course of the battle.

At 1100 of 5 April, Cos. I and L of the 397th Inf. finally crossed the river without casualties and prepared to join the attack. An effort the night before was unsuccessful due to enemy artillery fire. Following an artillery and mortar preparation on the loading yards which blasted out the die-hard Jerries entrenched there, the assault was resumed at 1445. Co. F moved through the factories which the 2nd Battalion had reduced in the previous day's action, and made contact with Co. G and the remaining men of Co. E in the buildings where Easy Co. had met disaster the night of 4 April. Moving cautiously ahead from that point, Co. G pressed on to the two warehouses still burning from our severe artillery shelling. In the warehouses, George Co. found 100 Krauts still dazed from our artillery fire. They surrendered without much of a fight, and the struggle for the glassworks was over.

George Co. waited in this position until Cos. I and L of the 397th, now actively engaged, caught up with them, after which the attack continued. Co. F mopped up the few remaining buildings in the glassworks and advanced to a small grove of trees at the southern tip of the glassworks area. Co. I, on the left of Co. F, pushed to the Fiat automobile factory along the road

which skirts the eastern edge of the glassworks, and cleared the building against intense machine gun and panzerfaust fire. Co. L guarded the left rear of the advance, extending the line of the 3rd Battalion 398th southward from the Neckargartach road to the Fiat factory. Co. K of the 397th, having crossed the river in the meantime, followed the four companies, F, G, I, and L, as a reserve in preparation for the struggle for the center of Heilbronn.

Blocking further advance to the south, was a large open space giving the enemy clear fields of fire. In the center of this area, approximately 200 yards south of the grove of trees held by Co. F, was a sprawling, grey concrete house, situated at the junction of the railroad spur connecting the glassworks to the city of Heilbronn and the road leading from the east side of that factory into the city. A key spot, the junction was a natural point of defense and attack. But to get to the house, the Centurymen first had to cross the open field.

Waiting until dark, four riflemen and a medic from Co. F crept out from the shelter of the grove of trees and wormed their way along the railroad track toward the somber, grey stone walls of the house. After the first group had advanced some 20 yards into the open, a second squad of F Co. men followed. Suddenly, a machine gun opened up from a window of the house, killing all five men in the leading squad. Realizing the building was too strongly defended for a frontal assault across open ground, the second group of F Co. men withdrew to the tree grove. It was then decided to put off the advance southward until the next day.

From the time of the original crossing of the Neckar by the 3rd Battalion 398th up to the night of 5 April,

200 prisoners had been taken by the Centurymen on the bridgehead.

During the night of the 5th, the engineers, working in the shelter of houses in Neckargartach, built a four-float ponton ferry and carried it to the river upstream from the original crossing site. Early in the morning of 6 April, the first medium tank was ferried across the swift flowing Neckar. The precarious crossing was successfully accomplished. But on the east bank it was discovered that the ferry could not push the ramps upon which the tank was to roll up the bank firmly enough into the soft earth. Although cognizant of the hazard, the tank tried to climb the bank, faltered in the soft ground, and slid back. The ferry, unbalanced, listed and gave way, plunging the tank into the river.

The engineers began pulling the ferry back to the western side of the Neckar to add another float. But by the time they had reached midstream the enemy had zeroed in and the ferry was sunk by a direct hit. Now the Krauts began pounding this new crossing site, and continued their heavy shelling for the remainder of the day, making further efforts impossible.

While the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 397th were battling the enemy on the east side of the Neckar, Co. B of that regiment was clearing isolated enemy snipers from railroad yards on the west side preparatory to a 1st Battalion crossing. Patrols from the regimental Anti-Tank Co. went to the deserted peninsula between the river and the long loading canal which reaches southward from Neckargartach. One Anti-Tank patrol attempted to move out onto the tottering railroad bridge which led into the heart of the city. Enemy machine gun fire, however, forced them to dig in on the west side of the bridge with their own two light machine guns. They held this position for the remainder of the battle.

Organic vehicles and Co. G of the 398th were now dispatched north to cross the Neckar at Neckarelz, a

town in the 63rd Div. sector where a bridge had been thrown across the river. They were ordered to join forces with the 2nd Battalion on the other side of the Neckar.

Late in the afternoon of 5 April, the west bank opposite Heilbronn being secured, the 1st Battalion 397th made ready to cross the Neckar and establish a second bridgehead in the center of the city itself. With the 2nd Platoon of Co. B of the 325th Engrs. reinforced by a squad from Co. A manning the assault boats, Co. C of the 397th was put across at 1830. During the time of crossing, German artillery was hitting the west bank. German snipers fired from the buildings north and south of the crossing site, wounding two of the riflemen in the boats. On the east bank, close to the river, however, enemy opposition was negligible, probably due to the fact that the boats swung north along the river bank to the first large factory, a brewery, from which they had received sniper fire. Advancing toward the brewery upon landing, the 2nd and 3rd Platoons drew more fire from the brewery, but found little difficulty in taking the building and the 40 young Jerries defending it. The defenders were jittery and had no officer to steady them.

At dusk, Co. A made the crossing, and went up to join Co. C in the brewery where both companies spent the night. Once during the night, the outposts were attacked by a small group of Jerries armed with a machine gun and a couple of panzerfausts, but the raid was broken up easily. At about 0430 hours in the morning Co. B crossed, and by daylight the battalion was ready to fan out and establish a bridgehead.

Co. A was given the mission of moving north to try to relieve the original bridgehead, struggling to gain ground southward toward the center of the city. Cos. B and C were to fan out and protect the right and rear of Co. A, at the same time widening the bridgehead sufficiently for the engineers to throw a span across the



Neckar at this point. Co. B was to move south, and Co. C east, perpendicular to the river.

Co. A advanced through two dense city blocks to Kaiser Strasse, the street that leads to the center bridge of the three over the Neckar blown by the Germans. At this point, they were in the heart of the city and were running into the core of German resistance. Co. A was held by the enemy along this line, running east and west from the dynamite-twisted bridge to Kilianskirche, two blocks east of the river, for two bitter, bloodstained days.

The strategy involved in expanding this second bridgehead was the development of a pincer movement in which the center of Heilbronn would be caught in a steel vice between the northern and southern bridgeheads and squeezed until the two arms locked around the heart of the city.

Co. C, guarding Co. A's right and rear, pushed two blocks east of the Flein road which runs south from the center of Heilbronn. Co. B, on the right of Co. C, also crunched eastward to this road, taking the sugar refinery near the river, south of the brewery, and a few apartment houses against scattered sniper opposition. But the right flank of Co. B, along the line of the sugar refinery and the Knorr works, southeast of the refinery, was dangerously exposed. In the afternoon, a patrol from Co. B was forced to re-enter the sugar refinery and clear it of infiltrating Krauts again, while the rest of the company prepared to clean out the Knorr works.

Before they could launch their assault, however, the Germans counterattacked. Swarming through narrow alleys between the houses, the enemy infantry, closely supported by four tanks, charged the Centurymen. The 1st Platoon of Co. A, which had been trying to extend its right flank up the road from the river beyond Kilianskirche, was forced back to its original positions. Co. C, fighting along the north-south Flein road,

was attacked savagely, but managed to hold its original positions. Two tanks slashed at the right flank of the company's line.

T. Sgt. Pittman Hall was on the second floor of an apartment house located on the corner where the enemy tanks hit the Charlie Co. positions. Firing one bazooka round through the wall of the apartment to clear a field of fire, he blasted the first tank with a second round, disabling its turret gun. By this time, the artillery FO with Co. C had zeroed in his 8-inch guns on the tanks, and both tanks, showing exceptionally rapid maneuverability, spun on their tracks and beat a hasty retreat.

Farther south, Co. B had been receiving an annoying amount of panzerfaust fire from one of the houses across the Flein road. Lt. William S. Kumpfel, the artillery FO, adjusted 155s on this target. Nine Jerries were cut down by the accurate machine guns attached to Co. B as the Krauts hurriedly left the building to escape the fire of the big guns. Seventeen more dead Germans were found in the house when we entered later. The German infantrymen, by this time, had lost their eagerness for close-in combat and withdrew.

Co. B, being the most exposed, and closest to the German barracks near the southeast corner of the bridgehead, was the hardest hit by the enemy counter-attack. The Baker men had set up a strong-point in an apartment house on the west side of the Flein road, across the street from the Knorr works. Two more tanks, together with about two platoons of infantrymen came up this road from the south. Pfc. B. R. Smith fired on this enemy force with a light machine gun and some 20 to 30 of the infantrymen were killed or wounded. The tanks kept coming, but by the time they had reached within 150 yards of the Co. B position, 8-inchers were falling around them also. The B Co. line, however, was not strong enough to withstand the fire of the tanks, and Lt. Owen Kirkland, B Co.



commander, ordered a withdrawal. Shortly after he had given this order, he was killed by a sniper while directing bazooka fire on the tanks.

The company withdrew to a line along the northern edge of the sugar refinery. The two German tanks came after them, but as they planked into the open field just before the refinery, our artillery really zeroed in, forcing them to show their ventilator turrets to the hard-pressed Century fighting men and roar out of the area.

In the interim, as soon as the tanks had been reported, a liaison plane took off and went after them to direct artillery fire. The Cub, with Lt. R. W. Sands, the pilot, and S. Sgt. Richard Hemmerly, the observer, chased the Tiger tanks back to their lair in the German barracks, carefully tracing their path by liaison radio. As the tanks approached the barracks, a direct hit was scored on one of them with an 8-inch shell and a near miss caused a brick wall to crumble on the other, damaging it heavily. Its mission completed, the little plane flew back across the river.

The intensity of our frontal attack upon Heilbronn continued to increase in fury. During the night of 6-7 April, Co. C of the 399th crossed the river and was attached to the 1st Battalion of the 397th. The 399ers spent the night in the sugar refinery, waiting for the dawn when they were to attack the Knorr works which had been recaptured by the Jerries.

At about 0830 hours, however, the enemy again struck at Co. B of the 397th and Co. C of the 399th, this time with more than 100 infantrymen supported by three tanks and a flak wagon. The Jerry troops came from the south, moving around the Knorr works toward the southern flank of Co. B's lines. One of the tanks rolled up to the crossroads directly between the sugar refinery and the Knorr works, and fired a few

rounds into the river before being driven back by our artillery.

The men from Co. C 399th were particularly worried by the counterattack because of the danger of being cut off from Co. B of the 397th, on their left. The Jerries were known to have infiltrated along the east side of the sugar refinery in which the men of Co. C were battling and around the rear of the building to the river. If the enemy force was of any strength, Co. C would be effectively isolated from the rest of our troops on the bridgehead. Accordingly, S. Sgt. James Harte was sent with an eight-man patrol to eliminate the Jerries, if possible. The patrol killed two enemy and took six PWs, reducing the threat in that sector.

In the meantime, Co. C 399th had suffered two more counterattacks, one at noon and another shortly afterwards, but beat off both with light machine guns, 60mm mortars, and supporting artillery fire. Co. C 399th and Co. B 397th, then moved out to the attack. Co. C captured the Knorr works for the second time with little difficulty, and Co. B, against negligible opposition, reestablished positions on the Flein road that it had been forced to abandon earlier.

During the night a Jerry patrol tried to break through the lines held by Co. B, but the enemy was





Infantrymen, supported by a tank, slug through a factory yard.



Wreckage of a Mark VI Tiger tank lies near the German barracks.

repulsed by the company's machine guns emplaced at the northeast corner of the Knorr works.

The bridgehead could now be called secure, but the purpose of the landing, relief of the northern bridgehead, had not been accomplished. Co. A could not move north from Kilianskirche without armor. And our armor still cooled its treads on the west bank of the Neckar while the Centurymen in Heilbronn stewed.

While Co. C 399th was fighting alongside the 1st Battalion 397th across the river, the rest of the 399th was in Bockingen and Frankenbach, directly opposite Heilbronn, still protecting the right and rear of the division. Patrols were dispatched to clear the remnants of enemy resistance on the west side of the river, and a patrol from Co. A reconnoitered the Neckar southward to a point opposite the town of Sontheim. No contact was made with the Krauts in this area.

The chain of assault boats continued to operate back and forth across the Neckar river. At all times of the day and night, at least two boats were in operation, and, in emergencies, as many as nine could be used. On the morning of 6 April, the boats were moved north 400 yards to a new site at the ruins of a foot-bridge where Co. A 397th had cleared the east bank.

However, the Germans infiltrated behind the Co. A lines and fired on the engineers in the boats and on the landing, harassing operations to such an extent that Lt. Jackson took tanks and TDs of Co. C 781st Tank Battalion and Co. B 824th TD Battalion down to the river bank to fire on the houses in which the enemy were entrenched. This did not stop the German artillery, however, which kept finding the engineers and forcing them to move their site. Throughout the action, supply lines to the right bank of the Neckar were maintained and wounded were evacuated. But the small boats were unable to transport the preponder-

ance of materiel necessary to crush the enemy quickly, and armor still could not be brought across.

Under cover of darkness, early in the morning of 7 April, the indefatigable Co. C of the 31st Engrs. started to build a treadway bridge 100 yards south of the demolished span. At daylight, smoke generators were employed to screen the engineers operations. The 163rd Smoke Generator Co. was reinforced by the 69th Smoke Generator Co., a light unit whose generators could be dug in and protected more fully from artillery fire. A wind-shift plan was devised by the engineers, and three small generators were ferried across the river to the east bank so that a wind coming from the east would carry the smoke toward the river rather than away from it. Altogether, ten small generators were knocked out at the southern crossing site, but none on the east bank were hit, the operators having skillfully concealed them in the rubble or placed them deep in the cellars of the buildings. The small generators had another advantage over the larger ones. Their smoke goes up in puffs and diffuses soon after escaping the spout, leaving no tell-tale stream pointing to the source of the smoke. The new system worked pretty well during the day, but the Jerries still were able to shell the site.

A sudden lull in the almost continuous enemy fire gave the engineers some respite, and by evening the treadway bridge was nearing completion and the tanks and TDs lined the bank ready to roll across. Then, at 1730 hours, the enemy artillery thundered ominously and five floats were knocked from under the bridge. Prisoners captured later said that the Jerry artillery men in the hills had carefully watched the bridge being put in and with a macabre humor had waited until the span was almost completed before destroying it. They had laughed as it went under.



*Left, air liaison transmits fire missions to the artillery batteries.
Above, looking down on the roofs of the glassworks.*

That night, an overcast blacked out the moon, and smoke was not needed. The bridgehead had expanded somewhat. Fewer German shells fell along the river banks, and the engineers were able to rebuild the bridge, completing it by daybreak. Before 0800 on 8 April, 24 tanks from Co. C 781st Tank Battalion and nine tank destroyers from Co. B 824th TD Battalion, rolled over to the east bank and joined forces with the valiant infantrymen.

Traffic was still pouring across the bridge when the wind fish-tailed, sending the protective smoke down the eastern bank and up the western bank, leaving the center of the river clear and the bridge perfectly visible from the hills to the east of town. At 1130 Jerry shells knocked out two floats, reducing the carrying capacity of the bridge to ten tons. Two hours later, the bridge was under water again. So the division went back to supplying the troops on the bridgehead with assault boats. But some armor had gone across and the bottleneck had developed a crack.

During the remaining days of the battle, the division worked on other methods of spanning the river while the assault boats continued to ply between the banks of the Neckar. On the night of 9 April, engineer officers considered building a trestle bridge, but when soundings found the water too deep, they decided to construct a motor-powered ponton assault ferry capable of transporting a tank.

Co. A of the 31st Engrs., which had struggled so courageously with the ferry at Neckargartach, came down to build the power-driven raft. Construction was started in the courtyard of an old garage before midnight on the night of 9-10 April. Assembling all five of the necessary floats here, they loaded them into trucks, transported them to the river bank, and by

0630 had the ferry in the water and ready to churn. For once, enemy artillery did not bother them, and by 1130 of 10 April, 13 tanks and TDs, in addition to the 81mm mortar platoon of Co. D 399th, had been carried across the river. From then on, crossings were made continuously. The average ferrying time was ten minutes.

While the first ponton bridge was being shelled by the enemy, our 1st Battalion 399th was moving across the river to take positions on the southern bridgehead facing to the south and east. Co. C was, of course, already across and had been helping the 1st Battalion 397th protect and expand the bridgehead. Co. B crossed the river on the ponton bridge and took positions on the right of the 397th. Co. A had begun to cross when the bridge was destroyed. The remainder of the company negotiated the crossing in assault boats, and Co. A dug in on the right flank of Co. B. At 1445, Co. C 399th was relieved of duty with the 397th and reverted to control of the 1st Battalion 399th.

An interesting sidelight to the drab drama of war occurred when an enemy prisoner was sent out across the front lines to convince some of his fellow soldiers to surrender. He returned with four civilians who demanded a guarantee of safety for any other enemy who wished to lay down their arms. The guarantee was made, and 22 enlisted men and one officer surrendered.

The 2nd Battalion 399th took over positions vacated by the 1st Battalion on the west side of the river. Co. E moved from Schwaigern to the former positions of Co. B along the west bank of the Neckar. Co. F re-



Centurymen dash through the rubble of Heilbronn in face of intense enemy fire. This was once a beautiful city.

mained in Grossgartach, sending one platoon to Schluchtern as added protection for our right flank and rear.

The 3rd Battalion 399th continued on VI Corps special duty, rounding up enemy stragglers while acting as security guard for Corps.

While efforts were being made to construct a bridge on the southern bridgehead, the artillery, in addition to helping protect the engineers, was trying to shield the northern bridgehead by screening Jerry observation from the hills overlooking the city. S. Sgt. James E. Hampton, with Co. L, who had seen a gun flash between Cloverleaf and Tower Hills from his vantage point on the top floor of the Fiat factory, relayed this information and four battalions of artillery focused their fire on this point. Enemy artillery fire from this spot ceased.

That was the night of 5 April. On the next night Sgt. Hampton observed more Jerries running into some houses near the same spot. He called for more fire, and two of the houses were destroyed. From the same Observation Point, Lt. Richard W. Pace, and Cpl. Gordon E. Stiles directed fire on the miscellaneous shacks and houses on the side of the hills around which the Jerries were constantly moving. Cos. B and C of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion smoked the ridge line of the hills to blot out enemy observation, and on 7 April it was reported by prisoners that the enemy had been smoked out of the tower and was looking for new OPs. But the smoke screen was not entirely effective, because the smoke did not always cover the top of the tower. So the artillery and the

heavy mortar battalion, firing high explosive shells, knocked the top off the tower with some long-range sharpshooting. The P-47s also bombed and strafed Tower Hill, but failed to hit the tower, even though they did plenty of damage to the castle.

After finding that they could not attack the gray stone house frontally in the advance southward from the northern bridgehead, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 397th, on 6 April, initiated a four-pronged drive aimed at meeting with the 1st Battalion 397th, coming up from the north. Plans called for Co. G, with the remaining men of Co. E, to push along the river, while the other three companies advanced through the factory district. Co. I, from their position in the Fiat factory was to lead the attack on the gray stone house, flanking it from the left side, where cover was to be found from two rows of warehouses running generally east and west. The first row was only 100 yards from an outbuilding at the southeast corner of the Fiat factory, and the second row only 50 yards from the first. From here it was only 25 yards to the gray stone house. Co. F, which had moved over to join Co. I in the Fiat factory earlier in the day, was to follow in support. As a preliminary, the artillery observer in the Fiat building directed several HE shells into the second row of warehouses, where he had seen Jerries, and registered fire on a large number of Krauts in a cement bunker and several foxholes out in front of the gray house. Some of the Jerries ran inside. The others were pinned down.

S. Sgt. Harold Kavarsky led the attack with his squad from the 2nd Platoon of Co. I. They made it to the first row of warehouses without drawing fire, but when they started to move out into the open again, the

Jerries fired on them from the cellar of the westernmost warehouse in the second row and from the foxholes in front of the gray house. When the lead scout in the squad was wounded, Kavarsky withdrew his men, and called for artillery. The forward observer directed fire for 30 minutes on the Jerries in the warehouse and in front of the gray house, killing some 15 of them as they tried to escape from the artillery into the gray house. Kavarsky then set up two light machine guns on the second floor of his warehouse and sprayed the windows of the warehouses in the second row and the enemy foxholes. These machine guns covered Kavarsky and his men as they ran 50 yards in the open under intense enemy fire to the middle building of the second row of warehouses. They reached the ramp which led up into the first floor of the warehouse, fired a machine gun burst into the windows of the building, and advanced into the structure where they paused amid burning piles of grain for the rear element of the squad to come up. As they waited, a round of our own artillery came in and struck Sgt. Kavarsky in the leg. When Kavarsky's squad was joined by the squad of S. Sgt. Robert Tessmer in the warehouse, four men led by Sgt. John P. Keelen went down into the cellar and captured five enemy prisoners, the only Jerries left in the building.

In the cellar, the men found a tunnel leading from their warehouse to the westernmost warehouse in the row, the one nearest the gray house. Waiting for the 3rd Platoon of Co. I to join them, the group proceeded through the tunnel to the next warehouse, and found it deserted. From the upstairs window they could see the cement bunker between them and the gray house, and they fired four bazooka rounds into the bunker, killing two Jerries. The Krauts in the foxholes retired into the gray house.

Early in the afternoon, Co. F came down into this

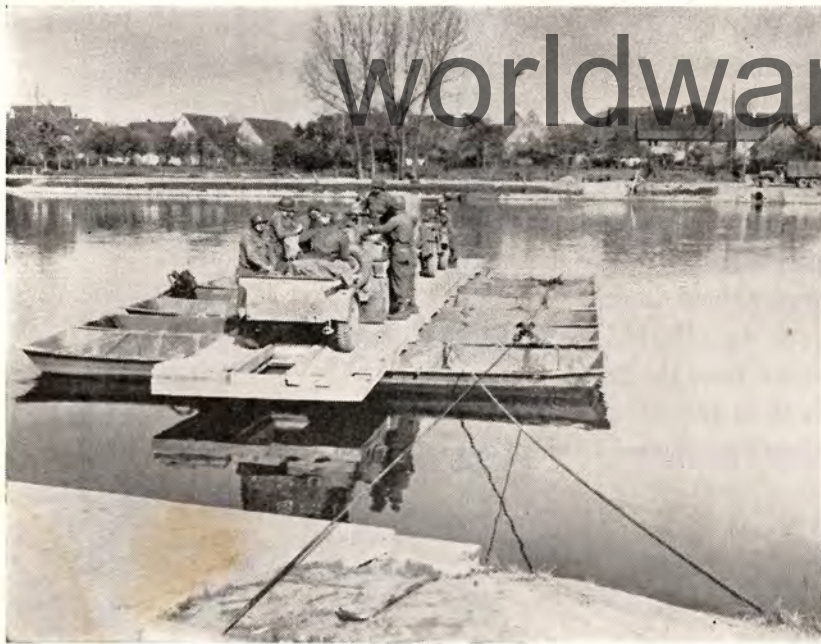
last warehouse to finish the job of taking the gray house. S. Sgt. Joseph A. Snyder leaned out of the window and fired two rifle grenades into the window of the gray house from a distance of a 100 yards, and the Jerries put out a white flag. With this strong-point subdued, the Centurymen worked through the buildings around the gray house, taking 20 prisoners from the house itself and 53 from the factory across the street.

Now that the second strong point in the enemy's zone-by-zone defense of Heilbronn had fallen, Cos. I and F found comparatively easy going. The spearhead advanced four companies abreast, Co. G on the right next to the river, Cos. F and I in the center, and Co. L on the left. Co. K covered the left and rear of the advance. That night, they cleared the block below the gray house.

On the following day, 7 April, they worked down through 550 yards of the next long block, meeting stiff organized resistance only at the end of day in Co. L's sector on the left of the line. About half way down the long block, Co. L was held up by about 20 Germans they heard yelling in a factory about 50 yards across the field from the factory they had just entered. S. Sgt. Hampton, forward observer, called for artillery on the Jerries' factory, and the enemy was driven out.

Co. L continued down the block into a group of shell-torn apartment houses, but as they entered the buildings they were greeted by a heavy burst of machine gun fire from across the railroad tracks a hundred yards or so to the east. As the 1st Platoon moved into the southeasternmost building, they were counter-attacked from the east by a small enemy force armed chiefly with panzerfausts. The first platoon held its

Below, a disabled American tank stands beside a wrecked house. Left, a makeshift ferry carries two jeeps to the east bank of the Neckar.



ground. When they heard a wounded German groaning as he lay out by the railroad tracks, a medic crawled out to help him, but before he could reach him, he was wounded himself and had to crawl back into the house.

By this time it was growing dark. The Jerries continued to fire into the corner apartment house. From the roofless top floor of the building, Pfc. Arthur Nimrod fired his BAR down on the railroad tracks, keeping the Jerries from crossing the tracks and attacking the apartment houses in force. Not until the attack eased up did he pay any attention to himself, and only then noticed that his knee was badly swollen from being hit by some of the debris thrown up by the shells that were hitting all around him on the top of the building.

On the morning of 8 April, Cos. G, F, and L, had to hold up their advance while Co. I cleared a small but powerful force of Germans from an orchard in their sector. From a small brick house in the southeast corner of the orchard the Germans could fire on the factory in which Co. F was preparing for the further attack on the southern part of the factory district. Along the east side of the orchard was a long factory, with all but half of its first floor blown away. In the center of the orchard, an enemy machine gun was emplaced in a dugout, where the trees were sparsely enough planted to afford good lanes of fire.

Early in the morning, our artillery shelled the orchard. S. Sgt. Richard C. Olson led his squad, from the 2nd Platoon Co. I across the road into the first room of the factory. From here they planned to work along the walls on the inside of the battered building to a point opposite the red brick house. They had to keep low behind the walls of the factory because the

machine guns in the house would fire on them every time they raised their heads. The first scout, Pfc. James Van Danne, climbed over a sheltering wall and made it into the next room. Pfc. Henry P. Perkins didn't make it. As he followed Van Danne over the wall a sniper from the red brick house killed him on the spot. At the same time the machine gun in the orchard began to blast the Item Co. men, forcing them to rush for cover.

Olsen got two bazookas into firing position, and two riflemen into a room closest to the red brick house. T. Sgt. Edward Eylander, in command of the 2nd Platoon, placed two light machine guns into position in windows in the factory across the road, and opened fire. Several bazooka rounds and an anti-tank grenade quieted the fire from the red brick house, and a smoke round from one of the bazookas forced the machine gunner from the center of the orchard to the back of the house. After a heavy preparation burst of machine gun fire from our positions across the road, Sgt. Thomas E. Cooper led four men across the orchard and up to the front door of the house. Pvt. Arthur Hare smashed the front door with the butt of his rifle and seven Jerries rushed into his arms and surrendered. Part of Olsen's squad later went down into the cellar and captured two more Krauts.

After Co. I had cleared the orchard, Co. L advanced into the block of factory buildings to the left of the fruit grove, using a captured enemy 37mm gun as direct support. The company moved through this block with little difficulty until reaching an office building at the southern end of the block next to the junction of two rail lines. From the railroad station at the junction, the Jerries zeroed in their machine guns on the office building, immobilizing the company. Sgt. Hampton, the artillery FO, called for fire on the station. The artillerymen registered 12 direct hits on the build-

Remains of another ponton bridge attests to the accuracy of enemy artillery. Right, riddled pontoons salvaged from the Neckar.





Tower in Bockingen which proved an excellent vantage point for artillery observation.

ing which silenced the enemy MGs and enabled Co. L to continue into the next block of factories.

From mid-afternoon of 8 April until noon of the 9th, relatively little opposition was met, and the companies were able to take all of the factory district north of the bend in the river. In the cellar of one of the factories, Co. G discovered 22 men and 6 women Russian slave laborers. The only serious resistance made by the enemy was a counterattack by some 20 Jerries who came across the railroad tracks on Co. L's left, armed with panzerfausts and burp guns. Co. L quickly repulsed the attack, sustaining only light casualties.

By noon of 9 April, our forces on the north bridgehead were ready to jump off across the railroad tracks, move into the heart of Heilbronn, and connect with the troops pushing up from the south. Only 1,000 yards away, the tall spire of Kilianskirche could be seen rising out of the smoke, and they could hear the firing of Co. A of the 397th. They were so close they had to telephone Co. A's tanks to mind their fire. Less than 1,000 yards—3 minutes at a jog-trot—for the pincers to be joined. But those 1,000 yards were the heart of Heilbronn.

To the south, Co. A had been stopped the afternoon of 6 April along the east-west road running along the north side of Kilianskirche. There the Germans began to put up some of the most concentrated defense offered during the entire battle of Heilbronn. Co. A had been advancing with the 2nd Platoon on the left next to the river, and 3rd Platoon on the right. T. Sgt. Bennie Ray was able to get two of his squads across the road that evening, but he withdrew them upon hearing that Lt. John H. Strom, leader of the 3rd Platoon, had also gotten men across the road, but had been unable to find tenable positions and was withdrawing

south. Strom's men had run across the road in the face of almost constant machine gun crossfire, one man every ten minutes dashing to the piles of rubble on the other side. As night fell, and they still were unable to advance through the German lines, Strom called them back and the platoon spent the night in the ruins of Kilianskirche.

Early in the evening, the 1st Platoon, led by Lt. Walter Vaughan, which had been following the other platoons, was sent to clear the block directly behind Kilianskirche, which had been bypassed by the 3rd Platoon.

S. Sgt. Edward Borboa's 3rd Squad went through the center of this block. As they rounded a corner, they came upon a group of seven men talking together near a rubble pile. Thinking they were men from Co. C, on the right of Co. A, Sgt. Borboa called to them. As they looked around, Borboa saw that they were Jerries. The squad's BAR man, Pfc. Paul Guzlides, and Pfc. Laurence Mills killed them all. The platoon went on through the western half of the block, but as darkness fell, they met heavier sniper and machine gun fire, and stopped their advance for the night.

The following morning, 7 April, Lt. Vaughan sent Sgt. Carl Cornelius with five men across the street into a large building, diagonally across the street to the northeast from Kilianskirche, to form an outpost and prepare for the attack that was planned for the afternoon. With the 19 men he had left, Lt. Vaughan waited in the building that forms the apex of the triangular block, directly across the street to the southeast from Kilianskirche.

About 1430 he saw a platoon of Jerries coming down the road from the north, and another platoon coming along the road from the east. Their movements threatened to cut off Cornelius and his five men in the outpost across the street. Both his platoon and Strom's platoon in Kilianskirche opened up on the two German columns. When 15 Jerries fell, they ceased fire to let the medics take care of the wounded. Both German columns withdrew. But they were soon back again, this time more cautiously, hugging building walls and stopping behind rubble piles and in doorways. They squeezed off Cornelius and his five men in their corner building, and firing panzerfausts, drove a wedge between Kilianskirche and Vaughan's platoon. At the same time, another Jerry counter-



A TD crosses treadway bridge to southern bridgehead on morning of 8 April. Some armor got across before span was destroyed.

Lending supporting to southern bridgehead from the western bank of the Neckar, a couple of TDs fire into enemy positions.

attack was launched on the southern end of the triangular block, and the right rear of Vaughan's platoon was forced to withdraw, losing all contact with Co. C on the right. Now completely cut off, the platoon was forced to withdraw altogether from the triangular block and form a line along the road that leads southwest from Kilianskirche. Here they held, and succeeded in driving out the Germans who had wedged in south of Kilianskirche.

The German counterattack came from the north as well as from the east. Kilianskirche was pounded all afternoon by a heavy German self-propelled gun which would roll up near the church, fire, withdraw, and then return from a different direction. Strom's platoon, in the church, fired constantly at the attackers and dropped grenades out the window to halt the infiltrating Jerries. The 2nd Platoon, next to the river, had already begun to attack northward when the counterattack hit. Five men led by S. Sgt. Max Dow had crossed the road and were setting up an outpost. But here the counterattack was less severe than it was on the right and the men in the outpost joined the men in the platoon in firing on the Jerries advancing from the open square north of the road, diagonally across the road from Kilianskirche toward the river. Most of the men from the 2nd Platoon fired from the cellars of their houses. Sgt. Ray, the platoon leader, came out of his cellar one time to kill a Jerry who was crawling along the roof of the building his platoon was using. Several Jerries lay wounded in the road when their leader raised a Red Cross flag. Ray's men let them pick up the wounded and get away. They did not return.

By the end of the afternoon, the Jerries had with-

drawn all along the line, and the three platoons of Co. A were able to establish contact with each other. But the Jerries had forestalled Co. A's attack, and throughout the night of 7-8 April artillery and nebelwerfer rocket fire harassed all three platoons. The Jerries infiltrated through tunnels that the men of Co. A knew nothing about. Snipers would go through the lines, or rather under them, and fire on our guards from the rear. That night a section of heavy machine guns was brought up to fire from the 2nd Platoon's house and from Kilianskirche, and the company's light mortars sent rounds into enemy strongpoints.

Lt. Vaughan with three men tried to reach Sgt. Cornelius and his A Co. squad in the building across the street from the church where they had been holding an outpost. They got as far as the building on the apex of the triangular block, where they ran into a Jerry patrol. After a short grenade fight, the Century-men were forced to withdraw. With every attempt at rescue repulsed, it seemed certain that Sgt. Cornelius and his men were lost.

It was at this time, when farther advance by Co. A was impossible and even the positions they were holding were precarious, that the short-lived ponton bridge was completed and the tanks and TDs roared across the river onto the bridgehead.

One tank, commanded by Cpl. Vincent J. Neratka, immediately raced to the aid of Co. A. As the Sherman clanked up the road leading toward Kilianskirche from the southwest, the road which now was Lt. Vaughan's front line, it was hit by a panzerfaust and its tracks were burned out. The crew bailed out and ran for cover as a German machine gun began to fire down the road from the north. This machine gun, sup-



The Market Platz. This building was west of Kilianskirche.



Street leading to bridgehead between Market Platz and Kilianskirche.

ported by panzerfausts and burp guns on the other side of the road, had stopped four previous attempts by Vaughan's platoon to advance into the triangular block.

A second tank and a TD were dispatched to help Co. A. Approaching up a different road, the two vehicles reached Kilianskirche safely. There the tank took a position at the intersection, while the TD opened shop at the northwest corner of the church where it could lay fire into the open square across the street. After several exchanges with the enemy, the Krauts ceased firing from behind the square, but it took three hours of steady shelling by the armor before the machine guns, firing into the intersection from the north and east, were silenced.

Now the way was clear for Strom's and Ray's platoons, still stymied along the river road. In short dashes, one man at a time, Strom's platoon crossed the road and took up positions in the open square amid the rubble of the wrecked buildings. By dark, a line had been established on the far side.

Ray's platoon had it easier. The roads in their sector were freer of enemy, and they were able to advance faster with the support of two tanks and a TD through the sniper-infested rubble along the river. The tanks proved extremely valuable in blasting snipers out of buildings and helping to clear intersections. That morning, 8 April, the 397th Anti-Tank Co. had crossed the river while the bridge was still in, and had moved up to the lines behind Co. A, securing that company's rear against infiltrating snipers. During the night, they took positions vacated by Ray's and Strom's platoons along the river road.

Lt. Vaughan's platoon, to the right and rear, meanwhile, was still unable to secure Co. A's right flank. Armor was brought up to stabilize the situation. On the afternoon of 8 April, while the original tank was clearing the intersection near Kilianskirche, two additional Shermans were thrown into the struggle for the triangular block of houses.

The tanks, attached to the 1st Platoon of Co. C, on Lt. Vaughan's right, and supported by infantrymen under the command of T. Sgt. Pittman Hall, started to work eastward through the street that lay directly south of the triangular block. A panzerfaust wounded Sgt. Hall and two other men, but Hall refused to be evacuated until he had secured medical aid for his two men. Having brought the medics back, Sgt. Hall returned to his platoon, showed the two tanks where he thought the panzerfaust had been, and oriented his second in command as to the situation. Only then did he permit the medics to remove a large piece of shrapnel from his arm.

Early the following morning, Sgt. Hall was back in the line with his platoon. Together with the tanks, the platoon pushed eastward along the road to the south of the triangular block, concentrating fire to the north and down the road to the east, from where they were receiving heavy panzerfaust and machine gun fire.

The tank fire, together with that of Hall's and Vaughan's platoons, drove the Krauts clear out of the triangular block. In the afternoon a squad from Vaughan's platoon entered the house where Sgt. Cornelius' patrol had been surrounded. Six gas masks and an American bazooka was all that was found.

The Germans kept up their heavy artillery fire dur-



Facing toward the Neckar. Ruins of Kilianskirche are at left.



All that remained of battered Kilianskirche after its capture.

ing the night, but made no attempt to attack directly. South of Kilianskirche, however, they did make an effort to break through. Ten Jerries started toward the church, but they were seen by Tec 4 George F. Brazier of Anti-Tank Co. Brazier killed one enemy and wounded two others with his carbine, causing them to withdraw.

The most serious resistance offered by the enemy to the capture of Heilbronn was over. During the day of 9 April, we cleared the entire inner area of the city. Here the southern bridgehead halted, waiting for the northern arm of the pincer to join them.

On the afternoon of 10 April, the forces had not yet met. Two tanks started north to contact the men of the northern bridgehead. As they followed the road north, they met heavy fire from the factories along the river and from a house along the road. Both tanks used up all their ammunition on these points of resistance and were forced to return without having found any trace of our troops to the north.

Meanwhile, at noon of 9 April, Cos. I and K of the 397th, on the northern bridgehead, made ready to cross the railroad tracks and launch a final drive to meet the forces of the southern bridgehead, closing the pincers. The 3rd Platoon of Co. I and the 3rd Platoon of Co. K jumped off following an artillery preparation.

Almost immediately, enemy machine guns opened a deadly crossfire on them from a red house just to the left of a small shack which was Co. I's initial objective, and a grey stucco house we had dubbed the "Gestapo Headquarters," the first objective of Co. K. Both platoons had to dash and crawl for the tracks.

One squad from Co. I, led by S. Sgt. Edwin Huermann, managed to reach the small shack where they found cover from the fire of the enemy machine guns in the red house, only a few yards away. The squad remained in the shack for the remainder of the day, while the rest of the platoon retired to the factory beyond the tracks.

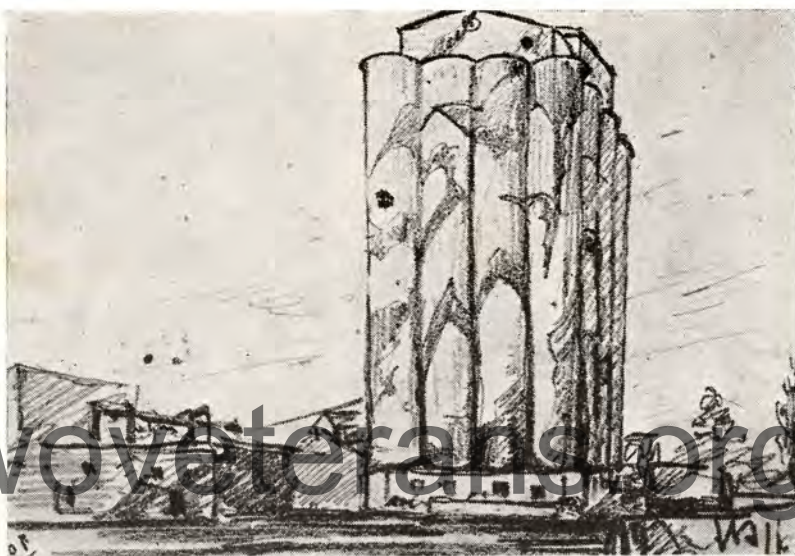
The platoon from Co. K, under Lt. Harris, reached the first line of railroad tracks and dived for the shelter of a ditch. Here they were comparatively safe from enemy fire, but could not even raise their heads to fire over the embankment. Harris and three of his men were wounded. A medic, Tec 3 Frank Harton, crawled out to aid them and was fired on by the enemy. Seeing that the platoon's position was hopeless, Capt. Ralph W. Scott, Co. K commander, called on the 374th F A Battalion for a smoke screen and ordered the platoon's withdrawal to the factory. It was now agonizingly clear that a frontal attack could not wrest the few remaining yards of the center of Heilbronn from the Germans.

On 10 April, the 3rd Battalion attempted to flank the enemy on the west, the side nearest the river. Co. I was to move down past the shack by the railroad bridge to the area of the "Hardware Factories" along the bend of the river, take the factories, and work in behind the red house and the Gestapo Headquarters. Co. K was to follow Co. I and exert pressure on the enemy flank from the northern portion of the factories and the railroad shack.

Late in the afternoon, following a blistering artillery preparation, the attack was begun. Sgt. Huermann, leader of the squad which had gained the shack



Artist's sketch of the Red Brick House across the railroad tracks which barred the advance of the 3rd Platoon of Co. I.



Camouflaged granaries of the Knorr works. The enemy waged a determined fight for this key defense point in factory district.

near the bridge the previous day, had found that it was possible to walk from the shack to the edge of the canal which skirted the river, and from there south to the factories under cover of a steep bank with a minimum of enemy observation.

As the sky, already thick with the smoke and fog of battle, began to darken, Huermann and Lt. Edinson led the 3rd Platoon of Co. I down along the canal to the rear of the big factory buildings. Cautiously, they entered the first building. Finding it empty, they moved in and waited for the 2nd Platoon to join them. From this point the Item Co. men were one block south of the Gestapo Headquarters. Just a few hundred yards down the road to the south, Strom's and Ray's platoons were waiting with the tanks.

At about 2200 hours, Sgt. Huermann and two men set out southward along the river in an effort to contact the tanks and infantry of the southern bridgehead. As he reached the parkway, 200 yards to the south, Sgt. Huermann was challenged.

"Are you the guys that's supposed to guide the tanks?"

"Who's that? Tankers?"

The great pincers around the center of Heilbronn had been pressed shut. The end of the bloody struggle for the city was in sight. The northern bridgehead forces had driven, without the help of armor, 3,000 yards south through four fanatically defended zones of enemy defense, clearing the enemy, building by building from cellars, piles of rubble and ditches along the way, pitting courage against the desperation of a well organized, amply supplied enemy defense.

Against the pounding hammer of the north, had stood the unyielding anvil of the southern bridgehead, steadily pushing block by block, rubble heap by rub-

ble heap, stone by stone, into the very core of the enemy apple as the Centurymen outfought the Krauts on their own ground.

Except for a few bursts of fire, the night of 10-11 April passed quietly. Early in the morning of 11 April, the attack on the red house and the Gestapo Headquarters was begun. The two tanks moved up the road to the red house, and each fired four rounds into the building. Then the infantrymen rushed the structure only to find it deserted. It was the same story with the Gestapo Headquarters. The Krauts had withdrawn from the center of Heilbronn. Later, they again attempted a defense on the eastern edge of the city. But the remainder of the battle, especially in comparison to these first six days, seemed relatively easy going.

Farther south, Cos. B and C of the 397th and Cos. A, B, and C of the 399th had pummeled their way steadily southward on 8, 9, and 10 April. The fighting in this sector was not as decisive as that done by Co. A 397th, to the north, but it contributed materially to the success of the operation by occupying enemy troops who might have counterattacked the center of the city. They also served the valuable purpose of protecting and enlarging the bridgehead.

Action wasn't long in coming to the 1st Battalion 399th after Cos. A and B had crossed the river and taken positions alongside Co. C of that regiment, which had held the lines on the east side of the Neckar since the first stages of the southern bridgehead. A limited attack to enlarge the bridgehead toward the south and east was immediately launched by the battalion. The attack had barely gotten under way when Co. B intercepted a group of 15 Jerries moving north from Sontheim and led by a Mark IV tank. The Krauts, obviously unaware that we had troops in that area, walked



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right into our hands. In the ensuing melee, 12 Krauts were killed, three captured, and the tank was knocked out by well directed bazooka fire from two Baker Co. men.

An enemy counterattack against the 1st Battalion's positions at 1731 hours, was beaten off with small arms and 50 cal. MG fire.

By noon of 9 April, Co. B had established a new forward strongpoint in the buildings of the first block north of the Knorr works, the same position that Co. B of the 397th had held before its advance eastward. Eighteen enemy were captured in this operation.

Co. A now fanned out to build a long attack line from the right flank of Co. B, through the Knorr works, and west to the river. A total of 54 prisoners were taken by the 1st Battalion during this advance east of the river, at a loss of one man killed and five wounded.

Also on 9 April, the 1st Battalion 397th continued its advance eastward. At 1000, Co. C jumped off from positions on the Flein road, three blocks east of the river, and drove two blocks farther east with the help of tanks. South of Co. C, Co. B pushed one block east, expanding the bridgehead in their sector.

Cos. A and B of the 399th, having made contact with Co. B of the 397th to their left, pressed out eastward and southeastward from the Knorr works about 1730 hours the afternoon of 9 April, supported by tanks borrowed from the 397th. The Krauts met this threat with 105mm and 150mm artillery, SP, bazooka and small arms fire. Co. B as it advanced across the fork made by the Flein and Sontheim roads was attacked by two Mark IV tanks, which had come up the Flein road. They came so close that the observers with Co. B could not direct artillery fire on them. But when Pfc. Arthur Grimm fired his bazooka on the leading tank, it turned

and fled. Grimm fired three more rounds into the tank and someone hit it with a white phosphorus grenade. Both tanks disappeared and did not return that night. By 1800 hours both A and B Cos. had advanced through about 200 yards of houses and captured 50 prisoners in bitter house-to-house fighting. By 2200, both B and A had reached their objectives on a crescent line a block and a half beyond the Knorr works. One platoon of Co. C established a strong position between the two leading companies. The battalion sustained no casualties during the advance and captured 46 enemy.

P-47s of the 12th TAC again lent valuable aid by attacking Heilbronn along the front of the two battalions.

On 10 April, Co. C of the 399th was ordered to move into the line and take several houses to the right of Co. B, about five blocks out to the next highway beyond the Flein road. The company was unable to advance. It encountered numerous teams of Volksgrenadiers armed with panzerfausts, and snipers hidden in the houses. The enemy panzerfausts were particularly effective against our men hiding behind cellar entrances, windows and stone walls. Many leaflets were found in this area by the 1st Battalion men instructing Volksturm troops in such specific uses for this copy of the American bazooka.

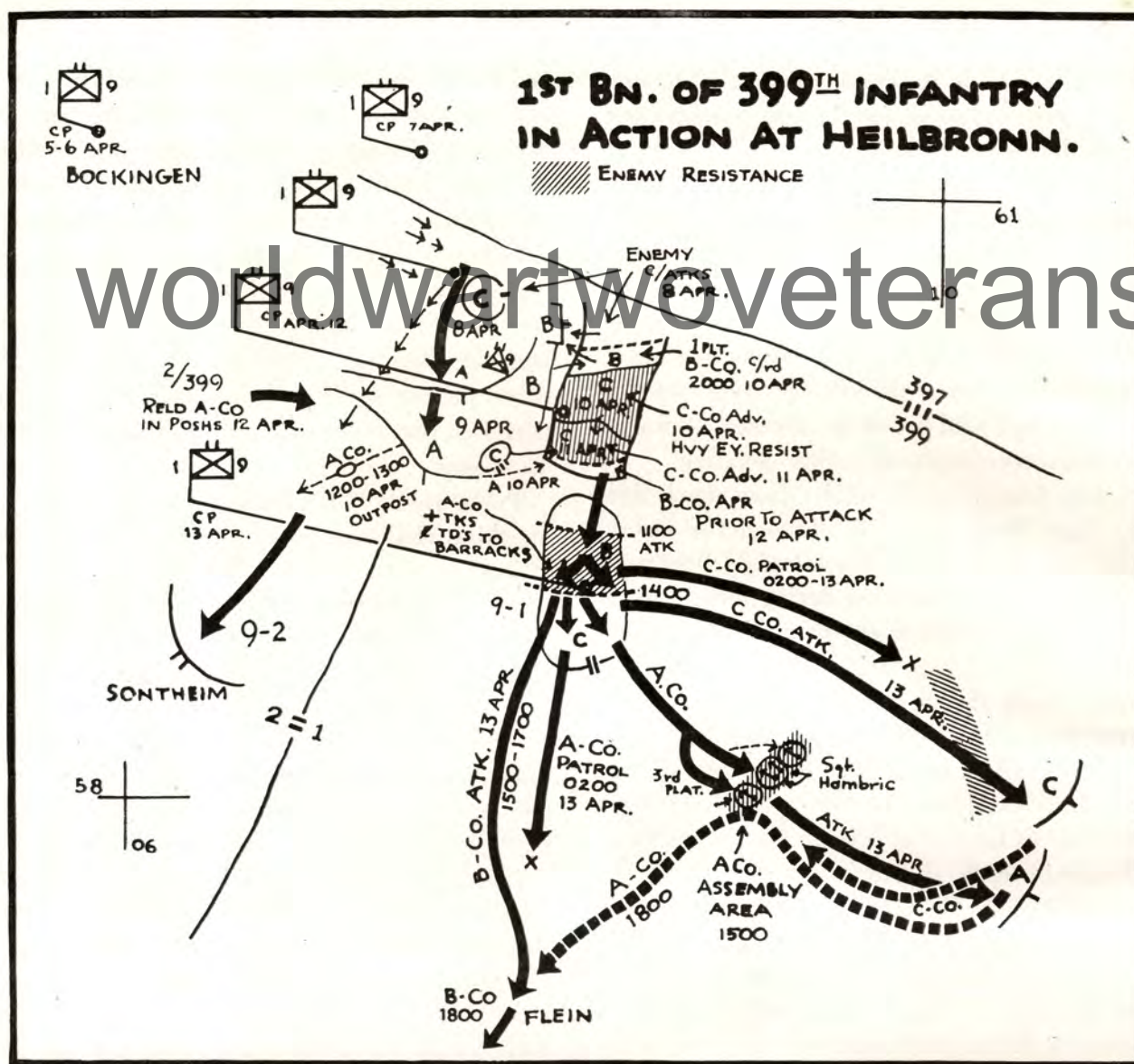
At 1310 hours, a raiding party from Co. A moved southeast across the highway and trolley tracks leading to Sontheim with the mission of clearing the approaches to the formidable enemy military barracks, capture of which would open the way to the wooded high ground beyond. The Krauts had been wreaking havoc on our bridgehead with their observed artillery and mortar fire from this wooded vantage point and it was of paramount importance that the enemy be

Closeup of ruins of Kilianskirche tells story of fierce struggle.



With the enemy forced back, a bridge was finally put in to stay.





cleared from these positions before our bridgehead could be called secure.

The raid was a difficult one. The Jerries literally clung to the cornerstones of every building and had to be pried out of their miniature fortresses in bitter house-to-house fighting. Nebelwerfers, 88mm, 105mm and 150mm observed fire rained down upon our men from the enemy's positions on high ground to the south-east. Despite this fierce resistance, however, by 1500 hours the last row of buildings had been cleared and Co. A had moved to positions about one kilometer east of the barracks. Thirteen prisoners were captured during this operation.

To the north on 10 April, Co. C 397th, pushed off at 0830 in its attack to further widen the bridgehead to the east. Against much stiffer resistance, the company managed to wrest three more blocks from the Jerries and establish themselves on the next highway parallel to the Flein road. Co. B found no resistance in its zone, however, and pushed four blocks on to the

highway where it joined Co. C. All along Co. B's route, the civilians came out of their houses to display large, white pieces of cloth in token of complete surrender.

On the night of 10 April, the bridgehead line ran from north of Kilianskirche, where Co. A 397th was still fighting, east to the highway beyond the Flein road, thence to the railroad tracks which Co. B of the 399th had cleared, and south around the Knorr works in the area held by Co. A 399th, to the river.

While the battle for Heilbronn proper was raging, an extremely important maneuver was being carried out by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 398th Inf. in the vicinity of Offenau, some ten kilometers to the north. On the morning of 4 April, while the 3rd Battalion 398th and elements of the 2nd Battalion 397th were fighting off savage enemy counterattacks in the northern part of the bridgehead, the 2nd Battalion 398th moved via motor into Hohenstadt, relieving elements of the 253rd Inf., 63rd Div. The battalion

was to establish a bridgehead across the Neckar as soon as practicable so as to effect a flanking drive to the high ground east of Heilbronn.

Originally, it had been planned for the 2nd Battalion 398th to cross the river over a bridge which was to be constructed by the 3rd Battalion 398th and attached engineers of the 325th Engr. Battalion. When enemy artillery fire prevented the building of the span, Capt. Elba W. Bowen, 2nd Battalion S-3, made a reconnaissance of the river to the north and found another crossing site opposite Offenau. That night, a patrol from the 2nd Platoon of Co. F, commanded by S. Sgt. Lawrence W. Curbo, was sent across the Neckar into Offenau to determine if the town was occupied by the enemy.

Luckily, the patrol found a small boat along the western bank, and with makeshift paddles struggled to the opposite shore, laying wire as they went. Upon reaching the muddy right bank, Sgt. Curbo directed concealment of the boat in the brush, and led his small party into the dark streets of Offenau.

The town was deserted of enemy troops, and German civilians, awakened and questioned by the patrol, could give no information of the enemy. After an exhaustive search of the town, Sgt. Curbo and his patrol returned to their hidden boat and recrossed the river to their platoon CP.

Informed of Sgt. Curbo's findings, Lt. Col. Harvey Weisel, 2nd Battalion CO, ordered one platoon from Co. F to cross the river the following morning and secure the far bank so that the engineers could construct a footbridge. Lt. Nick Stalikas, in command of Co. F's 2nd Platoon, was assigned the mission. The crossing was made in three assault boats. While in midstream, the platoon was harassed by enemy MG fire. But the range was long, and no one was hit.

Having gained the east bank, one squad remained near the edge of the town to protect the platoon's flanks while the other two squads moved from house to house up the main streets on the east side of Offenau. Finding no trace of the enemy, Lt. Stalikas, using the wire that Sgt. Curbo's patrol had laid the night before, called Lt. Adams, Co. F commander, and informed him that all seemed clear. Lt. Adams immediately sent another F Co. platoon across. The two platoons searched the remainder of Offenau but found only two German soldiers who had been left behind by their unit.

A defense of the battalion's crossing was established, and the 2nd Platoon of Co. B 325th Engrs.,



After six days of struggle for Heilbronn, the enemy began to surrender in large numbers.

under Lt. Samuel Pinnell, began construction of a footbridge. By 1500 of 5 April, the bridge was completed and the remainder of Co. F, followed by Co. E, and a platoon of heavy machine guns from Co. H, crossed the river. Co. F outposted Offenau, and Co. E sent one platoon northeast to Obergriesheim to contact the 63rd Div., while the remainder of the company moved to Duttonberg, about three kilometers northeast of Offenau. There they met Co. G, under Capt. Matthew B. Einsmann, and several attached tanks which had crossed the Neckar at Neckarelz, farther north, where the 63rd Div. had a bridge. After crossing the river, Co. G and the tanks had turned south and passed through a woods northeast of Offenau, where several hastily abandoned enemy pillboxes and a quantity of empty American Red Cross boxes were found. The company arrived in Offenau about 2300 of 5 April, and prepared to spend the night. So far, no enemy opposition had been encountered by any of the 2nd Battalion elements.

The Easy Co. platoon in Obergriesheim set up a defense of the town and awaited further orders, while the rest of the company outposted the town of Duttonberg. Duttonberg is situated on a plain high above the swift-flowing Jagst River, a tributary of the Neckar, and second of three water barriers in the path of the battalion. From their positions, Co. E was able to overlook the proposed crossing site of the battalion, and protect it from possible enemy assault.

The Neckar had been crossed with little difficulty by the 2nd Battalion, but the Jagst and Kocher rivers, tributaries of the Neckar, presented the main problem. Both these rivers flowed into the Neckar at a



point just south of where the battalion crossing had been made, and separated our troops from Heilbronn which they were trying to encircle and attack from the rear. Moreover, the two rivers, at this point roughly parallel and only about three kilometers apart, formed a peninsula which could be easily defended by the fanatical SS troops who had been assigned this sector.

By 0500 of 6 April, following a careful reconnaissance of the Jagst, the companies carried their assault boats, unloaded at Duttenberg, to the river bank. The first wave rolled across the Jagst abreast at 0530. Quickly clambering from the boats, the men ran 200 yards across flat, open ground toward a railroad track at the foot of a steep, heavily entrenched, wooded hill. While most of the men were still in the open, enemy machine guns and small arms began blasting them from high ground to their front and from behind the railroad bed to their right. The 2nd Battalionites continued forward in the face of this heavy fire to the protection of the railroad embankment. This advance was made possible by the quick work of Capt. Einsmann, on the north side of the river, who built up a continuous firing line composed of elements of E and G Cos. and the heavy machine guns of Co. H, which had not yet been sent across. Although one heavy MG was knocked out by enemy automatic fire, wounding two gunners, the forward elements of the 2nd Battalion, immobilized in the dangerous, open ground, were able to reach the embankment under the excellent covering fire of the units on the north bank of the Jagst.

Farther down the river, Co. F was also receiving heavy fire from high ground to their front and right

flank. Some excellent artillery sharpshooting directed by Sgt. Austin, forward observer, and bullseye firing by mortarmen of Co. H, aided by unusually good observation from positions on high ground north of the river, did much to lessen this enemy resistance.

In the meanwhile, Capt. Einsmann, searching for a safer crossing site for the remaining battalion elements, discovered a dam a short distance upstream. Raising the head-gates of the dam, he lowered the water level sufficiently in a few minutes for the troops to infiltrate across to the southern bank. The heavy machine guns of Co. H were left in position until the last moment to give covering fire to the troops negotiating the open field in front of the embankment. When the machine guns were taken across, the mortars of Co. H kept the enemy down with intense, accurate fire. In this way, the 2nd Battalion crossed the Jagst with a minimum of casualties and made their way to the comparative safety of the railroad embankment, although snipers were still active.

By 1030 hours of 6 April, all elements of the battalion were in position to resume the attack. Co. F, however, found it impossible to advance because of intense enemy fire on the open field which led to Jagstfeld. The Jerries covered the field with machine gun fire from positions in a group of railroad cars on a siding, a house in Jagstfeld, only a few hundred yards away, and a hill to the right behind the town.

Co. E reorganized along the railroad track, and moved out in a northeasterly direction along the railroad. Co. G, supported by a section of machine guns from Co. H, jumped off at 1100 and moved across the tracks to high ground. The enemy withdrew slowly, firing as they retreated to apparently better positions. About 1,000 yards past the tracks, the George Co. men hit the main enemy line, estimated at approximately 150 Krauts supported by at least eight machine guns. A bloody fight, lasting several hours, ensued. The G Co. men, trying to batter their way forward with small arms against an entrenched enemy, lost four killed, three captured, and 27 wounded. Co. H suffered three casualties. The valiant Centurymen took a severe toll of the enemy also, killing 40 Krauts and capturing ten. But the Jerries held, and continued firing with such intensity that we were forced to take cover in the shallow furrows scratched by a clumsy handplow in the thin topsoil of Germany.

Meanwhile, the tanks that had been sent across the Jagst farther east, at Wiessbach, arrived and were thrown into the fight, and after some reorganization



A guitar and accordion provide relaxation between fire missions.

A battalion of PWs is marched through a captured German town.

the attack was continued. But the enemy was too firmly fixed. One tank was knocked out by a Jerry SP gun, and the remaining tanks were forced to withdraw because of the intense enemy artillery and mortar fire.

Capt. Einsmann, realizing the futility of further offense, ordered his company to withdraw to more tenable positions. Enemy fire on the 3rd Platoon of Co. G, on the right flank, was so severe, however, that despite repeated orders to fall back, they seemed glued to the ground. Seeing the platoons plight, Capt. Einsmann and Sgt. Charley Compton stripped off their field equipment and dashed out to the immobilized platoon to give them courage and inspire them to make a run for their lives. Compton, who became almost a legend in the division for his exploits, made three trips over the open, ploughed ground, each time carrying wounded back.

At 1900 hours, battalion headquarters radioed to Co. G to proceed to Heuchlingen, some two kilometers to the northeast. An hour later, hungry and almost thoroughly exhausted, what was left of the gallant company marched into the town. Their reward was K-rations for supper.

Co. E already was in Heuchlingen when Co. G arrived. After leaving the crossing site earlier in the afternoon, Co. E had advanced about 200 yards northeast along the railroad toward Heuchlingen under cover of the railroad embankment. At this point, the 1st Platoon, led by Lt. Sam Passero, was fired on by automatic weapons. A patrol, sent forward to reconnoiter, reported a number of the weapons dug in on a hill to the right. Observed mortar fire by Co. H scored several direct hits. The mortarmen then laid

down a smoke screen to protect the Co. E men from enemy observation while moving into Heuchlingen.

Before advancing into the town, Capt. Garahan, the Co. E commander, sent Lt. Pittman and his platoon into the woods on the company's right to clear out any enemy troops threatening their flank. The remainder of Co. E then entered Heuchlingen where they found a group of American tanks and eight men from the 2nd Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon. The Shermans, together with the Anti-Tankers had crossed the Jagst at Wiessbach and had cleared the town. Co. E remained in Heuchlingen for the night.

Lt. Pittman's platoon, meanwhile, after clearing the woods, was cut off by the enemy who had set up a strong defense line on high ground between the platoon and the Co. E men in Heuchlingen. With the help of a smoke screen laid by the mortars of Co. H, however, he was able to fight his way across the river through intense enemy fire, and arrive in Duttendorf safely. The platoon joined the rest of the company in Heuchlingen the next morning.

Co. F, after having failed to advance across the open ground before Jagstfeld, made a second attempt to reach their objective later in the afternoon. This time the company was more successful, and after knocking out an enemy machine gun which had been threatening the entire field, took three houses on the outskirts of Jagstfeld, where they paused for the night.

About 0300 the following morning, an 18-man Jerry patrol raided the company's positions. One heavy machine gun of Co. H was knocked out by a direct shot down the muzzle, but after a lively fire-



An ambushed motorized column on a German highway returns fire.



Typical pillbox barring the western approaches to Heilbronn.

fight, the enemy was forced to withdraw. The Germans could be seen in the dark carrying their dead and wounded with them as they withdrew through the rubble. At daybreak one dead Kraut was found lying in the street.

At 0600 of 7 April, Battalion radioed Co. F to proceed into Jagstfeld and clean out the town. The company was then to move to the blown bridge site between Jagstfeld and Bad Wimpfen on the Neckar, and secure this point so that the engineers could throw a Bailey bridge across the river. Lt. Adams sent his 3rd Platoon, under command of Lt. William Kantor, into the town.

Kantor made good progress and Lt. Adams ordered Lt. Joseph Ward, leader of the 1st Platoon, to proceed into Jagstfeld by a different street and meet Lt. Kantor and his men. Lt. Ward's platoon had not gone far before they met strong opposition from enemy located in houses and a small, concrete pillbox which barred the platoon's path across an open field. Three rounds from a bazooka, however, drove 12 SS troopers from the pillbox into the open with their *hande hohe*. The two platoons then made contact and continued toward the blown bridge site. Just as they started forward they received fire from houses to their left, but with the aid of the section of Co. H machine guns which accompanied them, soon silenced the enemy fire.

The platoons moved forward once more. They were having considerable difficulty with a house in which some Jerries were holed up, when they were joined by several tanks which had crossed the Jagst at Weissbach. One of the Shermans blasted the house with one well-aimed shot, and the advance continued.

On this same morning, Co. E had been sent forward to clear the woods southwest of Heuchlingen so that Co. G could move south from that town and assist Co. F in the capture of Jagstfeld. Easy Co. encountered only sniper resistance, a commentary to the excellent work done by G Co. the day before.

Co. G entered Jagstfeld at 1100 hours. Its mission was to clear the houses on the left of the railroad yard, drive hard toward Waldau, and secure the bridge there across the Kocher River, which air reconnaissance had reported intact. Enemy artillery and intense small arms and automatic fire from houses to their front and woods to the left of town, gave the George Co. men considerable trouble. The Krauts defended the Jagstfeld railroad station fiercely, but after a bitter fight in which more than 20 Germans, including the officer in command of the Jagstfeld garrison, were killed, the enemy was forced to flee.

To the south, Co. F continued moving slowly through the factory district at the east end of Jagstfeld. The company sustained heavy casualties in the grim battle from building to building. When the F Co. men finally reached a large pickle factory which afforded perfect fields of fire and excellent observation of the large railroad yards from which the main organized resistance was coming, a halt was called for the night.

Encroaching darkness also forced Co. G to consolidate. That evening, many enemy were killed as they attempted to run from the heavy George Co. fire on the buildings on the left of Jagstfeld. In Lt. Lustica's words, "the boys had a field-day picking off those Germans as they ran across that open field." Our artillery afforded valuable support, helping to

A squad worms forward behind the protection of an embankment. The enemy is entrenched on the other side.

drive the enemy off the open ground and back into the town of Hagenbach, to the northeast.

At 1800, Co. E, which had been routing out snipers in isolated pockets between Heuchlingen and Jagstfeld, was ordered into Jagstfeld to protect the left flank of the battalion, engaged in fighting through the city. Less the 3rd Platoon, which was left to hold Heuchlingen, Easy Co. moved into Jagstfeld at 2000 hours, relieving one platoon of Co. G of left flank duties.

On the morning of 8 April, the 2nd Platoon of Co. F, with two tanks in support, led the company's push deeper into the factory district of Jagstfeld. Upon reaching the railroad yards after clearing snipers from two large factories, the F Co. men were fired upon by mortars, machine guns and small arms. After a lively fire-fight in which we used thousands of rounds of machine gun, 60mm mortar, and .30 cal. ammunition, the enemy was forced to fall back. Co. H machine guns, set up to fire down the railroad tracks and cut off the Krauts' retreat, mowed the enemy down like wheat. The F Co. men lined up at the windows of the buildings they were in and fired in rotation at the Jerries retreating across the open ground, one man firing until he ran out of ammunition and then stepping aside to let another add to the heap of Krauts lying across the tracks.

S. Sgt. Ray Hatley, mortar observer for Co. H, caused such havoc with mortar fire among the Germans caught in this stretch of open ground that the incident was known to the 2nd Battalion men as "Hatley's Slaughter." The mortars also fired extensively on buildings in the yards which the enemy was using as strongpoints.

One building, infested with snipers, was set on fire with a few Co. F bazooka rounds. The sparks ignited the house next to it and chased the Jerries into the open. For days afterward, the buildings in the railroad yard continued blazing. Despite severe losses, however, the enemy clung tenaciously to his battered positions, and little ground was gained during the day. There is no question but that here was one of the main defense lines of the Third Reich.

That night, a large Co. F outpost had a harrowing experience. The outpost, set up in a building in the center of the railroad yard, was attacked by the enemy who used armor piercing bullets in an effort to drive the Centurymen from their position. The F Co. men



lost several killed and many wounded as the Kraut fire pierced the walls of their house and ricocheted around the room. A number of our men were hit while asleep in their bedrolls. But the attempt to knock out the outpost failed as the riflemen drove off the Jerries with heavy counterfire.

Meanwhile, Co. E, less the platoon which had been left in Heuchlingen, had been attempting to clear out a large patch of woods on the left flank of Co. G, which had been holding up their advance. Although the area had been raked by an artillery and TD preparation, the Easy Co. men had not moved 300 yards into the woods before they were fired upon by a flak wagon, rockets, mortars and small arms. Realizing the futility of attempting to clear the woods with only two platoons in the face of such a terrific German defense, Capt. Garahan withdrew his platoons to the north side of Jagstfeld and called for artillery fire. Shortly after withdrawing, Capt. Garahan slipped on a stairway, injuring his back, and Lt. Keddie took command of the company.

At 1500 of 8 April, a second attempt was made to clear the woods. When the platoons had advanced some 600 yards, a patrol was sent to the right to contact Co. G, and another patrol was sent to the left to reconnoiter the woods on the Easy Co. flank. The patrol dispatched to the right, met the left platoon of G Co. which had been held up in an effort to enter the woods in their sector. The patrol which had reconnoitered to the right, however, was fired upon by two machine guns and some small arms, and reported back to the company. Mortar fire now began to fall on the Easy Co. men again, and Lt. Keddie withdrew his platoons once more to the houses on the north side of Jagstfeld where he set up a defense for the night.



Pushing through the remains of a roadblock along the road to victory. Roadblocks delayed but did not stop our advance.



A tank destroyer of the 324th TD Battalion rolls through a captured town. The TDs were an invaluable adjunct in city fighting.

The dogged resistance that had been holding up Cos. F and E, also faced G Co., and the fighting for Jagstfeld became, like Heilbronn to the south, strictly a house-to-house battle. While the 2nd Battalion troops were not gaining much ground, however, they were taking a heavy toll of the enemy. Throughout 8 and 9 April, the battalion, supported by the machine guns and mortars of Co. H, bled the enemy white as he counterattacked and withdrew, or stood to fight it out. In effect, Jagstfeld was a war of annihilation with no quarter asked and none given.

Then, on the night of 9 April, a terrific explosion in the vicinity of Waldau told the weary Centurymen that the enemy had destroyed the one remaining bridge over the Kocher River. Once again a crossing would have to be made in the face of an entrenched enemy. Dreams of walking over the Kocher were disintegrated with the blasted bridge. But it was almost too much to hope that the enemy would repeat the error he made at Remingen on the Rhine. There is no concrete highway to victory.

The next day, 10 April, enemy mortar fire continued to fall in the railroad yard, but it no longer seemed to come from the north side of the Kocher. Air reconnaissance confirmed the fact that the bridge at Waldau had been destroyed and that the enemy had withdrawn to the town of Kochendorf, on the south side of the river. The Jerries seemed to have abandoned Jagstfeld.

Since the bridge was now destroyed at Waldau, and there was a strong possibility that F Co. would not be able to establish a crossing site there, especially if the enemy held Kochendorf in strength, Co. E was sent to

Hagenbach, 1,000 yards northeast of Waldau. Easy Co. was to take the town, and reconnoiter for a possible crossing site at that point. Upon reaching the outskirts of Hagenbach, a patrol was sent into the town. They had just reached the first house when a machine gun opened fire on them from a knoll on their left near the river. After an exchange of shots in which two Jerries were wounded, the remainder of the gun crew surrendered. Hagenbach was divided into platoon sectors and the doughs proceeded to clean out the town, killing several enemy and capturing 16, including a lieutenant. With the town secured, Lt. Keddie dispatched patrols to reconnoiter for a possible crossing site. None could be found, however, and the patrols returned to Hagenbach where the company spent the night.

After a quiet night, F Co. pushed out of Jagstfeld on the morning of 11 April and moved toward their original objective, the town of Waldau. Supported by two tanks and two TDs, the company advanced to the northern edge of the Kocher River town. An enemy strongpoint was smashed by the TDs and a heavily mined roadblock was cleared by the battalion A & P Platoon, after which F Co. entered Waldau and established a defense.

Two patrols were dispatched to reconnoiter the river bank for possible crossing sites. Both patrols drew sniper fire. One group, however, found a foot-bridge across the canal just before the river, and a likely place to cross the Kocher if the enemy could be cleared from the area.

While the 2nd Battalion 398th was occupied at Jagstfeld, the 1st Battalion of that regiment was active

to the northeast, on the 2nd Battalion's right. Late in the afternoon of 3 April, the 1st Battalion had relieved the 3rd Battalion 255th Inf., 63rd Div., in the Neckar River town of Bad Wimpfen.

They remained in Bad Wimpfen while the 2nd Battalion crossed the Neckar and Jagst. During the period, strong patrols, reinforced by TDs and tanks, cleared Unter Eisesheim and Ober Eisesheim, south of Wimpfen. Platoons from Co. C 398th were placed in each of these towns, as well as in Hohenstadt, north of Bad Wimpfen, and armor was brought into position on the west bank of the Neckar to pour fire into the town of Neckarsulm.

Then, close to midnight on 6 April, Tec 5 Robert A. Mallam and Pfc. Merrill C. Newren, 398th Inf. Message Center drivers, were called upon to deliver Operations Instruction No. 33 to the 1st Battalion. Forced to abandon their vehicle and continue their mission on foot, the two men arrived at the 1st Battalion CP at 0045, 7 April.

OI No. 33 ordered the battalion to proceed on foot without delay to an assembly area across the Neckar at Obergriesheim and attack at 0800 across the Jagst. At 0500, the 1st Battalion moved north out of Bad Wimpfen on the curving narrow road past the fashionable swimming pool that had given Bad Wimpfen its name and pre-war reputation as a resort, to the flat strip of bottom land along the smooth, beautiful Neckar. In the dim light of dawn, the battalion with Cos. B, C, A, D, and Hq. in order, crossed the river in single file over the same footbridge used by the 2nd Battalion several days earlier. The battalion's vehicles crossed the Neckar further north, at Neckarelz.

Two hours later, the battalion was closing into Obergriesheim, only 200 yards northwest of Heuchlingen, where Cos. E and G were spending the night after battling across the Jagst the day before. By noon, the 1st Battalion had forded the Jagst and launched an attack southeast from Obergriesheim toward Ödheim on the Kocher River.

With Co. B on the left, Cos. B and C advanced through the 63rd Div. sector to the northern slope of

an open, gently rising hill. Upon attempting to move over the crest of this obstacle, Co. C was showered by artillery, mortar, MG, and small arms fire from behind the hill and a lesser one to the right. Co. B, moving along a draw to the left of the open hill received intense fire from its direct front and a second hill to its left.

Artillery, TD and tank fire was placed on the Jerry positions, and at 1500 of 7 April, the two companies resumed their drive. Once again, however, they were stopped cold by heavy mortar and artillery fire coming from the hills around Ödheim. Planes from the 12th TAC were summoned to strafe Willenbach Farms to the south, and a patch of woods behind Willenbach. Both missions were completely successful, but no direct help could be afforded the assault companies by the planes due to the closeness of our troops to the enemy.

At 1900, Co. C sent the 1st and 2nd Platoons into a draw around the hill to their right while the remainder of the company covered their advance. The platoons had advanced only a few hundred yards, when they were stopped by intense small arms fire. After an artillery preparation on these enemy positions, five light tanks of Co. D 781st Tank Battalion formed to support the assault.

The tanks passed through the line of infantrymen, and drove on ahead, around the right side of the hill. The riflemen, reluctant to follow, due to the heavy machine gun and small arms fire coming from the top of the hill and from other enemy positions in the rolling open ground to the front, stayed in their positions of comparative safety until Pfc. Mike Colalillo, a rifleman in the 2nd Platoon of Co. C, jumped to his feet, and with a shout for his buddies to follow, charged out in the open behind one of the tanks. Inspired by his example, two or three of the men followed him, then a few more, then the whole company.

Using one of the tanks as protection, Colalillo ran toward the enemy positions, firing his grease gun until a shell fragment hit the gun in his hands and rendered it useless. Spotting the light .30 cal. machine gun

At least once each month from Saturday, we loaded into jeeps and trailers and took off for showers. Guns, like towels, were SOP.





Mike Colalillo clambered to the turret of the tank and began returning the whizzing enemy fire from his exposed position.

mounted on the tank he was following, Colalillo clambered to the turret and, carefully asking the permission of the tank commander first, began returning the whizzing enemy fire from his exposed position. As the tank passed around the hill, the target of every Kraut in the vicinity, Colalillo turned his fire on the machine gun nest at the crest, knocking it out and wounding at least ten men.

Still astride the tank, despite the artillery which was coming closer and closer to hitting it, Colalillo peppered a haystack in the draw behind the hill, silencing the enemy fire from that spot and killing an SS lieutenant. Not pausing in his fire, Colalillo concentrated on a machine gun dug in a few yards behind the haystack, definitely spiking it, killing three of the Germans in the dugout, and wounding several who jumped up and began to run in the face of his fire.

Then the machine gun jammed. Trying desperately to repair it without success, Colalillo borrowed a sub-machine gun from one of the tankers, and jumping down from the turret advanced on foot. Less than five minutes later, the tanks, having run out of ammunition, were forced to withdraw. The company drew back, and Colalillo halted his one-man assault. Drawing back with the company, Colalillo noticed Sgt. John McEvoy, a squad leader in his platoon, trying to crawl to the rear with severe leg wounds. Staying out in the open a few minutes longer, despite the intense artillery and mortar fire, Colalillo dashed to the side of the wounded man and helped him back to the safety of the company's holes.

For this stirring action, Pfc. Mike Colalillo was awarded the third Medal of Honor won by a soldier of the Century.

While Colalillo was waging his one-man attack, S. Sgt. Loma M. Hash, a squad leader, lost his life in a similar action. Also one of the first to leave his hole and charge after the tanks, Sgt. Hash, firing as he ran, became separated from the rest of the company. Alternately running and crawling up the western slope of the hill where the enemy was dug in, Sgt. Hash attacked a machine gun nest, throwing a grenade into the enemy position, and dashing in to finish the job with his rifle. Three enemy were killed and the gun neutralized before Hash turned his attention elsewhere.

Continuing forward, he moved from dugout to dugout, seemingly oblivious of the hail of fire around him, killing the occupants of each hole as they tried to resist. Two Krauts in one hole surrendered to him, but as Hash was taking them to the rear, they suddenly picked up two discarded weapons and began to fire on the C Co. men. Hash promptly killed the two Krauts, and turning, advanced single-handedly, firing into every hole he could find and killing an uncounted number of Jerries.

By this time, he had become the target of intense small arms fire. Refusing to take cover, Hash was finally hit in the leg. As he stumbled forward on the side of the bare hill, he was hit several more times. He died within a few seconds.

The two C Co. platoons had advanced to within 75 yards of Willenbach Farms, where German mortar positions were located, when the tanks ran out of ammunition. Left in an exposed position without tank support, the C Co. men might well have been annihilated were it not for the gallant self-sacrifice of Centurymen such as Lt. Frank Reinhart, Lt. Noel Felix, S. Sgt. Herman Block, and S. Sgt. Charles Earle. Lt. Reinhart deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire, in order to direct covering fire of his mortar and machine gun sections, until he was killed. Lt. Felix, Sgt. Block, and Sgt. Earle heroically stood their ground while the enemy counterattacked the withdrawing C Co. Platoons, pumping lead into the advancing Krauts until they were overrun by the Jerries.

Co. C finally succeeded in forming a defense line behind the hill, where they spent the night. Co. A, in reserve up to this time, now moved up on the right of Co. C, where it was feared the Germans might attempt to counterattack.

Cos. A and B jumped off the next morning, 8 April, at 0545, while Co. C remained in reserve. They were



Mounted on tanks, Centurymen pursued the enemy relentlessly, permitting the Jerries little time to regroup for a stand.



The unending stream of "Supermen" with their hands up gained volume as we pushed deeper into the German Vaterland.

met with heavy mortar, artillery and small arms fire. The light tanks and the TDs moved out to join the fight, but after a fierce battle, characterized by small arms duels at distances of 50 to 100 yards, the assault companies were forced to return to their original positions. During this bitter action, feats of heroism by the A and B Co. doughfeet came thick and fast. Tec 5 Johnson, a rifleman of Co. A, single-handedly charged a machine gun nest which had been putting heavy pressure on our troops, wiping out all four members of the enemy crew. Pfc. Francis Crowley, a B Co. machine gunner, voluntarily lead a group of litter bearers 500 yards in front of our lines to evacuate some casualties. He made two such trips under heavy fire.

For the rest of the day, and all of 9 and 10 April, there was little activity. Having forced the enemy to reveal his positions in meeting the hard-driving attacks of our infantry, we were now in a position to lay back while pounding him with artillery—and pound him we did, blasting his forward and rear elements with devastating artillery, mortar and cannon fire. Heavy MGs from Co. D performed indirect fire missions, spraying the Kraut forward lines and forcing the German infantry to remain in their positions while our artillery smashed them to pieces.

At 0530, 11 April, a patrol from Co. B picked up a PW who claimed that his battalion had withdrawn across the Kocher River. Acting immediately, patrols were dispatched to contact the enemy. Three hours later, orders were received from Lt. Col. Robert M. Williams, regimental commander, instructing all 1st Battalion elements to move forward and seize posi-

tions on the Kocher River, securing all crossing sites which could be found.

Before the enemy knew what was happening, Co. C, advancing with other units under cover of our artillery, was digging in along the river bank. Once the Germans spotted our troops, they opened up with small arms, MGs, 20mm, artillery and SP guns. But they were too late. By 1515 hours, all companies were in position on the north bank of the Kocher.

Air support by the 12th TAC did much to smash enemy artillery shelling our positions along the Kocher from the vicinity of Ödheim. The planes, bombing and strafing, caused two large fires, neutralized Jerry SP guns, and inflicted an unknown number of enemy casualties.

With all elements in position, a patrol was dispatched to contact the 63rd Div., on the battalion's left flank. During this five-day action, the 1st Battalion had decimated a regiment of SS troopers entrenched in almost impregnable positions, and had aided materially in the ultimate capture of Heilbronn. During the night of 12 April, the 1st Battalion 398th was relieved by elements of the 2nd Battalion of that regiment. By 0500 hours, they had closed into the vicinity of Bad Wimpfen as regimental reserve.

At 2200, 12 April, the 2nd Battalion 398th at Waldau, was ordered across the Kocher. Co. F was selected to lead the battalion across. As soon as the leading elements had crept to the footbridge over the canal which had previously been reconnoitered by F Co., the Jerries poured such intense automatic weapons and panzerfaust fire into them that they were forced to withdraw to the safety of a railroad under-



During the fighting at Heilbronn, Pts. Harry W. Mehlhoff and R. L. Beverley captured five Krauts armed with two bazookas, four packs, a stove, four boxes of ammo, and assorted small arms. One Jerry carried a yo-yo to fill in pocket space.

pass. Here they waited while Co. H pounded the enemy positions in Kochendorf with mortar fire. The results could not be observed, but a patrol dispatched across the river at 0200, returned one hour later without having drawn fire.

Accordingly, at 0400, 13 April, the companies made ready to move out. Using the narrow footbridge across the canal, and wading the river proper at a spot where it was only knee deep, Co. F crossed the Kocher and entered the town of Kochendorf where they captured 18 Germans. After clearing the town, they established roadblocks and set up a defense so as to give security to the engineers as they constructed a Bailey bridge.

Co. E, following Co. F, skirted Kochendorf and entered the northern part of Neckarsulm from where they turned southeast to the objective in the vicinity of Affaltrach. Patrols were sent to clear Ödheim. Co. G passed through Co. F and occupied high ground on the outskirts of Kochendorf before continuing to the south.

The 3rd Battalion 398th, meanwhile, had broken out of their bridgehead, and after clearing the lumberyards on 12 April, was heading north to meet the 2nd Battalion driving southward. The Germans, crushed between the two battalions, withdrew rapidly. On the morning of 13 April, the 3rd Battalion entered the southern part of Neckarsulm, and by noon had cleared all enemy resistance and established contact with the 2nd Battalion driving from the north. Both

battalions were then ordered to turn southeastward in pursuit of the fleeing 17th SS Div. troops.

In the southern part of Heilbronn, the going, these past few days, had been tougher. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 399th, assigned the mission of clearing the enemy training barracks, the hills east of them, and the towns of Sontheim and Flein to the south, were meeting a stubbornly resisting enemy reinforced by tanks.

Co. C drew the job of clearing the houses between the Knorr works and the field which lies to the north of the barracks. The attack was begun on the afternoon of 10 April against determined enemy opposition. Indications, moreover, were that the enemy planned a counterattack that night. Two enemy tanks had been observed moving down from the barracks to a point 300 yards from Co. C's left flank; two more tanks were reported grinding toward Co. A's front; while the entire battalion sector, including the Knorr works, the sugar refinery, the battalion CP, and the bridgehead were subjected to heavy shelling toward dusk.

Plans were made for a defense in depth and a withdrawal, if necessary. Medium tanks were sent to reinforce Co. C, on the right; Anti-Tank units were dispatched to Co. A's support near the river; and a platoon of TDs and the battalion Anti-Tank Platoon were shifted to Co. B's position at the railroad station.

Sharpshooting by our artillery and the regimental Cannon Co. on targets to the battalion's front, the barracks, and the town of Sontheim, apparently dispersed enemy concentrations and the attack did not materialize. At 0400, 11 April, artillery directed by Co. C knocked out one of the enemy Mark IV tanks. Forty minutes later, artillery shells again found their mark and blew up an ammunition dump at the barracks.

Under cover of early morning darkness, 2nd Battalion 399th, less two platoons of Co. G, two platoons of Co. E, one machine gun section and one mortar section of Co. H, moved from assembly areas in Schluctern, Grossgartach and Bockingen to Biberach, northwest of Heilbronn, to act as a mobile Division reserve. At 1100, the two Co. E platoons left their positions on the west bank of the Neckar opposite Heilbronn. One platoon of Co. G and the mortar and machine gun sections of Co. H followed later. One platoon of Co. G established an outpost line to include the positions vacated by Co. E.

At 1600, 11 April, elements of Co. C moved eastward in a successful advance across the Heilbronn-



The mudsloggers enjoyed the luxury of riding the noisy tanks.



Directing TD fire against enemy positions near Weisloch, Germany.

Flein highway. The company encountered only slight resistance from sniper fire, but the panzerfaust teams provided some fierce house-to-house fighting for our men. Five blocks of houses had been cleared by nightfall when Co. C, reaching a position directly north of the Schlieffen Barracks, halted their advance.

The enemy relied heavily upon artillery and mortar fire to slow our advance and prevent reinforcements from pouring across the Neckar. Rocket fire and 105mm artillery fire fell unceasingly upon our ferry site and our front line troops were under concentrated 88mm, SP, 120mm and 210mm shelling during the entire period. The enemy, however, seemed incapable of launching a sustained counterattack of more than company strength. His defense was confined to important high ground designed primarily to slow our advance. But with the Jerries picking the spots and our troops forced to follow and clean them out, our progress was slow and costly.

Despite the enemy's efforts to prevent us from reinforcing our 1st Battalion on the right bank of the Neckar and continuing our attack southward, the 2nd Battalion 399th, released from division reserve at 0515 hours, 12 April, began the difficult operation of crossing the river. Moving from their assembly point in the vicinity of Biberach, with one platoon of tanks and one platoon of TDs in support, they passed through Frankenbach and Bockingen to reach the ferry site just as dawn was lighting the banks of the river. Then, while the tanks and TDs were shuttled across the water on the ponton ferry, infantrymen paddled across to the opposite bank in assault boats and rafts. By 0845 hours the crossing had been completed and 2nd Battalion moved into an assembly area

in the southern end of Heilbronn. One-half hour later, Co. F had relieved Co. A on positions gained the previous afternoon, north of the German garrison.

The enemy shelled all battalion positions heavily throughout the day, exacting a toll of 11 casualties and the destruction of several vehicles.

At 0815 hours the next morning, Co. B moved through C, clearing and occupying the last houses, preparing for the attack southward across the 300 yards of open field into the barracks. Co. C was to follow B. (Co. A, at this time, was still on the right of the line.) Capt. Harry G. Flanagan, commander of Co. C, placed two heavy machine guns in houses on the edge of the field to cover the attack, and called for an artillery barrage. The shelling set one barracks on fire and drove a large number of Jerries out of the trenches on either side of the field. Then the attack jumped off. The 1st Platoon of Co. B, supported by two tanks, moved down the road on the eastern side of the field; the 3rd Platoon, also with two tanks, moved down the road on the western side. By 1030 both platoons had reached the abandoned trenches and were only 150 yards from the barracks. But now, the Germans' machine guns from the barracks windows, mortars from the center of the barracks, and a heavy gun in the hills to the east were firing almost continuously. Co. B's tanks fired into the barracks and the riflemen tried to hit faces in the windows. After a fierce 20-minute fire-fight, the two Co. B platoons climbed out of the trenches and ran alongside the tanks toward the barracks. Five men were wounded on the way as the enemy fire continued unabated. But the tanks finally quieted the German fire in the two corner barracks, and the riflemen rushed in. By 1400



A tank crew from the 781st Tank Battalion takes a break behind a sheltering wall.

the northern half of the garrison was cleared and the Jerries had fled to the southern half. Co. C came down to join Co. B.

In a deep cellar under the center barracks they found some 60 civilians and foreign workers, ranging in age from three to 70 years, half starved and still terrified. When the heavy barrage that our artillery had laid down on the southern barracks was lifted, Co. B went down into them and took 50 dazed Jerries prisoners. The battalion sustained casualties in the attack on the barracks, one man being killed in the action. Near the southernmost barracks they found a smashed German tank, evidently one on which forward observers had been firing the previous night. By mid-afternoon, Co. A of the 399th came down to join the rest of the battalion in the garrison and plans were made for the next day's attack.

With their left flank cleared, the 2nd Battalion, led by Co. F, launched an attack on the town of Sontheim at 1630 hours. Moving south with a platoon of tanks and a platoon of TDs, Co. F had advanced to the northern outskirts of Sontheim against light opposition by 1900 hours. But after clearing a few blocks of the town, the enemy showed his hand. From a factory building which the enemy had converted into a fortress, severe small arms, automatic weapons, and SP fire stopped our troops cold. An attempt to encircle this enemy resistance from the west was frustrated by a road block.

The fight for Sontheim continued under artificial moonlight long after darkness had thrown a protective mantle over our troops. Inching ahead, the 399ers finally overcame the fanatical resistance of the enemy in the factory and by 2215 hours had reached the center of the town. Here the advance was again halted when the enemy unleashed a terrific artillery barrage

combined with raking machine gun fire from every road vantage point.

There was no sleep for the tired 2nd Battalion fighters that night. With Co. E on the left flank, Cos. F and E, following an artillery preparation, resumed the attack against an estimated 200 Krauts still holding the southern half of Sontheim at 0340 hours of 13 April. The Krauts continued their stubborn resistance, but with two companies driving through the town abreast, our weight began to tell. By 0530 Co. E had overrun the Sportplatz in the southern part of town, and by 0840 had cleaned out the Wilhelmsruhe to the southeast against heavy machine gun opposition.

Co. F, moving parallel to the river, advanced along Heilbronner Strasse to Adolf Hitler Strasse, clearing the town on the west. By 0940 hours, Sontheim had been fully occupied, the Jerries who had not been killed or captured retreating southward. Mid-day found a Co. F patrol probing the outskirts of Horkheim, one kilometer to the southwest.

At 1300 hours, Co. G, which had been relieved from attachment to 1st Battalion at 1200, advanced on Horkheim with the infantry mounted on tanks. Flanked to the east by Co. E's advance south of Sontheim, the Krauts relinquished Horkheim without a struggle and Co. G had fully occupied the town by 1315 hours.

While the 2nd Battalion was chalking up these important advances, the 1st Battalion, having reduced the Schlieffen Barracks the previous afternoon, dispatched reconnaissance patrols on the night of 12 April from both Cos. A and C to investigate the edge of the large woods to the east of the barracks. These woods, situated on high ground, completely encircled Heilbronn from the east. Actually, they consisted of a huge ridge segmented by deep ravines, a picture of

German civilians pour back to the remains of their homes after the Wehrmacht withdrew.



tortured topography which rose sharply to the height of 373 meters in our sector. The western slopes of this hill, besides being exceedingly steep, were bare and open, and made a formidable natural fortress. In the woods on the ridge were placed great numbers of enemy mortars and artillery, which had been plaguing our troops in their advance southward, and its clearance was of paramount importance before we could press on southward.

Working their way over open ground with utmost caution, and calling upon every trick they had learned in six months of unbroken combat, the two patrols reconnoitered the western approaches to the woods under the very noses of the enemy and returned with the information that each of two houses at the edge of the woods was occupied by the enemy.

Probably realizing that this would be their last opportunity to use their artillery from these positions, the Krauts continued to pound elements of the 1st Battalion in and around the barracks with terrific artillery and nebelwerfer fire. The 1st Battalion took everything that the Jerries could throw at them. And then, at 0400 hours of 13 April, with Co. A on the right, C on the left, and B behind Co. C, the 1st Battalion moved stealthily southeast along the road under the cover of darkness toward the woods and the high ground.

They reached the edge of the woods while it was still dark. As Co. A advanced up the stretch of open slope, the enemy blasted at the two lead scouts with machine guns, seriously wounding both of them, and immobilizing the company. To reach its objective, Co. A had to penetrate this line. But the enemy had at least five machine guns concealed along the edge of the woods, covering any advance from Heilbronn and the open ground on either side.

As a company aid-man tried to reach one of the two wounded scouts, he was fired upon by the enemy. Seeing this, Sgt. James Amoroso and Sgt. Gilbert Moniz, squad leaders of the 1st Platoon, advanced directly into the face of the machine gun fire to reach the wounded soldier. One rendered first aid, while the other directed covering fire. Forming a coordinated team, they killed four enemy and silenced one of the machine guns. Five more Jerries came out of the woods with their hands over their heads. These captives were forced to carry the wounded Americans back to the Co. A lines.

The 3rd Platoon of Co. A had veered to the left of the highway and was moving forward on the northern slope of the hill southwest of the point where the road entered the woods, when they, too, were stopped by enemy fire. Sgt. John Hambric, a squad leader, called for volunteers. Recruiting five men, he crept with them into the woods and then snaked, alone, to the rear of one of the enemy machine gun positions, while the other men in his patrol covered him. He then angled back toward the gun. Crawling into close range, he arose with a shout and killed each of the surprised Krauts with rifle fire. A second MG position was dug in a short distance to the north. Calling for his covering squad, Sgt. Hambric made his way toward this gun. As the enemy gunner swung his weapon to fire on him, Sgt. Hambric killed him. A second Kraut climbed from the hole and charged the intrepid Hambric, firing a machine pistol at point blank range. Hambric coolly stood his ground, holding fire until the fanatical Jerry was within 40 yards of him, and then dropped him with one shot.

A fourth enemy machine gun was knocked out through skillful action led by Sgt. Murel Mumbower, also of the 3rd Platoon, who penetrated the woods



Allied soldiers liberated by Centurymen after capture of Weisloch.



The beauties of spring were often passed unnoticed.

on the extreme right flank and forced the enemy out. By these actions, Co. A was enabled to enter the woods, encountering thereafter only minor resistance from isolated snipers and one roadblock at the edge of the woods. By 1100, the company gained Hill 333.1, 1,400 yards to the east, at the top of the ridge. From this hill, they controlled the road and could look down upon the town of Donnbronn. The company held these positions until contacted by Co. C, attacking on the left.

As Co. C moved into the woods at daybreak, at a point several hundred yards north of the Heilbronn-Donnbronn road, it stumbled upon a platoon of Jerries who were so well dug in, and so sure of their positions that all were sound asleep. The Co. C men killed several, took 20 prisoners, and moved on into the woods.

Farther on, the Co. C advance was delayed by a machine gun nest and several snipers. When a tank they had called for came up from the garrison and helped knock out the machine gun nest, the rest of the way over the hill was clear.

That afternoon, Co. B moved out on the road leading to Flein. As they approached the town, they paused while Capt. Harry G. Flanagan, Co. B commander, Lt. George W. Everett and Lt. Russell Leahy went ahead to reconnoiter a more covered route into the town. They walked into three German officers in a foxhole and after firing on them, found them eager to surrender. Other Jerries, 15 in all, climbed from nearby foxholes and gave themselves up. The company was ordered to continue to attack, and after a short fire-fight, 15 more prisoners were taken. Not

many of this enemy rearguard got away. When Co. B entered Flein, it found very few Jerries there. Lt. Ayotte, artillery FO, had directed fire on a long German column he had observed pulling out of the town before Co. B's entrance.

That evening, when B Co. went down to clear the woods south of Flein, they found along the eastern edge of these woods an abandoned "88," probably one of the guns which had worried them most in the barracks, whose flash they had been unable to find.

Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion continued their attack. Supported by tanks, Co. E rapidly overcame weak enemy resistance one kilometer south of Sontheim at 1400 hours. Then, teaming with Co. G on its right flank, it pivoted southeast at 1515 to seize the high ground dominating Sontheim. Advancing steadily despite heavy enemy artillery fire and an S-mine field encountered by Co. E, Co. G was 1,700 yards south of Horkheim by 1800 hours. At approximately the same time, Co. E reached a position southwest of Flein and northeast of Talheim, approximately halfway between the two towns.

At this point, Co. G encountered three enemy pillboxes similar to those we had come against in the Siegfried Line. These pillboxes were easily disposed of, however, and by 2100 hours, Cos. E and G had joined forces approximately two kilometers northwest of Talheim.

In the heart of Heilbronn, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 397th Inf., driving from the north, had joined forces with the 1st Battalion pushing from the south. Then, having regrouped its forces, the regiment attacked eastward between the 398th and the 399th



A map is utilized to interrogate a PW as to enemy positions.



A wounded Kraut gets first aid from a GI at scene of capture.

to clear the eastern, residential half of Heilbronn, the hills beyond, and the road running through these troublesome barriers to Weinsberg, once a picturesque, thriving community.

The 2nd Battalion, on the 397th's northern flank, jumped off on the morning of 11 April. Co. F ran into fierce resistance soon after leaving the factory district, but managed to clear the workers' houses to the base of Tower Hill, where the company dug in for the night. During the day, 20 prisoners had been captured by the F Co. men and more than 300 civilians, found hiding in cellars, had been sent back to civilian collecting points. G Co., advancing on F Co.'s right, was stopped by machine gun and burp gun fire from two houses near the railroad tracks. The leading platoon crossed the rails about a block further north and flanked the buildings. Two tanks, supporting the company, then blasted the houses with their heavy guns, and the squad closed in with grenades. Sixteen Krauts were taken prisoners in one house and four Jerry machine gunners were snared in the other. After this, the company advanced with relative ease. Two tremendous cellar shelters filled with some 600 foreign workers and German civilians were "liberated." By nightfall, Co. G had dug in beside Co. F at the foot of Tower Hill.

In the 3rd Battalion sector to the right of Co. G, houses to the junction of the railroad with the Heilbronn-Weinsberg road were mopped up by Co. I. At this point, Item Co. was stopped by a road block constructed of rock and steel girders and defended by snipers. Lt. Alvin W. Leber's tank pushed the block down and clanked onto the Weinsberg Road with

Capt. Ulysses J. Grant, Co. I commander, firing the tank's turret machine gun at the snipers. The riflemen followed and flushed the Krauts out. The company then pulled back to the railroad where they set up a defense for the night.

Southward, Cos. B and C of the 1st Battalion 397th, pushed 1,500 yards farther east, crossing the railroad tracks and advancing beyond them. Co. B, on the regimental right flank, had easy going, driving to the southern end of a tunnel 1,900 yards south of the Weinsberg road, where they halted upon order. Co. C, on Baker Co.'s left, slashed ahead against no opposition to the railroad, crossed the tracks north of the tunnel, and pulled up at a large German hospital. Charlie Co. then continued in a northeasterly direction to a large factory where they met sniper fire. After silencing the few Jerries in the building, Co. C moved in and spent the night in the shelter of the structure's thick walls.

Early in the morning of 12 April, Cos. L and K, having advanced four blocks the previous day against almost no opposition, pushed to the railroad tracks to tie in with Co. I on Co. K's right. From here, Co. K started out along the Weinsberg road. The company had gained about 300 yards along the highway when snipers opened up on the leading elements from a group of houses, wounding four men. After a spirited exchange of fire, the Centurymen were forced to withdraw to the railroad. Later that afternoon, they returned with a TD which blasted the enemy from the houses. The company then moved on.

Co. L, on the right of Co. K, was assigned the mission of reducing the hill which guards the Weinsberg

road from the south. As the company started up the hill, the leading elements were immobilized by heavy fire from a roadblock some 200 yards ahead. The Love Co. men deployed and returned the fire. Capt. Weiler, who was at the head of the column, saw four or five Jerries dart from a house marked as a hospital, and dash to the roadblock to join their comrades. At first the hospital had not been fired upon by the L. Co. men, but now that he had visible evidence that the Krauts were using it for combat purposes, Capt. Weiler sent a platoon into the hospital. The platoon flushed six Jerries, made them prisoners, and herded them back to the company waiting on the road. Weiler immediately brought up the TD which had been supporting him, and placed it in the center of the road in full view of the roadblock. Then, lining up the six Krauts in front of the TD's big gun, he yelled in German for the Jerries behind the obstacle to look at their comrades. Seventeen Krauts took one quick look and walked into the road with their hands over their heads. From this point onward, the road to the top of the hill was clear.

Meanwhile, on the left of the regimental line, Co. F of the 2nd Battalion was attacking Tower Hill, and Anti-Tank Co., fighting as infantry, was driving against Cloverleaf Hill.

Anti-Tank Co. moved through Co. F's lines at the foot of Tower Hill and continued northeastward toward the southern side of their objective. Crossing the road between Tower and Cloverleaf Hills, the Anti-tankers entered a deep draw which ran parallel to the road. While attempting to cross the draw, however, the two leading platoons were immobilized by intense machine gun fire. Capt. Carl Cusanelli, the company commander, moved one platoon 100 yards west in an effort to flank the enemy gun. But even here fire continued to sweep the draw. Capt. Cusanelli thereupon ordered his men to dig in along the southern bank of the draw. The company held these positions until dusk when they drew back to the highway. Early the next morning, Co. E, which had been holding a line along the highway at the western base of Cloverleaf Hill, advanced up the hill to find that the Jerries had pulled out during the night.

Co. F did not have so much difficulty with the hitherto bothersome Tower Hill. During the afternoon of 12 April, a patrol of 15 men, led by S. Sgt. James K. Russell, set out for the castle at the crest of the hill. Climbing straight up the hill's southwestern face, bare except for the occasional shelter of houses and

shacks, the patrol bypassed a large, square, gray-brown cement fortress, and approached the driveway that encircles the castle. Here they were fired upon by several Jerries in foxholes, but after a flurry of shots, all nine defenders of the castle surrendered. After carefully scouting the shell-damaged castle and the woods at the top of the hill without encountering any enemy, the patrol moved to the castle door. On the oak pannel was tacked a piece of paper with the message: "Please take note. There are only civilians in here." Inside, the F Co. men found an old caretaker, his wife, and their two young daughters. Another part of the patrol found 500 men, women, and children crowded together in the squat, fortress-like building across the driveway. The only other "enemy" founded by the F Co. patrol was a gentleman named Demon Rum, in the form of a well-stocked cellar of vintage champagne.

With the hill signaled clear by S. Sgt. Russell, the balance of F Co. climbed to the top. They were followed by the entire 2nd Battalion. That night, the graves of three Centurymen of the lost 1st Platoon of Co. K 398th, were shown to the Americans. The three riflemen had been buried by the caretaker and some civilians.

So, with the capture of this thousand-year-old castle, the battle for Heilbronn was ended. Late that night, the training barracks to the south fell to the hard-hitting 399th. On 13 April, Neckarsulm succumbed to the onslaught of the 398th, while the 399th captured Sontheim and was pressing into Flein.

By this time, the entire pocket of German resistance had disintegrated and the enemy was in full flight. Only 15 miles east of Heilbronn, the 10th Armored Div. had pushed into Neunstein and Ohringen, and was swinging south, followed by the 63rd Div., which, having swarmed down from the north, was mopping up scattered enemy rear-guards in the 10th Armored's wake.

The enemy who had turned at Heilbronn like an enraged tiger, was leaving like a jackal. During the nine days of the struggle, from 4 to 12 April, 1,769 prisoners had passed through the Century cage. There is no way of estimating the number of German dead and wounded, but it was far larger than our own losses. In these nine days, approximately 60 Centurymen were killed, 250 wounded, and 112 listed as missing. Heavy toll though it was, our losses were remarkably low considering the nature of the battle and the gains achieved. As Gen. Burress remarked



After capture of an enemy town, arms were confiscated and civilians questioned. This scene was in Waiblingen, Germany.



A column of 397th Inf. dogfaces swing through the budding orchards on the outskirts of Fischbach, Germany.

later when we were chasing the Krauts toward Stuttgart, "I think we beat Jerry at Heilbronn. He hasn't fought us since then."

Unconditional Surrender

So ends the bloody business of the day.

—HOMER, *Odyssey*.

But there was no rest for the weary. The next day, the 397th and 398th Inf. were chasing the enemy eastward while the 399th continued on the rough road to the south. Once more the enemy had to be pursued and engaged before he could have time to set up a defense for another costly stand. Speed was essential. In war, the enemy must be caught, surrounded and annihilated. To permit him to escape, means to fight him another day. Our troops were motorized to keep up with the armor as it slashed after the enemy fleeing toward the possible National Redoubt in the mountains to the south.

Pressing east from Heilbronn on 13 April, the 397th Inf. captured the towns of Weinsberg, Ellhofen, and Lehensteinsfeld, some six kilometers east of the city's outskirts. Directly southeast of Heilbronn, the 3rd Battalion 397th extended our lines as far as the town of Donnbronn. Upon attempting to advance to Ober Gruppenbach, however, they were held up by a roadblock and forced to withdraw to more tenable positions for the night when the Krauts began concentrating artillery and mortar fire on their lines.

The 398th turned east from Neckarsulm to take the town of Erlenbach. A heavy ponton bridge was

finally constructed across the Neckar at 1730 hours. This time, it was in to stay.

In the 399th sector, Co. G, under the leadership of Capt. Millard B. Hayes, was the first to continue the attack on Talheim on the morning of 14 April. Surging forward at 0615 hours from positions gained under cover of darkness approximately 500 yards northwest of Talheim, George Co. had reached the northern outskirts of town 35 minutes later. The advance on Talheim was a bloody fight all the way. The enemy had prepared a crossfire machine gun defense perimeter around the southern edge of the town with at least two machine guns firing from the patch of woods to the southeast; one from a vineyard to the south, and another from a field to the southwest. Fifty and 80mm mortar fire backed up the Krauts holding the northern edge of Talheim with unusually heavy fire concentrations which kept the Co. G men hugging the ground. From farther south, shells hit the bridge in the center of Talheim and fell accurately on the important road junction on the western edge of town.

In the meantime, Co. E, which had started moving south toward Talheim at 0620 hours, had reached the medieval castle one kilometer northeast of the town by 0700. Striking across a vineyard and through an orchard toward a junction with Co. G for a combined assault, the Co. E men by 0830 had advanced to a point 300 yards north of the George Co. positions by the time Co. G had fought its way to the northern end of Talheim. With the coordinated attack now in full swing, the Krauts began to give ground more rapidly, and by 0915 hours, Cos. E and G were in possession of Talheim.

Our armor blasts a strong-point in Heilbronn during the final stages of the struggle for that key city.



further advance impossible. Artillery and some 50 rounds of SP fire was finally placed on the road-blocks and the wooded area to the southeast. But it was 1700 hours before the Krauts were driven from their positions and Co. A was able to continue its advance along the road leading southeast, skirting the edge of the woods to their objective, a point half way along the road between Flein and Ilsfeld, where they were to meet Co. C.

Co. C, on the left flank, joined the 1st Battalion drive at 0700 hours, 14 April. Leaving positions on high ground in the woods northeast of Flein, Co. C continued southward through the woods with the mission of meeting Co. A. The Unter Gruppenbach-Heilbronn road was crossed at 0800 and the advance continued over the extremely rough, forested terrain. By 1430, Co. C had reached a point two kilometers due west of Unter Gruppenbach, meeting only slight resistance. In attempting to swing southwestward through the woods toward a junction with Co. A, which would pocket the Jerries in the 1st Battalion sector, resistance on the Co. C front began to stiffen considerably. Upon reaching the Unter Gruppenbach-Talheim road, Co. C hit a strongly defended roadblock. Enemy artillery fire was added to the fierce small arms opposition. Despite valiant efforts to disperse the Jerries, they continued to hold up the Co. C men.

While this fight was raging, a reinforced Anti-Tank Platoon from 1st Battalion Hq. Co. took up positions southwest of Donnbronn to block any attempt by the enemy to withdraw from the town, which had been bypassed by Co. C.

After three and one-half hours of indecisive battling, Co. C was still short of their objective, the spot where they were to meet Co. A. At 1800, Co. B was sent

to the aid of the hard-pressed Co. C. Reinforced, the 1st Battalionites finally smashed the enemy resistance at 2240. Then, leaving one platoon each from Cos. B and C in positions south of the Unter Gruppenbach-Talheim road, Co. C withdrew to reserve positions in Flein, and Co. B joined Co. A at the rendezvous point on the Flein-Ilsfeld road just east of Talheim. The 1st Battalion then paused in its drive for the night.

At 0135, 15 April, machine gun and anti-tank platoons from Co. D and 1st Battalion Hq. Co., respectively, relieved Co. A. Co. A, thereupon, moved southward to the southern edge of the woods northwest of Wüstenhausen, reaching the objective line without opposition. Co. B, which had taken up positions on an extension of Co. A's left flank the previous night, also pushed south to the objective line east of Co. A. Following this move, the Co. B platoon which had been attached to Co. C in reserve reverted to Co. B's control.

During the day, the 397th had continued to move to the east, against stubborn resistance. The 2nd Battalion battled its way into Ober Heinriet, fighting persistently from house to house, finally subduing the enemy at 1450, having been opposed by small arms, automatic weapons, panzerfaust, rocket and 75mm fire. The enemy launched a strong counterattack at 1530, cutting the battalion supply line and pressing steadily until 1730. But our lines held, and the supply block was cleared by 2000. The 1st Battalion moved from reserve positions in Weinsberg to clear out enemy who had infiltrated through the 2nd Battalion lines and were preventing the engineers from filling a large shell crater in the Lehensteinsfeld-Ober Heinriet road.

Early in the morning of the 14th, the 3rd Battalion



Red Cross girls serve coffee and doughnuts within a mile of the front. At this stage, just talking to an American girl was a treat.

had moved out on the road to Ober Gruppenbach. Co. I on the right, ran into a fire-fight in the woods west of the town, the leading 2nd Platoon encountering machine gun and self-propelled fire while the rear of the column suffered from enemy mortars. The tanks supporting the company were brought up to help the leading platoon, and after about an hour, the enemy was forced to withdraw.

Co. L, on the left of Co. I advanced south-southeast toward Ober Gruppenbach. About one kilometer from town, the company found a roadblock. Eight of the enemy were killed and wounded at this obstacle. Moving on to the edge of the woods surrounding Ober Gruppenbach, the two tanks with the company eliminated two machine gun nests that were holding up the advance.

Heavy and light machine guns were set up on the high ground surrounding the town, and, under their cover, the 1st Platoon with the tanks moved into the village. As they tried to enter, the town was shelled heavily by enemy artillery located to the south. Accordingly, Co. L pulled back to allow our own artillery and mortars, including the 4.2 mortars of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion to go to work. At 1200, Co. L jumped off and entered Ober Gruppenbach in the face of spasmodic small arms fire. For about ten minutes, Co. L was under intense self-propelled fire. After the concentration, Co. L was joined by Co. I. Having secured the town, Co. L posted the outskirts and Co. I pushed off to the east about 2,000 yards to cut the Autobahn and the road net in that area.

While Cos. I and L were taking Ober Gruppenbach, Co. K was clearing Donnbronn. Stiff opposition from enemy 88s, self-propelled guns, mortars, and automatic weapons was effectively reduced by our own artillery, after which Co. K entered the town.

As the 2nd Battalion moved south toward Unter Heinriet, approximately 250 enemy, supported by artillery and mortars, delayed the advance into Unter Heinriet for several hours. Enemy shelling continued after the 2nd Battalion had entered the village. But the 2nd Battalion held and sent elements two kilometers west on the road to Heilbronn to occupy bypassed Happenbach.

Farther west, the 3rd Battalion 397th drove south to the town of Unter Gruppenbach. A reinforced patrol from Co. I was sent to Happenbach to contact elements of the 2nd Battalion, but no direct hook-up could be established.

Southward, in the 399th sector, Co. A, motorized, moved northeast at 1620 hours of 15 April, following their rendezvous at the edge of the woods with Co. C, and relieved the 3rd Battalion 397th in Unter Gruppenbach. Relief was completed at 1730, after which Co. A dispatched a patrol to Wüstenhausen, about two kilometers to the southeast. The patrol found the town occupied by the Jerries who opened up with machine gun fire. Co. C, reinforced by the Anti-Tank Platoon of 1st Battalion Hq. Co., held their reserve positions in Flein.

On the afternoon of the 15th, the 2nd Battalion 399th, relentlessly probing enemy defensive positions in an attempt to find his weak spots, dispatched a task force consisting of two rifle squads from Co. E and two squads from Co. G, supported by two tanks and two TDs, with the mission of clearing two patches of woods southeast of Talheim. If contact could not be made, the task force was to proceed to Schozach and then continue southeast to Ilsfeld. In the most northern patch of woods, the task force discovered 50 enemy dead from the previous evening's heavy fighting when Cos. E and G had been forced to move back into Talheim in the face of heavy opposition. Crossing the open field between the two woods, the task force discovered 12 enemy in the houses. The Jerries were taken prisoners and the advance continued into the patch of woods due north of Schozach.

These woods proved to be deserted, but upon reaching the southern line of trees at 1615 hours, the enemy began pouring 50mm and 80mm mortar, artillery, and machine gun fire onto our troops from emplacements within Schozach. With their mission of clearing

With the end in sight, even the German brass began throwing in the sponge. They generally brought their arrogance with them.

the woods accomplished, however, the task force returned to Talheim.

At 1500 hours, Co. F moved from Flein to Talheim, closing at 1550 hours without incident. Co. E joined their platoon, which was holding positions on the southern edge of the woods northeast of Schozach, at 1855 hours. Co. G shifted southeast from Talheim to the patch of woods due north of Schozach at 2045.

The next morning, 16 April, Co. G began to send patrols from their positions at the edge of the woods in an effort to make contact with the enemy. After testing enemy positions without encountering too much opposition, a platoon from Co. G launched a drive to the town at 1320 hours.

The Krauts countered the Co. G attack with heavy mortar and artillery fire from the vicinity of Neckarwestheim, two kilometers to the southwest. Hitting the dirt at almost every step, the Co. G men pushed southward over open ground toward the town.

It required one hour and twenty-five minutes for the Co. G platoon to cover the 600 yards from their woods positions to the southern end of Schozach. But by 1445, Capt. Millard B. Hayes' men had entered the town.

The remainder of Co. G followed the leading platoon into Schozach at 1610, despite the murderous artillery bombardment which continued from enemy positions near Neckarwestheim. At 2240 hours, the hard-hitting Co. G men were reinforced in Schozach by a platoon from Co. F.

To the east, the 1st Battalion 399th had been working on the town of Wüstenhausen. A patrol from Co. A, dispatched at 0830 to investigate, reached the town at 1025 to find it deserted, confirming A and B Cos.' reports of enemy movement the previous night. Co. B then moved from positions along the southern edge of the woods northwest of the town and occupied Wüstenhausen at 1300 hours.

Co. C left Flein at 1200 and closed into Unter Gruppenbach at 1315 hours after dispatching one platoon to take over the vacated Co. B positions at the edge of the woods.

Fifteen minutes later, Co. C sent a motorized patrol to scout Abstatt. The patrol had reached a point one kilometer north of the town when an artillery liaison plane dropped a message that at least 40 Jerries with



six machine guns were entrenched south of their objective. Reversing its direction, the patrol turned west and proceeded south over secondary roads to a point about 300 yards south of Wüstenhausen where they met hostile fire from the south.

The patrol battled the Jerries until 2245 hours when, with the aid of a platoon from Co. B and two tanks, it was able to withdraw to Unter Gruppenbach.

The emphasis of the 399th attack on 17 April shifted to the left flank. Almost two weeks of hitting enemy positions frontally had convinced Col. Edward J. Maloney, commanding the 399th, that the price we were paying and would continue to pay would be too costly for the value of the ground gained. The enemy, taking full advantage of the rough, wooded, easily defended terrain, was falling back. But the casualties he was inflicting upon us would make the victory a Pyrrhic one by the time we reached our final objective.

Accordingly, Col. Maloney secured permission to shift his forces eastward in an effort to envelop the enemy by a drive around his right flank. Such a maneuver, if successful, would bypass enemy positions on high ground, to be mopped up later at our leisure, and prevent them from withdrawing southward.

The plan of attack called for the 399th, supported by Co. A 781st Tank Battalion, Co. A 824th TD Battalion, and a Provisional Rcn. Sqdn., which included the 100th Rcn. Tp., to attack southwestward in a column of battalions with the 1st Battalion leading and 3rd and 2nd Battalions following in that order.

The 3rd Battalion, relieved from a 15-day attachment to the 35th AAA Brigade, was engaged in shuttling to our sector and was scheduled to reach the regimental zone late in the afternoon. Upon arrival, they were to close into an assembly area southeast of Unter Heinriet and remain in readiness to follow the 1st Battalion toward the regimental objective.



After Heilbronn, German losses began to show. Taken in one batch of PWs were a 73-year old grandpa and a boy of 15.

Leaving their positions in the vicinity of Unter Gruppenbach and Wüstenhausen to be occupied by the 2nd Battalion, the 1st Battalion, at 0930 hours, moved to their attack line at the edge of a woods one kilometer south of Unter Heinriet. By 1230, all 1st Battalion elements were in position and the attack was under way. The advance moved forward slowly along an axis between Unter Heinriet and Beilstein, with Co. A to the north, Co. B to the south, and Co. C in reserve.

By 1430 hours, Co. A, pushing southwest, had reached the edge of the woods northeast of Helfenberg. Every attempt to cross open ground and seize the town, however, was met by such intense machine gun and small arms fire that the Co. A men were unable to continue their advance and were forced to dig in at the edge of the woods. After four hours of futile efforts to disperse the enemy, Co. C began to move forward to the aid of Co. A, seeking to flank Helfenberg on the south while Co. A maintained pressure from the northeast.

Swinging southeast from their original positions, Co. C had reached the outskirts of Gagernberg by 1900 hours. At this point, they were forced to pause in their advance while Co. B, on their left flank, supported by a platoon of tanks, cleared the town.

Enemy resistance was not crushed in Gagernberg until 2230, and by that time, the harassed Co. A had been forced to withdraw from their advanced posi-

tions under threat of being enveloped by the enemy from the south and southwest.

One platoon from Co. F moved into Unter Gruppenbach at 1600 hours, the balance of the 2nd Battalion remaining in the former 1st Battalion positions.

At 2200 hours, the Provisional Rcn. Sqdn. relieved our 2nd Battalion on position. Reinforced by Co. E, the Squadron held a zone of approximately 800 yards which stretched from the Neckar River through Talheim and along the southern edge of the woods to Unter Gruppenbach.

Moving from their assembly area at 0600 hours, 18 April, the 3rd Battalion 399th took the lead in pressing the attack southwestward to secure the high ground northeast of Beilstein and capture the town beyond. With Co. K in the van, the 3rd Battalion advanced upon their objective. By 0700, Co. K was passing through Co. C, holding a section of woods east of Helfenberg. The advance continued slowly over the difficult terrain until Co. K had reached a road junction near the edge of the woods. At 1000, Co. K paused to combine with Co. I in an attack against the high ground to the south. This high ground was a steep hill, covered by a patch-quilt of farmland, with a pine woods near the crest. To reach the summit, the 3rd Battalion had to push through an exposed draw, and climb the hill under perfect observation from whatever enemy troops might be entrenched at the top.

Co. K, on the left of Co. I, was the first to start across the clearing at the foot of the hill. Enemy 80mm and 120mm mortar shells were falling around them, but the Co. K men managed to make the first patch of woods and then continue across the short stretch of open ground to high ground beyond. They reached the woods at the crest of the hill with only two casualties. Co. I, following the lead of Co. K, also gained the shelter of the woods at the top of the hill with only a few casualties.

Then, Cos. L and M moved into open ground. Leading elements were about half way through the draw when seemingly every enemy 80mm and 120mm mortar on the Seventh Army front opened up on them.

The ensuing attempt to climb that hill proved to be the costliest effort made by CT-399 in 168 days of fighting. To the terrible mortar fire, the Krauts added artillery and small arms. Within a few minutes, hundreds of artillery and mortar shells fell on the slope and in the tiny wooded area at the top of the hill. One veteran of Anzio contended after the shelling was over

that the enemy barrage exceeded anything he had experienced in Italy. Our men hadn't even time to dig in. Smoke was employed extensively, but the Jerries covered almost every foot of ground with superbly directed fire.

Fighting to reach the dubious cover of the hill, the 3rd Battalion men paid a heavy price for those few hundred yards of ground. Within less than two hours, the 3rd Battalion lost 17 men killed and 101 wounded. By 1445 hours, however, the battalion had clawed its way to the comparative shelter of the woods on the crest of the hill, and prepared to continue the attack southward to the town of Beilstein.

But the enemy had ideas of his own. At 1500, following a severe artillery preparation, the Jerries launched a counterattack to drive us from the hill, with 60 elite OCS men and an estimated 20 in reserve. Climbing the hill from the south along a trail which wound through terraced vineyards to the summit, the Jerries came on, seemingly oblivious to our fire. Our men used every weapon they had, even resorting to pistols. Finally, at 1600 hours, the enemy attack was broken, leaving the 3rd Battalion clinging to the top of the hill.

During the day, the 2nd Battalion, minus Co. E, which was helping the Recon hold the sector from Beilstein to the Neckar, and one platoon from Co. F, which was holding Unter Gruppenbach, moved into a new assembly area southeast of Unter Heinriet.

In the 1st Battalion sector, to the right of the 3rd Battalion, both Cos. A and B dispatched patrols at 1300 to the towns of Helfenberg and Sohlbach respectively. After the return of the patrols, Co. A immediately attacked toward Helfenberg and Co. C headed for Sohlbach, 1,000 yards south of Helfenberg. Helfenberg was taken at 1700 hours and Sohlbach fell at 1900. Co. A dispatched a patrol to Abstatt and found the town deserted. Co. C sent patrols west to Auenstein, which was also clear of Jerries.

During darkness hours of 18-19 April, patrols were dispatched to reconnoiter the ground north of Beilstein, where the 3rd Battalion had met such stiff resistance the previous afternoon. On the information of the patrol, Co. I moved into Beilstein at 0830 hours, completing occupation of the town two hours later against artillery, mortar and small arms fire from a Jerry rear guard force. Harassing artillery fire continued to fall in Beilstein from enemy positions to the south.

According to patrol reports, the enemy was with-



drawing to Obersteinfeld, about 10 kilometers south of Beilstein.

At 1800 hours, the 2nd Battalion moved into their positions in the vicinity of Prevorst, about six kilometers east of Beilstein, in the area cleared during the day by the 397th. At 1930 hours, the 1st Battalion moved from their positions in the towns of Helfenberg, Sohlbach and Gagernberg to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Nassach, two kilometers south of Prevorst. The sudden shift of troops to the east was made in order to clean out pockets of resistance bypassed by the 397th in their drive to the south. The pocket was cleared of some 300 Germans that night, and the attack was begun again the next morning.

On 20 April, the 399th advanced to sweep the enemy from the wooded ridges south of their area.



A partially destroyed bridge at Backnang was quickly repaired by our engineers and we continued toward Stuttgart.

Soon, however, it was seen that this was to be the final blow.

The 2nd Battalion was the first to jump off. Moving from its assembly area in the vicinity of Prevorst to the high, wooded ground northwest of the town, the 2nd Battalion slashed westward toward Groneau. Forty minutes later, the 1st Battalion, from Nassach, pushed southwest two kilometers to a dominating hill, and advanced due west toward Völkeshofen. Co. C, in the lead, slugged ahead three kilometers before meeting enemy resistance at a roadblock northeast of Altersberg, while Co. A, following Co. C, captured Kurzach. By 1000, Altersberg was in Co. C's hands.

Meanwhile, Cos. F and G, with Co. F on the left, had cleared the three wooded ridges to the north of the 1st Battalion and the drive began to gain momentum. With high ground to the north in our possession, the 2nd Battalion pivoted due south toward the enemy stronghold of Backnang.

The 3rd Battalion then swung into action. Supported by a platoon of tanks and a platoon of TDs, they moved south on the Beilstein-Klein Aspach road toward a junction with our 1st and 2nd Battalions which would snap shut the Jerry pocket. South of Beilstein they encountered T-mines and heavy enemy resistance was met in the wooded and rough terrain in the vicinity of Obersteinfeld. However, the town was taken by 1030 hours, and the battalion pushed on to the southeast.

When the towns of Völkeshofen and Klein Aspach fell to the 1st Battalion at 1130, the possibility of an enemy debacle began to materialize. Accordingly, Co.

A was motorized and began a rapid drive toward Backnang. Passing through Cos. B and C, Co. A reached a point one kilometer northwest of Gross Aspach.

Roadblocks and blown bridges impeded our drive, but the columns pushed through the roadblocks, simply detoured the blown bridges, and kept on driving. The 2nd Battalion in particular met heavy opposition in Obershontal, a tiny town west of Backnang, from a company of Germans who engaged our troops in a bitter fire-fight, using small arms and panzerfaust. But they were dispersed, and the troops entered the village.

Having reached the western section of Backnang, the 1st Battalion began to drive again. A blown bridge across the Murr River halted the push momentarily. Ingenious repairs by the engineers, though, enabled the 1st Battalion columns to push on in the chase.

By now, the fight in the 399th sector had become a race between greyhounds and rabbits. The Krauts only turned once in a while to fire back over their shoulders, and spent most of the time running. The infantry in the line companies, hopped onto the tanks, and kept after them. The only thing that would greet the riding infantrymen as they entered a town would be white flags hung out of the upstairs windows of the houses.

There were a few spots of resistance. At Maubach, direct artillery fire fell on our troops, and on the outskirts of Hertmannsweiler, on the road to Winnenden, a small arms fire-fight developed during which one of our tanks was destroyed by a camouflaged 75mm gun. After knocking out the tank, the enemy retreated in a jeep and a GI truck which they had previously captured. Here, the 1st Battalion held up for the night. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions moved into Backnang.

At 2330 hours, a former German army chaplain and a German civilian were picked up by 1st Battalion outposts. The chaplain, who had been trying to contact our troops, excitedly told them that 10 Volksturm under the direction of three "Wehrwölfe" were preparing to blow the important bridges across the Zipfel and Buchen Rivers in Winnenden. The clergyman offered to lead a group of men to the bridge by a covered route. He said that the civilians in Winnenden were afraid that if the bridges were wrecked, food could not come into the town, and if a stand was made there, our artillery would wreck the city.

A squad from Co. C, followed by a full platoon, and then all of Co. C was immediately sent to the

bridge. Led by the German chaplain, the squad crept up to the Buchen River bridge without being observed by the Jerries. Pouncing upon 13 Krauts, they cut the wires that were to set off dynamite charges, and saved the bridge before the astonished Jerries could snap the explosive switch.

With this important bridge in our hands, the 1st Battalion lost no time in pushing southward into the city, occupying Winnenden against no resistance at 0200 hours of 21 April. Two additional bridges across the Buchen and one bridge across the Zipfel were saved due to the aid of the clergyman.

The 3rd Battalion followed the 1st Battalion into Winnenden at 0300, and both battalions stayed in the town for a few hours of badly needed rest.

At 0900, 21 April, the 3rd Battalion took the lead in the race. Pushing aggressively southwestward from Winnenden, they moved to Korb, entering the town 50 minutes later against only token resistance by Volksturm troops.

At 0920 hours, the 2nd Battalion, in regimental reserve, reached Winnenden from Waldrems.

At 1000 hours, 1st Battalion left Korb, bypassed Hanweiler within one hour, and took Klein Heppach at 1145 hours. The 3rd Battalion, paced by Co. I, cleaned out Hanweiler and moved quickly into Waiblingen, in spite of slight resistance at two roadblocks outside the town. The tank-mounted infantrymen found two bridges across the Rems River intact in Waiblingen, and the drive continued. Co. G was moved up to guard the two vital Waiblingen bridges and the 3rd Battalion pressed on toward Rommelshausen.

Farther east, the 1st Battalion had taken Gross Heppach at 1345 hours, and while Co. A was completing occupation of the town, Co. C took Beinstein and two more bridges across the Rems River. Co. A

then crossed the Rems at Beinstein and headed for Endersbach. Flanked on the east, northeast, and northwest, the town fell easily, intact except for several spans of the railroad bridge outside the town.

Back on the right, the 3rd Battalion took Rommelshausen, and together with the 1st Battalion began to drive on Stetten, over difficult terrain. The 1st Battalion reached the town at 1715 hours. The 3rd Battalion, trying to join with the 1st Battalion, was met with intense self-propelled and small arms fire from the ridges south of Rommelshausen, but the tanks dispersed the Krauts, and the advance continued toward a junction with the 1st Battalion.

Resistance now gave evidence of collapsing completely, and we continued to push southward toward the Neckar River, the Corps objective. Schanbach, four kilometers south of Stetten, was occupied by Cos. B and C at 2000, after which the 1st Battalion paused for the night with Cos. B and C remaining in Schanbach and Co. A in Lobenrot. The 2nd Battalion, still in reserve, moved from Waiblingen to Stetten at 2000.

But the 3rd Battalion began to encounter difficulties as it advanced through the woods 1,500 yards south of Stetten toward Waldenbronn. Small arms fire held up the advance, and sniper fire in the thickly wooded ridges began to take a toll of our troops. With the enemy being driven across the Neckar by the advance of the French into Stuttgart, large numbers of Jerries began to filter into the 3rd Battalion positions. The 3rd Battalion men would clear a ridge and advance a few hundred yards only to find that abatis had been thrown across the road to their rear, with the result that they would be forced to clean out the area time and time again. On one instance, several Jerries walked out of the woods with their hands raised, and when our men walked toward them, an anti-tank gun opened up on our troops at point-blank range, killing one man and wounding the Co. K commander. It was not until the 3rd Battalion had sealed up all the roads leading into Waldenbronn that resistance began to slacken and the battalion was able to pause in Waldenbronn for the night. Prisoners taken during the day by the 399th numbered 319.

At 1000 on 22 April, the 2nd Battalion 399th left Stetten to clear the bypassed woods to the southwest and west of the town. The terrain was thickly wooded, with difficult ravines and hill masses. But the 2nd Battalion went about their task methodically and by 1200 hours, E and F Cos. had cleared the hills southwest of Stetten and were swinging northwest in a combined





Three "Wehrwölfe" captured at Winnenden after German civilians had told us of the terrorists' preparations to blow up the important bridges across the Zipfel and Buchen Rivers.

drive on Fellbach with the help of Co. G. By 1430, the battalion had fought northwest to a point south of Fellbach and east of Untertürkheim. The battalion then turned while Co. F moved across open ground to the southwest to take Rotenberg and Co. G dashed south to take Uhlbach. Patrols were then sent to Untertürkheim and Obertürkheim. When no resistance was met, the battalion moved into both towns. An hour later, all of the 2nd Battalion closed into Obertürkheim, slightly south across the Neckar from Stuttgart.

The 1st Battalion 399th also pushed southwest and west in its sector. At 1100 hours, the battalion advanced into the woods west of Schanbach. By 1530, Co. B was about one kilometer northeast of Hegensberg, and later co-operated with Co. A to take the town, after which Co. C pushed on south to the Neckar at Ober Esslingen.

In the 3rd Battalion sector, our doughs moved toward the city of Esslingen, also on the Neckar. Supported by tanks and TDs, they had reached the river without meeting any opposition by 1115 hours and by 1230 this city of 50,000 population, with 10,000 Displaced Persons, surrendered to our troops. At 1300, Co. K, reinforced, cleared the area between Mettingen and Uhlbach, along the river. Waldenbronn gave the 3rd Battalion something of a headache. During the early morning, as a last gasp of a dying monster, one of our kitchen trains, returning to the rear for supplies, was ambushed. The attack was beaten off, but sniper fire continued to harass our troops until cleared out by the attack of the 2nd Battalion. It was late in the afternoon before resistance was finally eliminated.

The 3rd Battalion sector contained a good many prizes of war. A completely loaded munitions train

and a small-parts aviation plant were captured in Waldenbronn; a V-1 bomb motor plant was found in Mettingen; and four hospitals were taken over in Esslingen.

The 399th, on 23 April, paused in their pursuit of the enemy to await further orders while continuing to mop up enemy stragglers who by now seemed only too happy to be given the opportunity for surrender.

Preparing for possible movement to the east, the 399th I & R Platoon and Co. C 325th Engr. Battalion conducted road and bridge reconnaissance for suitable fords and bridges across the Neckar. A rocky ford was discovered near Oberesslingen which, along with a factory bridge across a canal further south, could afford transportation for our heavy vehicles and tanks across the Neckar river. A cement and steel bridge at Esslingen had been partially destroyed, but was judged passable for jeeps by our engineers. The buttresses of this bridge were still intact, and although two large craters had been blown in the paving, jeeps could maneuver past.

All three of the battalions were alerted for a possible move to the east. But at 1600, the alert of the 2nd Battalion was called off, and it was ordered to Bad Cannstatt, where it closed in at 1745 hours. At 1730 hours, the alert of the 1st and 3rd Battalions was also called off.

Co. A, 781st Tank Battalion, which had been attached to the combat team since the drive on Bitche, was relieved from the control of the regiment at 1800 hours.

The regiment was again placed on a four-hour alert notice at 2240 hours and prepared to move as a motorized combat team if so ordered.

On 24 April, task forces from the 1st and 3rd Battalions, consisting of heavy weapons and reserve companies, supported by TDs, crossed the Neckar River by the Oberesslingen ford and the Esslingen bridge and proceeded to mop up the territory in the 399th zone south of the river. The 1st Battalion moved two task forces across the river at 0830. They were followed by three task forces from the 3rd Battalion at 0900. Advancing through their assigned sectors, the 3rd Battalion began sweeping the towns on the right while 1st Battalion took care of the towns on the left.

The task forces, with the TDs expediting the movement of our troops, worked methodically, clearing every foot of ground in their assigned zones. By 1500, the 1st Battalion had mopped up Berkheim, Nellingen, Sielmingen, and Neuhausen and combed the surrounding territory. One hour later, the 3rd Battalion had completed operations involving the towns of Brühl, Hedelfingen, Ruit, Kemnat, Scharnhausen, Bernhausen, and the eastern outskirts of Esslingen south of the river. All elements thereupon returned to their respective battalion assembly areas in the vicinity of Esslingen and Wäldenbronn.

The 2nd Battalion continued mopping up operations in Bad Cannstatt and supplied a guard in platoon strength for a captured German military hospital there. Guards were also stationed by the 1st Battalion over hospitals, factories, the water plant, and other military and public utility installations in Esslingen.

While the 399th was driving through to Esslingen, the 397th combat team was fighting on their left, slicing its own way through Germany. After being relieved by Co. A 399th in Unter Gruppenbach on 15 April, the 3rd Battalion 397th, preparing to go into regimental reserve, was ordered to send Co. L and a platoon of medium tanks to the control of the 1st Battalion 397th, fighting northwest of Lowenstein. Co. L then moved on foot to Unter Heinriet where it received intense shelling from enemy field-pieces located to the south. The company marched north to Ober Heinriet, from where it moved by truck about five kilometers north to Willsbach. At 2000, Co. L pivoted south along the Lowenstein highway to Hösslinsülz and Brietenau, where it relieved elements of the 1st Battalion 398th. The rest of the 3rd Battalion 397th, in

regimental reserve, moved north to Heilbronn and then east to Willsbach through Weinsberg.

Pushing southeast from Ober Heinriet, the 1st Battalion 397th, after undergoing heavy shelling, reached the outskirts of Vorhof, where it met resistance. Co. B skirted the town to the south, and succeeded in cutting the roads leading to the southeast. Cos. F and G jumped off from Unter Heinriet at 1700, meeting little opposition on the march to Etzlenswenden, four kilometers to the east, which it took at 2115.

The following day, 16 April, the 2nd Battalion continued to clear out its area, taking Farnersberg and Kaisersbach in the face of small arms and automatic weapons fire. Cos. G and F again were subjected to artillery and direct fire. At the end of day, the battalion was on the outskirts of Billensbach, several hundred yards southwest of Kaisersbach.

Also on the 16th, the 1st Battalion, plus Co. L, took Vorhof and continued in a full-scale offensive against the comparatively large town of Lowenstein. Closely supported by tanks, the reinforced battalion entered the town and cleared it of enemy by noon. Cos. B and C jumped off from the high ground around Lowenstein, and attacking eastward, made gains of about four kilometers, Co. C going on to Stangenbach, where they remained for the night. Co. L veered to the northwest, capturing Rillelhoff, and then reverting to the control of the 3rd Battalion which, from its positions in reserve, took Frankenhof and Reisach.

On 17 April, the 1st Battalion moved on eastward to Wüstenrot, clearing the towns of Hirrweiler and Bernbach on the way. Numerous abatis and road-blocks slowed down the advance to some extent. In the afternoon, concentrations of nebelwerfer were laid on our troops in Wüstenrot.

The 2nd Battalion zig-zagged across its broad front, clearing the small towns and the woods in its zone. Considerable difficulty was had in maintaining the supply routes for a time since a weasel was the only vehicle able to reach the front line troops. A temporary supply route was later established along a narrow dirt road that twisted through the darkly wooded hills between Unter Heinriet and Etzlenswenden.

The 3rd Battalion, following the 1st Battalion, remained in reserve; Co. K occupying Stangenbach and Schmellenhof and sending patrols to Greuthof and Altlautern. Co. I went to Hirrweiler, and Co. L remained in Lowenstein.

The I & R Platoon located an abatis and encountered an enemy force, which it dispersed, taking 15



At Backnang a Nazi colonel and lieutenant colonel turned each other over to our forces. The lieutenant colonel informed us of the whereabouts of the colonel, and the colonel asked us not to overlook the lieutenant colonel.



German soldiers making the rounds of hospitals to cart away enemy dead.



French slave laborers start for home in a captured vehicle.

prisoners. Anti-Tank Co. sent a patrol to investigate a castle 1,500 yards south of Unter Heinriet, finding it unoccupied, but drawing small arms and light artillery fire from Stein-Berg, a few hundred yards to the southeast.

Continuing on its mission 18 April, the 1st Battalion 397th pushed relentlessly southward, clearing in order the towns of Vorder Buechelberg, Neufuerstenuette, Ober Fischbach and Gross Hochberg. The final objective, Spiegelberg, was reached by Co. A by nightfall, and the doughs dug in for the night.

The 2nd Battalion, acting upon information gained by patrols the previous night, overcame enemy resistance at Jettenbach, south of Etzlenwenden and occupied the town. Small arms fire continued to harass our troops in the town for several hours, but when the battalion turned east and cleared Klingen, Stocksberg and Prevorst, it met only small arms resistance.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion met no opposition except scattered small arms fire in clearing the towns in its sector. The 3rd Battalion, still in reserve, met no resistance at all in mopping up Neulautern and Spiegelberg, two kilometers to the south. Battalion supply lines were maintained with some difficulty.

Many abatis and mined roadblocks were found on the roads. A captured document revealed orders given to local burgomeisters and district leaders to use civilians in constructing roadblocks and obstacles.

On the 19th, in a rapid advance east of the Sulzbach-Spiegelberg road, no resistance was offered by the reeling enemy. In the town of Sulzbach itself only weak blows met the troops of the 1st Battalion. West of Sulzbach, minor resistance was encountered: small

arms and moderately light self-propelled fire; numerous roadblocks defended by a few infantrymen. In addition to Sulzbach, the 1st Battalion cleared the towns of Siebersbach, Klein Hochberg, Berwinkel, Liemannsklinge, Esehenstrüt, and Zwerenberg.

Co. E, at 0700, moved south to take the town of Nassach, then west to Kurzach, becoming engaged in a fire-fight on the outskirts of town.

The 3rd Battalion 397th passed through elements of the 2nd Battalion continued to move to the south. Co. L drove south and east from Lowenstein to take the town of Jux, just outside of Spiegelberg, securing it for the night. Co. K moved out of Stangenbach, on the battalion right flank, and passed through the 2nd Battalion in the vicinity of Nassach. When the company tried to take a group of farm buildings on the high ground south of the town, it ran into severe resistance. The enemy used everything at hand: panzerfausts, automatic weapons, self-propelled guns and mortars. Co. K dug in and called for artillery support. As darkness came on, Co. K withdrew to Nassach where they spent the night while artillery and 4.2 mortars wiped out the enemy positions.

Co. I attacked down the road which leads south from Spiegelberg, taking Bernholden against no resistance except lightly defended roadblocks.

Early in the morning of 20 April, a representative of the Volksturm from Backnang reported to the





Enemy radar equipment abandoned by the fleeing Wehrmacht.

A tank cuts a road through the trees to skirt a blown highway near Lewenstein.

troops of the 397th that Backnang and Oppenweiler were clear of the enemy and that the townspeople were willing to surrender the towns. This was probably the result of a propaganda leaflet campaign picturing the razed villages that had resisted our advances, comparing them to the untouched towns that had surrendered. As Cos. I and K arrived in Backnang, met by only a few snipers and light shelling from a 75mm gun in the south end of town, they found all the bridges across the Murr River blown. One, however, could be easily repaired, and the infantrymen, mounted on the tanks, pressed on after only a few hours delay. Continuing south, the 3rd Battalion reached and cleared Allmersbach at the close of day.

The 1st Battalion crossed the Murr River at Murrhardt, encountering moderate shelling, but continued the advance as far as Rudersberg, ten kilometers east of Winnenden. In this area extensive roadblocks had been carefully erected. Other towns taken were Eulenhöfle, Waltersberg, Horschhof, Rottmannsberg, Sechselberg, Ebersberg, Lippoldswiler, Daefern, Hohnweiler, Siebenknie, Unter Weissach, Ungeheuerhof, Heiningen and Almersbach, and many other places. In the 397th sector, too, the war had become a race.

The battalions of the 397th continued their relentless push of the previous night, reaching the Rems River against little resistance on 21 April. The 3rd Battalion occupied Grunbach and Geradstetten, completely surprising and capturing 90 prisoners, most of them Volksturm. The 1st Battalion 397th entered Schorndorf about 0400 hours, meeting no opposition. Advancing across the Rems River, and moving south to the Fils River, the Centurymen were held up only

by roadblocks. Among towns taken by the 1st Battalion on the 21st were Ober Weissach, Seelach, Unter Schlectbach, Mittel Schlectbach, Michelau, Asperglen, Metzlinsweilerhof and Schornbach. After entering the outskirts of Schorndorf, the battalion veered west, reorganizing in the vicinity of Winterbach and resuming the attack south across the Rems River.

The 2nd Battalion left its reserve positions in the vicinity of Unter Brüden, five kilometers east of Backnang, at 1100 to check the towns and roads in the regimental area to the rear of 1st and 3rd Battalions. At the close of the day, units of the battalion had penetrated as far as Hösslinswart. The 3rd Battalion cleared Königsbrunnhof, Rettersberg, Oppelsbohm, Steinach, Rohrbromm, Hebsack, Grunbach and Heppach. Roadblocks, abatis and blown bridges continued to constitute the whole of the enemy opposition.

The 397th reached the Neckar on 22 April. The 1st Battalion continued its steady advance to the south, clearing the wooded area on the route to its objective and becoming engaged in a heavy fire-fight against small arms and automatic weapons in the woods north of Plochingen. The towns of Winterbach, Engelberg, Hohengehren, Baltmannswir, Reichenbach and Plochingen were taken, while contact with the 3rd Battalion was established and crossings of the Neckar were reconnoitered. The 2nd Battalion checked and cleared the towns of Schnait, Aichelberg, Schanbach, Krummhardt and Aichschiess in the rear of the rapidly advancing 1st and 3rd Battalions. Towns occupied by the 3rd Battalion included Beutelsbach, Schönbühl, Manolzweiler, Altbach, and Zell. The units had no sooner reached the objectives, when the enemy began



Liberated Polish slave laborers cheer Century men in Backnang. Left, a group of Poles rests along a roadway.

to harass the rear of our troops. As a result of this unexpected development, two men were killed and several wounded when Hohengehren was raided at 1100 by about 50 Germans. Our supply routes were also harassed by small arms fire, necessitating details of tanks and infantry to patrol them. After dark, the enemy began blocking roads behind us by felling trees. Wire teams were constantly prevented from completing their lines by small groups of raiding Jerries.

Having reached the battalions' objectives in surprisingly rapid time, the troops of the 1st and 3rd Battalions on 23 April patrolled the north banks of the Neckar River within the regimental zone and conducted a reorganization. No enemy activity was reported during the day. The 2nd Battalion, attacking south from positions in the vicinity of Aichshies found three bridges intact across the Neckar at Altbach, which enabled the troops to cross without incident and clear Deizisau and other towns south of the river.

There were no definitely established front lines and the only contact with the enemy was in the form of stragglers. No defensive organization had been set up by the fleeing foe, and his only capabilities seemed to be the harassing of our supply lines and minor acts of sabotage.

There were no actual combat operations for the troops of the 397th on 24 April, and the units busied themselves solely with routine patrolling tasks. The 1st Battalion, billeted in Plochingen, patrolled the north bank of the Neckar within its assigned zone. Service Company moved up 30 miles from Oppenweiler, north of Backnang, to Plochingen, and showers were available along with a much needed change of

clothing. Taking advantage of the break, the men used the time to freshen up, write letters, and, of course, clean their weapons. The wonderful novelty of meals that steamed, served with coffee that actually warmed the canteen cup, inspired the more loquacious ones to gripe about the cubed vegetables.

And some merely slept.

While the 399th and 397th were chasing the Jerries south to where the Neckar bends east at Stuttgart, the 398th, to the north, circled the city widely and drove south parallel to the two other regiments.

After the 3rd Battalion 398th moved out of Heilbronn to meet the 2nd Battalion, which had come down from Jagstfeld at Neckarsulm, the two battalions moved east toward their objectives. On 13 April, the 2nd Battalion, taking Kochendorf and skirting the northern edge of Neckarsulm, headed directly east, sending patrols to clean out the town of Ödheim. The 3rd Battalion, having cleared Neckarsulm, moved out the next day to capture Sülzbach and Willsbach, on the road to Lowenstein.

From here, the regiment fanned out with the 2nd Battalion on the left, 3rd on the right, and 1st in reserve. The 1st Battalion passed through the 3rd Battalion in Willsbach, and began the attack southeast toward Lowenstein, receiving heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire from the flanks and front. Intense artillery and rocket concentrations fell on the troops from the vicinity of Lowenstein. Fighter-bombers from the 12th TAC strafed and bombed the town and the high ground to the south.

The 2nd Battalion, attacking farther to the northeast, cleared the towns of Affaltrach, Eschenau, Wim-



Long lines of PWs awaiting processing. Those not deemed dangerous were released soon after Germany's surrender and permitted to return to their homes.

mental, Dimbach, Schwabbach, and Waldbach, and sent patrols into Bitzfeld. The 3rd Battalion protected the right flank while moving to the east and southeast.

During the night of 14-15 April, the 1st Battalion 398th patrolled extensively to maintain contact with the enemy. At 0800, Cos. A and C jumped off southwest in the direction of Weiler against heavy automatic weapons fire on their right flank. By 1000, Co. A had taken Hösslinsülz, northwest of Weiler. Co. C relieved Co. I, and Cos. A and B relieved Cos. K and L. The 3rd Battalion consolidated its position and cleared small pockets of resistance in the regimental area, moving north to the vicinity of Bretzfeld by the end of the day.

The 2nd Battalion continued its attack from the left flank of the regiment and the division. At 1000 hours, the battalion jumped off to seize the towns of Sheppach, Adolzfurt, Windischenbach, Verrenberg and Pfedelbach. Elements of the battalion were responsible for maintaining and keeping contact with the 253rd Inf. of the 63rd Div., on our left flank.

On 16 April, the 1st Battalion jumped off at 0800, Co. B on the right, Co. C in the center and Co. A on the left. Co. B attacked from Weiler to the southeast to capture Friedrichshof and drive on to the southeast. Co. C attacked from Echenau to the east and southeast, and Co. A advanced to take Wieslensdorf. The entire battalion encountered intense small arms, automatic weapons and direct artillery fire.

The 2nd Battalion, to the north, motorized, prepared to advance in the rear of elements of the 10th Armored Div. at 0800. Detrucking in Pfedelbach, the battalion attacked to the south at 1330. Cos. E and G,

at the head of the battalion, encountered heavy SP fire at the beginning of the attack from south of Pfedelbach. At 1430, the battalion took Heuberg. At 1745, Co. E captured Buchhorn and advanced 300 yards to the south, meeting heavy resistance from the south and southeast. The 3rd Battalion, from positions in the vicinity of Adolzfurt, followed the 2nd Battalion, clearing bypassed pockets of resistance.

The following day, the 2nd Battalion co-ordinated its attack with that of the 10th Armored Div., continuing its advance to the southeast with Co. F on the right, E on the left, and G in reserve. The battalion seized the towns of Gleichen, Geisselhardt, Gailsbach, Lachweiler, Ziegelbronn, and Maibach. Numerous pockets of resistance, most of which were quickly cleared, were met along the way. The 3rd Battalion continued to mop up isolated groups of Jerries in the rear of the 2nd Battalion. The town of Geddelbach was taken by Co. K.

In the 1st Battalion zone, Co. A encountered heavy resistance north of Hohenacker. After neutralizing the enemy fire, the company continued in the direction of Unter Heimbach, and marched south to the aid of Co. C which was engaged in a heavy fire-fight north of Neuhütten. Co. B continued its attack southward, encountering little resistance except mined roadblocks, and maintaining contact with the 397th on the right.

On 18 April, the 1st Battalion started out at 0700 from the vicinity of Ammertsweiler and cleared the towns of Neuhütten, Lauxenhof, Finsterrot, Ammerstweiler, Wiedhof, Hals, Hohenstrassen, Böhringsweiler, Hohenegarton, Hammerschmiede, and Grab. At the end of day, the battalion was in the vicinity of Grab, six kilometers north of Murrhardt.

The 2nd Battalion dashed southeast to assist ele-



Bomb-battered Stuttgart, headquarters of the Century Division during the major portion of our occupation of southern Germany.

ments of the 10th Armored Div. During the period, the battalion crossed the Mainhardt-Hall road and swept through the towns of Rötendorf, Sittenhardt, Buchhof, Wieldansweiler, Marhördt, Ofenberg, Kornberg, Obermühle, Brennhof, Ebersberg, and Ober Rot. The 3rd Battalion followed behind the 2nd Battalion, mopping up groups of bypassed Jerries who still had some fight left in them.

On 19 April the end was in sight so far as the 398th was concerned. The 2nd Battalion, on the left flank, was pinched out by a battalion of the 71st Inf. Div. early in the morning, whereupon the 2nd Battalion regrouped and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Hütten, closing at 1300. The 3rd Battalion, in regimental reserve, moved to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Lowenstein.

Remaining on line, the 1st Battalion 398th proceeded to the south, clearing town after town. Co. B took Marbaeche, Co. A, Steinberg, and Co. C, Wolfenbrück. That night, advancing through the thick, inky, evergreen woods north of Murrhardt, in co-operation with tanks and TDs, the battalion seized two bridges across the Murr River at Murrhardt. The 1st Battalion objective was reached at 0730, 20 April. The battalion remained in the vicinity of Althütte until the 3rd Battalion passed through them at 1100. The 3rd Battalion continued to positions 500 yards south of Klaffenbach before stopping.

The 2nd Battalion was detached from the regiment and detailed to Öhringen as a guard for VI Corps.

On 21 April, the 3rd Battalion slashed forward once more, taking the towns of Langenberg, Eselshalden, Ober Steinberg, and Steinbrück, and pass-

ing through to Ober Urbach and Unter Urbach, east of Schorndorf. In the operation, the battalion overran a total of 11 roadblocks, five of which were defended. At Eselshalden in particular, strong resistance was met, but the Jerries withdrew after a sharp fire-fight. It was early morning by the time the 3rd Battalion reached Urbach. Here they reorganized and proceeded by motor to Winnenden, where, by this time, the rest of the regiment had assembled.

During the next few days, the 398th, pinched out of their area by the 71st Div., helped the other two Century regiments clean out their areas. With Winnenden as a base, patrols from the 1st and 3rd Battalions were out constantly, mopping up the areas bypassed by the 399th and the 397th in their respective dashes to the Neckar. The 1st Battalion cleared Leutenbach and Heofen and mopped up Winnenden itself. The 3rd Battalion stayed in Winnenden also, with the exception of Co. L, which was part of a 3rd Battalion task force, consisting of, in addition to Co. L, the 3rd Platoon of Co. B 781st Tank Battalion and one platoon of Co. B 325th Engrs. The task force cleared out the towns of Waiblingen, Fellbach, Bad Canstatt, Unter Türkheim, Beinstein, Endersbach, Heppach, and Korb, cutting down the isolated spots of resistance that would spring up as soon as the bulk of the division in this zone had passed on. Elements of the French 3rd Armored Div. were contacted in the northeastern section of Stuttgart. The Co. L CP was moved to Stuttgart during this period.

The 2nd Battalion 398th remained as a guard for VI Corps Hq. in Öhringen. Co. E was in Öhringen, Co. F in Sittenhardt, Co. G in Langenbeutingen, and Co. H in Kochersteinfeld.

On 23 April, the 1st Battalion 398th was sent to

ETO WAR ENDS

Unconditional surrender of all German forces was announced yesterday by the German radio at Flensburg. Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, successor to Adolf Hitler as Fuehrer of Germany, ordered the surrender and the German high command declared it effective, the German announcement said. No immediate confirmation came from the capitals of the Allied

U.S. Celebrates Victory 2nd Time in Ten Days

NEW YORK, May 7.—Tension-light America applauded today for the second time in 10 days over the unconditional report that Germany had surrendered unconditionally to the Allies.

In New York, clouds of torn paper — Goebbels' traditional form of celebration — began swirling through the city's granite canyons a quarter of an hour after the news. Each reached the population gathered at the high windows meeting and shouting at great windows in Brooklyn, 30 and 40 stories up.

King Expresses Thanks to Ike

LONDON, May 7 (AP).—The King expressed his thanks to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, Gen. Eisenhower, for the victory over Germany.

New S and S Is Off To a Rousing Start

Many of our nation's leading writers and editors are contributing to the new Sunday and Saturday edition of The Stars and Stripes, which is now being published in the European Theater of Operations.

King Leopold Rescued

WITTS (U.S. ARMY) May 7.—King Leopold of Belgium, 84, was rescued from the clutches of the Germans by the 10th Cavalry Group.

powers, but President Truman and Prime Minister Churchill will broadcast at 3 p. m. ETO time today, and King George VI will broadcast tonight at 9 o'clock.

In London, the British Ministry of Information announced that today would be V-E Day, and that today and tomorrow would be holidays in Britain. In Washington, President Truman said he had agreed with London and Moscow to make no announcement of surrender until a simultaneous statement could be made by the three governments.

Had waiting for formal confirmation of the peace news, New York and battered London began peace celebrations. Downtown New York was reported covered under the heaviest blast of paper thrown out of office buildings in years.

AP and Reuter correspondents assigned to SHAEP reported unofficially that the Germans had surrendered unconditionally to the Western Allies and Russia at 2:41 a.m. ETO time yesterday.

clear the woods from east of Winnenden, south to Winterbach. Then it moved on order to the vicinity of Ellwangen, where, under the control of Seventh Army, it continued to clear out resistance points.

During this period, the 117th Rcn. Sqdn. was attached to the 398th Combat Team, and patrolled the roads southeast of Stuttgart, from the Neckar River northeast to the Rems River, and then south again to the Neckar.

On 24 April, the Regimental CP closed into Waiblingen. The 1st Battalion, still attached to Seventh Army, moved into Stuttgart.

With assignment of the 399th Inf. to Seventh Army reserve on 25 April, the division was officially off the line for the first time in 175 days of sustained combat. The next ten days were spent in guarding important captured enemy installations such as factories, hospitals, various public utilities, roads, and bridges. Mopping up operations continued in individual unit sectors. What free time there was, we spent in cleaning equipment, personal hygiene and just relaxing. Chow, even with dehydrated vegetables and C-ration added, was a delightful experience. Some of us were becoming epicures again.



Shell of famous Stuttgart Rathaus stands amid leveled structures over which it once towered. Air bombing did most of damage.

And then, at 2000 hours of 5 May, under the commonplace heading of Operations Instructions No. 82, the following breathtaking message was dispatched to all division units:

EFFECTIVE AT ONCE, 100TH INF. DIV. TROOPS WILL NOT FIRE UPON ENEMY TROOPS UNLESS FIRED UPON OR UNLESS NECESSARY IN CONNECTION WITH POLICE DUTIES. PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN HQ. SEVENTH ARMY AND GERMAN FORCES OPPOSING SEVENTH ARMY REGARDING UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER BECOME EFFECTIVE 1200, 6 MAY 1945. THIS ORDER EFFECTS SEVENTH ARMY TROOPS ONLY. THIS INFORMATION IS NOW BEING ANNOUNCED OVER SEVENTH ARMY RADIO AT FIFTEEN MINUTE INTERVALS.

BURRESS
Maj. Gen.

For the next day, every Centuryman within a mile of a radio had his ear cocked. Exactly thirty-one hours later, a second, even more stirring message, was received from SHAEF over Gen. Eisenhower's signature.

A REPUTABLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND SIGNED THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF ALL GERMAN LAND, SEA, AND AIR FORCES IN EUROPE TO THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TO THE SOVIET HIGH COMMAND AT 0141 HOURS CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME, 7 MAY UNDER WHICH ALL FORCES WILL CEASE ACTIVE OPERATIONS AT 0001 HOURS, 9 MAY.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY ALL OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS BY ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WILL CEASE AND TROOPS WILL REMAIN IN PRESENT POSITIONS. MOVES INVOLVED IN OCCUPATIONAL DUTIES WILL CONTINUE. DUE TO DIFFICULTIES OF COMMUNICA-



Centurymen line up in Geislingen for passes to Paris, the Riviera, Switzerland, Belgium and England.



The EM Recreation Center at Nancy provided occupation-jaded GIs with dancing and entertainment.

TION THERE MAY BE SOME DELAY IN SIMILAR ORDERS REACHING ENEMY TROOPS SO FULL DEFENSIVE PRECAUTIONS WILL BE TAKEN.

ALL INFORMED DOWN TO AND INCLUDING DIVISIONS, TACTICAL AIR COMMANDS AND TROOPS, BASE SECTIONS, AND EQUIVALENT. NO RELEASE WILL BE MADE TO THE PRESS PENDING AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HEADS OF THE THREE GOVERNMENTS. EISENHOWER.

Strangely, the official announcement of Germany's surrender was greeted with the calm of an anticlimax. Some of us got drunk. A few of the more volatile Centurymen shot off steam by firing small arms into the air. But most of us, choked with happiness, merely shook a buddy's hand, laughed like a boy again, or just sat quietly and gave thanksgiving to God in his own way.

We had come a long way since that rainy afternoon on 1 November when we first crossed swords with the enemy and were ordered to attack at St. Remy. In those six months the Century Division had battled through the Vosges Mountains, a feat which had never before been accomplished in military history. We had liberated Bitche, a fortress which had not bowed to an invading army in over 200 years. We had survived a winter campaign and a serious enemy counteroffensive. We had slashed through the Saarland, covering 100 miles in two days. We had crossed the Rhine, captured Heilbronn against fanatical resistance, and chased a bewildered and beaten enemy clear south of Stuttgart. Those were six months which had changed us from rookies to battle-hardened veterans. A glorious half-year of victory after victory in which we had

taken the best punches the enemy had to offer and then knocked him on his back.

We had taken losses. In those 185 days of combat operations, 916 Centurymen had been killed, 3,656 wounded, and 180 listed as missing in action. That is the sad part of war. How wonderful it would have been if the dead could have drunk with us in victory.

But the enemy had taken losses, too, and we had given him far more than we had received. There is no accurate means of counting the number of casualties we inflicted upon him, but in prisoners alone we had amassed a total of 13,351 men—almost a full infantry division.

Thus ended "the bloody business of the day." Methodically, we turned toward the duties of Occupation with a prayer for a quick end to the war in the Pacific.

Occupation and Home

They spoke, I think, of perils past.

They spoke, I think, of peace at last.

One thing I remember:

Spring came on forever.

Spring came on forever.

Said the Chinese nightingale.

—VACHEL LINSAY,

The Chinese Nightingale.

"Change the sheets, Mom! I'm coming home!"

That cablegram, sent by Sgt. "Mickey" Dunay of Co. H 399th Inf., on the occasion of one of our numerous "shipping alerts," was the sum and substance of our thoughts and desires during occupation. Oh,



worldwartwoveterans.org



worldwartwoveterans.org

Occupation





Centurymen display shapely "gams" in musical which was an associate feature to ritualistic, official launching of the Society of the Sons of Bitche, colorful 100th Div. Association.

we did our job of policing the Germans, and we did it well. But the guns in Europe were silent, and men can't be criticised for hoping, planning, or dreaming. While the war in the Pacific was still raging, we wrapped our separation from home in the stoic philosophy of the soldier. But with the surrender of Japan, waiting to see our loved ones again became a seemingly unending nightmare.

Home, at such times, takes on an aurora which blinds one to reality. Domestic hardships, financial difficulties—can't get an apartment, baby needs shoes, butter is unobtainable, the boss is unbearable, dad has rheumatism, kids yowling, wives nagging, fiancée two-timing—are problems other people have. But you? Your personal life will be, and always was, a symphony of laughter and belches from T-bone steaks. And your plain Jane had more sex appeal than a bevy of Goldwyn pretties.

While we stewed and griped, however, we continued to perform our vital task of occupation. The complexities of this duty became painfully apparent to officers and men of the 100th when we were assigned a temporary occupation zone on 10 May, one day after V-E Day. The final surrender of Germany had found us in Army reserve, our first break in six months of sustained combat, and we were ready to take up our new duties immediately. The area under our command covered approximately 2,400 square miles and followed the right bank of the winding Neckar River from Heilbronn to the vicinity of Memmingen where our division boundary turned east to the city of Ulm.

Within this huge, rectangular area, some 80 miles long and 50 miles wide, lived thousands of unscreened civilians, an unestimated number of former enemy

troops who had drifted homeward with the collapse of the Wehrmacht, and multitudes of DPs. Two hundred and eighty highly important captured installations such as power plants, ammunition dumps, food factories, railroad yards, bridges, pipe lines, hospitals and miscellaneous manufacturing plants, had to be guarded constantly. In addition, watch had to be kept over our own command posts, supply dumps, motor pools, communications nets, and the various vital materiel of an army in the field. To do this work, more than 3,000 men had to be employed in a 24-hour period. This number did not take into account the routine guard of unit installations.

To effectively apprehend enemy nationals who might prove dangerous to our occupation, teams of linguists were trained to aid our division CIC Detachment. These men conducted initial investigations, culled important suspects from the huge number turned in daily, and sent them to the CIC for final interrogation and disposition. Minor offenders were either dealt with through normal military channels, or referred to civilian authorities for punishment. In order to perform these complex tasks efficiently, sectors were assigned to subordinate units, for which they were held responsible. Division Headquarters acted much in the same capacity as a police headquarters, receiving data from units on installations under guard as well as reports of activities in sub-sectors.

As efficient methods of occupation were developed, the few instances of subversive activities by civilians decreased. Generally, the Germans did not give us too much difficulty. They knew which side their potatoes were coming from, and with Uncle Sam in a mood to spank, Jerry was toeing the mark.



Outstanding among feature USO performers who entertained Centurymen overseas, were Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Ingrid Bergman, Marlene Dietrich, Martha Tilton, Jerry Colonna, and Larry Adler.

For the most part, the Germans were co-operative to the point of being servile. They obeyed occupation edicts with a deceptive eagerness, and after four or five months of occupation, acts of sabotage were almost non-existent.

Getting German civilians to do something constructive, was a horse of another color. With food strictly rationed, and luxuries unobtainable, the motive to earn a livelihood by building new business ventures from the ruins of the old, was sadly lacking. Most of the German's energies during this initial occupation period were devoted to black-market dealings and picking up cigarette butts in the streets. The craze for American cigarettes was not due to the German's desire for nicotine. The cigarette had, in effect, replaced the mark as a medium of exchange. In the system of barter which was in vogue, money had relatively little value although the Allied High Command had stabilized the German currency.

Non-fraternization rulings had some amorous GIs in a sweat until the ban on association was lifted. What most civilians in the States didn't realize was that the average Joe wouldn't care if he never spoke to a German male. The interest was purely in the *genera femina*. There isn't much use in explaining to a man who has not spoken to a woman in a year that some gorgeous blond was his enemy or that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male."

In such circumstances a man can reason rather circuitously. The particular light of his life was not a Nazi. She was merely dragged along with the Hitler "putsch." She loved the Americans, hated the French, despised the Russians. Besides the war was over and it was up to us to educate the Germans as to the benefits of democracy. Anyway, who was interested in her

politics? All the dame wanted was a bar of chocolate or a pack of butts. That was pretty reasonable for a fraulein who was as frustrated as we were. So we fraternized and dreamed of home.

Toward the end of May, 31 Centurymen with over 85 points were sent home for discharge, the first in a long line during the months to come.

Training emphasis was placed on routine exercises. Most Centurymen who had fought through France and Germany were bored to tears with learning how to sight a rifle again. But that's the Army and tears won't help a bit.

In June, Col. John C. Kilgore was appointed division Chief of Staff. Col. Kilgore replaced Col. Richard G. Prather who assumed command of the 397th Inf., a post left vacant by the transfer of Col. Gordon E. Singles to the 6th Army Group.

Gen. Burress drew a trip to the United States this same month to spark the Seventh War Bond drive. He was accompanied by Lt. Col. Elery M. Zehner, 1st Battalion 399th commander. The general left the division 4 June and returned 3 July.

On the all important food front, the Red Cross workers announced they had cooked their half-millionth doughnut. By the time we left for home, most of us felt we had eaten that many individually.

On 8 and 9 July, the 100th moved westward to a new occupation area approximately 50 miles wide and 35 miles deep. Division Headquarters was set up in Stuttgart. Complicated jurisdictional problems immediately arose since our new area contained 133 important installations and large civilian populations in such cities as Stuttgart and Pforzheim.

Less than two weeks after we had moved into our new zone, the division, on 21 and 22 July, partici-



Enemy small arms find a grave on the silt bottom of the Neckar.



GIs line up for "coffee and" at Rainbow Corners, Stuttgart.

pated in a secret dragnetting of the area. All buildings were thoroughly searched and pedestrians were halted and interrogated. The raid, known as "Operations Tally-ho," uncovered firearms, ammunition, black market evidence and contraband possessions. A number of Germans wanted for war crimes and Army connections were rounded up.

In a lighter vein, the 100th launched a membership drive for its first divisional organization, the *Society of the Sons of Bitche*. Headed by S. Sgt. David M. Swift of Co. C 399th Inf., as Grand Exalted Biggest, the organization became "official" following a ritualistic "knighting" ceremony at the Stuttgart Opera House presided over by Lt. Gen. Wade H. Haislip, commanding general of the Seventh Army and Sixth Army Group. Membership in the Society was held open to all Centurymen who had participated in the capture of the stronghold of Bitche and the smashing of the surrounding Maginot forts.

On the sports front, the Century Division softball team romped away with the Southern Seventh Army League Title by winning 12 out of 13 games. We followed with three straight wins in the Army playoffs

at Mannheim, but blew three straight to the 10th Armored Div., champs of the 3rd Army.

The *Century Sentinel*, division tabloid, which had maintained regular weekly publication throughout combat despite overwhelming printing obstacles, continued to publish a superior news sheet during occupation. The *Sentinel* was joined by 27 smaller unit papers within the division.

USO shows began to come to town. Outstanding among the feature presentations were performances by Jack Benny, Ingrid Bergman, Martha Tilton, Larry Adler, Bob Hope, and Jerry Colonna.

As the tempo of the Pacific war mounted and the probability of our redeployment at an early date increased, training gained momentum in August. Drill, lecture and combat rehearsal were in full swing when, on 10 August, the Century was alerted for redeployment to the Pacific. Movement from our area was to be completed by 27 August and our sailing date was set for 10 September.

Peculiarly, the fact that the division was to be redeployed via the States took precedence in our thoughts over the hazards of Pacific combat. Many of





A few lucky Centurymen left Marseilles for home before New Year's.



The excited shout "land" sent us clambering onto the mastheads.

us felt that we could die with a smile if we could see home once more, even for a little while. Then, with dramatic suddenness came news of the Atom Bomb and the surrender of Japan.

In a ringing note to the officers and men of the Century Division on 17 August, Gen. Burress wrote:

THE TREACHEROUS ATTACK OF THE JAPANESE ON DECEMBER 7TH, 1941 HAS BEEN AVENGED BY COMPLETE DEFEAT. FOR THIS WE ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR COMRADES IN THE PACIFIC AREAS. THEIR DEEDS OF HEROISM WILL LIVE THROUGH THE AGES, SIDE BY SIDE WITH YOUR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS.

IN THE PACIFIC AS WELL AS IN EUROPE WE WRAPPED IN SHROUDS OUR HERO DEAD, AND BLED THE HEARTS OF LOVED ONES BY SEPARATION. OUT OF THESE SACRIFICES MUST LIVE THE PRINCIPALS FOR WHICH MEN SUFFERED AND DIED. OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS NOT ONLY INDIVIDUAL, BUT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL. WE ARE OUR BROTHERS' KEEPER. OUR PRAYERS FOR PEACE HAVE BEEN ANSWERED AND NOW WE MAY MEASURE UP TO OUR PRIVILEGE OF LEADING THE WORLD INTO A PROGRAM THAT WILL BLESS THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH TOWARD GREATER MATERIAL PROSPERITY AND A DEEPER SPIRITUAL GRATITUDE TO GOD.

For the first time in long and weary months of service, home looked big, real, concrete. A mirage had by some miracle become a reality. We could see the front porch of our house, the long flight of tenement stairs, or the handsome entrance to our city apartment. Always, at the end, there were smiles, and kisses, and love; love in a world we had come to know as hate.

But what was to happen to our alert? Now that the

war in the Pacific was over, would our redeployment notice be cancelled or would we slip under the wire and get a boat home as scheduled? Early the next morning, 18 August, we had our answer. The division was de-alerted. We began sweating it out again.

The Century Information and Education program, which had gotten off to a belated start as a result of our uncertain redeployment status during May, June, and July, finally began to click after the Japanese surrender. Frequent lectures on the point system of discharge, the combat history of our division, current events, and kindred subjects, were conducted while we waited for definite word as to our future. With the end of the world conflict and the probability that our designated category would be changed, however, two units, the 1st Battalion 399th and the 925th F A Battalion, instituted vocational studies for civilian skills. Other units rapidly followed suit. More efficient operation had eliminated and consolidated numerous "targets" in our area, cutting required guards by 75% and enabling virtually all division personnel to subscribe to educational courses within the division. A number of officers and men were even able to attend courses at universities in France and England for specialized studies.

As units were alerted for shipment home and point scores were recomputed, the flow of personnel in and out of the Century Division grew to a torrent. Some 2,300 men with less than 60 points toward discharge entered the ranks of the 100th from the 63rd Div. during August, while 800 men and 33 officers with more than 70 points were transferred to the 447th AAA Battalion, which was returning to the States. By

the last week in September, 4,000 additional men had left the division on age, points and transfer to other units. These consisted of personnel with more than 65 points and less than 45 points, further complicating the outlook for our deployment status.

Signalizing the break-up of the old Century Division was the transfer of Brig. Gen. John B. Murphy, Division Artillery CO since 19 October 1943, to a new post in the States.

And then, on 22 September, Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burress, guiding light of the Century Division since its activation, was separated from the organization he had built into a mighty fighting machine. After almost three years as division commander, Gen. Burress was ordered to assume command of VI Corps, under which he and the 100th had served during a considerable part of our combat operations. Gen. Burress was succeeded by Brig. Gen. Andrew C. Tychsen who, first as CO of the 399th Inf., and later as assistant division commander, had also served with the division since activation. The division feted Gen. Burress at a special review in the Century Stadium at Bad Canstatt where the general bid a touching farewell to the 100th. Gen. Burress' address preceded a slam-bang football game in which the Century *Blue Devils* battled the 84th Div. *Railsplitters* to a 7-7 tie.

Awards won by the fighting men of the Century in combat, continued to pour in throughout occupation. Presidential Unit Citations awarded to the 397th's 1st and 2nd Battalions and the 399th's 3rd Battalion, boosted unit battle honors to eight.

But the big news for October was classification of the 100th in Category 4 with a tentative sailing date of 15 December. The cheers which greeted this announcement were almost hysterical. Here was a possibility of getting home for Christmas. But there was some lead in our silver lining. The way redeployment stacked up, only those Centurymen with more than 55 points would make the boat with the division. Since all those Centurymen who had been with the 100th from activation, but had not received an award, scored only 54 points, fully half of our original personnel would be left behind. General Tychsen fought a valiant battle to bring the 54-pointers along with us. But it was a losing fight. The big brass, late in November, finally handed down a negative verdict. In reality, that was the break-up of the Century Division.

The *Century Association*, official 100th Division alumni organization, with membership open to all division officer and EM personnel, was launched with

the blessing of Gen. Tychsen on 12 October. Besides acting in the capacity of parent organization to such intra-division groups as the *Sons of Bitche* and individual company, battalion, and regimental clubs, the *Century Association* was to distribute and coordinate the sale of the division history, *The Story of the Century*. Following a torrid election campaign for officers of the association, Russell M. O'Brien was elected president; Joseph J. Weckenman, vice-president; Wesley E. Jones, secretary; and Robert J. Karch, treasurer.

The 3rd Anniversary of the Century Division was celebrated with a stirring ceremony at the Century Stadium. Gen. Burress, as guest of honor, bid farewell to the 100th with the advice that Centurymen should always "be proud of your uniform, be proud of what you have done."

And so it ended. After several additional weeks of nail-biting in fear that our shipping alert would be cancelled again at the last moment, and hoping against hope that we could make the States by Christmas, movement orders finally arrived on 9 December.

Movement by motor and rail to Staging Area No. 1, Calas (Marseilles), France, Delta Base Section, was begun before dawn on 10 December 1945. Those units which moved by motor bivouacked overnight at Metz, Dijon, and St. Rambert, France. Four days and 620 miles later, the first Century units were closing into Marseilles. By 18 December, the entire division had completed the movement.

But we were still a long way from home. Weary, heartbreaking weeks slipped by while we chafed and prayed for our ship to come in. Division Headquarters, Headquarters Company and several Artillery outfits were fortunate enough to sail from Marseilles on New Year's Eve. But most of the remaining units did not clear port until February 1946.

At 0001 hours, 11 January 1946, three years and 53 days after activation, the 100th Infantry Division was officially inactivated.

In June 1946, Gen. Jacob Devers, Ground Forces Commander, reactivated the 100th as an active reserve division and redesignated it as airborne.

We pass on to the "flying infantrymen" of the future a legacy of courage, devotion and *esprit de corps* which measures up to that of any division in the history of the United States Army. Guard our honors. fledglings! Carry our patch proudly! In the names of our hallowed dead, may God grant that the need will never again arise for our banners to be borne to war.