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COLONEL HAROLD H. MCCLUNE
Commanding Officer, 376th Infantry Regiment

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Commanding Officer, 376th Infantry Regiment

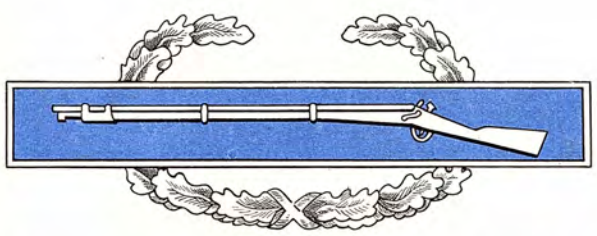
HISTORY

of the

376TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

BETWEEN THE YEARS OF

1921-1945



THE FIRST EXPERT INFANTRY REGIMENT IN THE
UNITED STATES ARMY

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THIS BOOK COMPILED, EDITED AND PRINTED BY THE REGIMENTAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION OFFICE

FOR THE OFFICERS AND MEN WHO HAVE SERVED AND ARE SERVING
WITH THE 376TH INFANTRY REGIMENT
FIRST EDITION

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DECEMBER 1945

HISTORY OF THE

376TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

1921-1945

REGIMENTAL INSIGNIA

THE COAT OF ARMS of the 376th Infantry Regiment contains symbols that have been closely associated with American history since pre-Revolutionary days. The black rattlesnake on a field of gold dates back to 1638, being taken from the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston. The rattlesnake and the accompanying motto, "Don't Tread on Me" also appear on the flag carried during the Revolutionary War by the communities from which the original personnel of the 376th Infantry Regiment were drawn. It appeared again on the flag designed by Colonel Christopher Gadsden, who gave this reason for choosing the device: "The rattlesnake has no eye lids and is therefore a symbol of vigilance. It is said of the rattlesnake that it never began a fight nor when once engaged, ever surrendered. It is therefore, an emblem of peace, yet true courage. The rattlesnake is found only in North America. Among the ancients, serpents were considered to possess wisdom and vigilance."

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The bolt of lightning, or thunderbolt, on a bend of fiery red symbolizes the power of destruction over the enemy, and is probably the first "blitzkrieg" device to be incorporated in a regimental coat of arms. The upper field of blue designates Infantry. At this writing the blue field contains no device because at the time the Coat of Arms was designed, the 376th Infantry Regiment was entitled to no battle honors. However, the magnificent achievements of the Regiment in the present war will be commemorated by a symbol to be placed in the field at some future date.

INTRODUCTION

COLONEL HAROLD H. McCLUNE

The design of this book's compilers is to present a panoramic view of the 376th Infantry from its birth in September 1921 to the capitulation of the Japanese Empire in August 1945; a panorama of battle experiences that have demonstrated our superiority over the enemy that confronted us, and proved the mettle of our civilian Army.

While this is the story of an infantry regiment, we do not fail to appreciate the contributions modern technical science, designer of our weapons, our armor and aircraft support, and our means of protecting against weapons, has made for the success of our infantry. The weapons and equipment which have proved so deadly in the hands of this war s foot-soldiers are the best that any army ever had.

In view of these new developments, the infantryman who, until recently did most of his fighting with a rifle, has become a specialist, and his training must be more thorough than that of any other branch of the army. It must begin with knowledge, gleaned first from the books and regulations; but it must stop short of depending on ready-made ideas. Much had to be learned from other battles, and from brothers-in-arms who learned the hard way. These principles are sound. The leaders and the men alike have proved them in the way they adapted themselves and applied the technique learned in the shock of battle when flesh and blood were the price exacted.

An attempt has here been made to tell the story of how the Regiment fought—the story of its battles, and the story of its individual acts of courage in the face of the enemy. Much is said of the weather and the land we fought in, but words are inadequate here. Frozen feet, hunger, loss of sleep, constant exposure to enemy fire, and the shock of seeing a buddy killed or wounded cannot be described. They must be lived.

It is the purpose of this volume to tell that story—as much of it as can be told in words—simply, without exaggeration. This history needs no embellishments. It is hoped this work may be of use to future military historians searching for details not to be found in official War Department records. But primarily it is intended for the officers and men who have served, and are serving with the 376th Infantry Regiment. For all of us who wish to keep alive our rich experience with this noble organization, this book will serve to renew our memories and discipline our imaginations.

WE WON'T
WE CAN'T FORGET

CHAPLAIN BUCHANAN

Lord God, creator of all men, apart
From whom no man knows life, or tastes of death,
Author of justice, mercy, and man's hope,
Out of great weariness at the battle's end
We turn to Thee. Stunned by such strange silence,
We search ourselves for gratitude and praise.
They say a victory's ours, that war is ended . . .
We yet are men, and from our hearts we pray —
Accept our tardy thanks.
But, God of care and mercy, where are these
Who bled and suffered here, and now are gone?
They were our friends, our brothers in the fight,
Breathing the air we breathed, the good and bad;
They felt what we felt, shared our loves and shared
Our little peeves, and through our endless days,
Joined us in bickering and high spirits too,
In love of family, sweethearts and daily bread,
We dreamed with them of home, of joyous laughter;
Of daily cares and freedom once again
To go our way through all our nights and days.
These dreams we left behind us when we faced
Our stubborn enemy together here . . .
The beauty of the snow upon the hills
Was marred by black and the redness of their blood.
No refuge here, and each with his own prayer
Sought strength from his own God.
Their duty plain, their honor and their pride
Held high against the Winter's piercing chill . . .

Against the enemy's relentless hate . . .
They struggled forward to this victory
And their own immortal fate.
We saw them hit; we heard their cries, and lay
Beside them in their pain and agony.
And now, our God, we call their names until
Our comrades come to tell us these are dead,
And we are numb . . .
Lord God, hear now our prayer, lest we forget:
These were the best of men; our cherished friends
In this life of war where man was close to man.
We loved what they loved, felt their love in turn,
And were a part of them, and they of us.
Give us the strength to hold their memory firm,
That in our lives they yet may live, and know
The honor of our children's world of peace
For which they all have paid so high a fee.
Oh, God of mercy, each through his own creed
Honored Thy name and spoke to Thee in need
Out of his plain sincerity.
Hear us now, and still preserve their souls
In the bright honor of their shining hour.
In Heaven and on earth let all men know
That of all manhood these have been the flower;
That in those moments of a world gone mad,
Each clung to pride and saw his duty plain.
Because they left us we are poor and robbed
Of all the strength and love we had in them.
Yet, with their cherished memory they willed
Us freedom and their yearning after peace,
And years of greater trust twixt man and man.
God hear our prayer, for they are part of us
And we shall not forget,
Nor can forget . . .

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OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE 376TH INFANTRY KILLED IN ACTION OR DIED OF WOUNDS

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JAMES H. McCOY JR.
HARRY N. McLAUGHLIN
THEODOR E. WEISSICH
SECOND LIEUTENANTS
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ERNEST N. DYRLUND
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ROY TUBBS
EVERETT W. ZELLERS
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RALPH ALLEN
ROBERT L. ALLEN
GORAN H. ASP
PASCUAL AYALA
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EMIL G. BAUMGARTNER
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CHAPTER I In the Beginning

1921–1942

In August 1945 when the atomic bomb at last brought the tottering Japanese Empire to its knees, the 376th Infantry, manning a sector of the Russian-American control line in Czechoslovakia, at last had time to look back over its long career and the part it had played in history's greatest war. For many in the Regiment this history was short, extending back over no more than a few weeks or a few months. Some knew only the patterned green farmlands of Czechoslovakia. Others remembered Wuppertal and the broken streets of Ludwigshafen. For others memories of the 376th began with Veckring, Ayl, Ockfen, Wiltingen and other towns in the wake of the long advance from the Siegfried Switch Line to the Rhine.

There were many too who could look back as far as training days in the mud of Camp McCain, Mississippi, or to the dust storms and treeless wastes of Camp Phillips, Kansas. A few still remember that day at Fort Custer, Michigan, back in September 1942, when Colonel Arthur N. Payne presented the Regimental colors to Major General Harry J. Malony, and the 376th became officially activated as a part of the 94th Division. Captain George P. Whitman, S-3 of the Second Bat-

talion, can even tell stories of the old Organized Reserve days before activation. But many officers and men now serving with the Regiment were not even born on that September in 1921 when the 376th first saw the light of day.

The 376th was more of a blueprint than an actual organization in those days. It was a skeleton regiment of the skeleton 94th Division, Organized Reserve, which was one of the then slightly undernourished brain children of the National Defense Act of 1920. In those early days the Regiment consisted entirely of officers, most of them recently returned veterans of France and the occupation of the Rhineland.

Commanded from the first by New Hampshire-bred war veteran, Colonel Arthur N. Payne, the infant 376th was composed entirely of residents of historic Eastern Massachusetts, and its headquarters was established in Boston—conveniently close to home for most of its members.

It was only natural that an organization so surrounded by Bay State tradition should choose as the device for its coat of arms the rattlesnake and motto "Don't tread on me." The rattlesnake, aside from being a symbol of eternal vigilance, had appeared, along with this motto, on the flag of the men who had "fired the shot heard 'round the world" at Lexington and Concord in Revolutionary days. Most of the original personnel of the 376th were direct descendants of these Minutemen, the symbolic statue of which appears on the crest of every reserve regiment in the army.

During the first decade of its existence, the 376th was a fairly dormant organization from a military point of view for fifty weeks of the year. Its members went about their civilian occupations and attended drill sessions, and later military classes one or two evenings a week The other two weeks were devoted to more extensive training sessions held first at Fort Devens with the rest of the 94th Division and later at separate unit camps.

It was in 1932 that the military horizon of the 376th began to broaden. In that year the Regiment was first detailed to take charge of a CMTC regiment of somewhere near 1,000 men. It was at this time that a number of officers of the Regiment received a year of training with the Regular Army under the provisions of the Thomason Act.

In addition to the limited training schedule provided by law, the officers of the Regiment devoted much time to rifle marksmanship, and in this respect the Regiment earned an enviable local reputation. Several handsome trophies were the subject of contest on various occasions, the first being known as the "Battalion Challenge Trophy." Matches were held each year beginning in 1925, and the Regiment for purposes of the match was divided into four groups: Regimental

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and the three battalions. Each group could enter as many contestants as desired and its score was determined by taking the five highest recorded. The trophy was up for seven years when it was finally won for the third time by Regimental Headquarters and is now proudly possessed by Colonel Payne.

Several sub-calibre indoor matches and turkey shoots were held at various intervals, and in 1935 the Regiment entered a team in the Metropolitan Rifle and Pistol League, being the only Reserve component ever to participate. Led by Captain Martin J. Sullivan the team won first prize in its division against nine others which had offered competition of the stiffest sort.

On July 26th, 1934, Colonel Henry A. Hale assumed command of the 376th. Colonel Hale was born in Salem, Massachusetts, June 23rd, 1888, graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1910, attended Plattsburg Training Camp, August 1916. He was commissioned Captain in June 1917, and served with the 23rd Engineers. It was under the command of Colonel Hale that the 376th Infantry Chapter, Reserve Officers Association, proposed a plan for inactive duty pay for Reserve Officers which received many favorable comments from high ranking officers of the Army.

Along with its duties the Regiment managed to engage in a number of unofficial festivities. Regular dinners and parties were held at the Rowes Wharf Station of the Boston Yacht Club. Somewhat outside the scope of this History is the story of the "Mystic Council of the Mahagony Picture Frame." Readers interested in this delightful tale are referred to any of the original personnel of the Regiment.

Activation

First indications of the activation of the 376th Infantry Regiment were received during June 1942 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where the officer cadre was selected from the 77th Division. On July 12th the cadre began studies at a Division Officers School at Fort Benning, Georgia. The cadre consisted of the following officers: Major Gerald D. Waits, Captains John R. Dossenbach, Thomas R. Kelley, Benjamin S. Roper, Graydon A. Tunstall, Alkie C. Kaufman, Frederick W. Bucky, Jr., First Lieutenants Carl H. Schofield, Hugh R. Gilmore, Frank Malinsky, Jr., Cecil J. King, John W. Scott, George P. Whitman, Charles A. Sinclair, Lawrence S. Simcox, John D. Heath, Miles S. Andrews, Marion P. Smith, Max H. Karelitz, Julian M. Way, Howard P. Landry, Robert Smith, Jr., Edward S. Pilcher, Albert S. Fisher, and William H. Buehrle, Jr. Only members of the cadre who had been on the roster of the Regiment during its reserve status were Lieutenants Whitman and Andrews.

Commanding the cadre, and later Commanding Officer of the 376th Infantry Regiment, was Colonel Maximilian Clay, who had been the chief of the Communications Section at the Infantry School, Fort Benning. From the 325th Infantry, 82nd Division came Lieutenant Colonel V. J. Conrad to be Executive Officer of the new Regiment. Lieutenant Colonels Henry Borntraeger and Ernest F. Walker commanded the First and Third Battalions, respectively. The Second Battalion was under the command of Major (now Lieutenant Colonel) Olivious C. Martin, Jr. S-3 duties were handled by Major James B. Bennett, later commander of the Third Battalion. All the other officers, with one exception, had been previously assigned to the 307th Infantry and were acquainted with one another.

On August 8th, 1942, at the completion of the Division Officers School at Fort Benning, the officer cadre began its journey to Fort Custer, Michigan, where the Regiment was to be officially activated, and begin its training. Arriving at Fort Custer August 12th, the officers found most of the area assigned to the Regiment still occupied by other troops. Temporary headquarters were set up, but had to be moved three times. On August 15th the enlisted cadre arrived at Fort Custer. This cadre consisted entirely of former members of the 307th Infantry, 77th Division. The balance of officers, three First Lieutenants and 98 Second Lieutenants arrived between August 23rd and 25th. Most of these officers were recent graduates of the Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning.

At this time the officers and enlisted cadre began full scale preparations for the reception of the filler replacements, expected on September 15th. Training was held

to refresh the officers and non-commissioned officers on the subjects they would soon be teaching the new recruits. On September 12th the Regiment learned from Division that the new men would not arrive before October 1st. So the training schedule was extended to that date.

On September 15th the 376th Infantry Regiment was formally activated in a ceremony with other units of the Division. Colonel Arthur N. Payne, first Commanding Officer of the Regiment, represented the Division in its reserve status. He presented the Regimental Colors to Major General Harry J. Malony, Commanding General of the 94th Division. That evening Colonel Payne messed with the officers of the 376th, and related to them many anecdotes of the Reserve Regiment's history.

On September 18th a detail of 114 enlisted men and five officers, Captain Roper in charge, participated with other units of the Division, in the dedication ceremony of the Willow Run airplane factory. President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt were present. A commendation was later received from the Commanding General of the Sixth Service Command as to the exceptional performance of the officers and men of the 94th Division during the ceremony.

Still no recruits were forthcoming. Then early in November the Regiment received orders to move to Camp Phillips, Kansas and all training gave way to boxing and crating operations. The Regiment entrained on the morning of November 15th and detrained at Camp Phillips to find it a new post, only partially completed, consisting of "theater of operations" type buildings. Bleak, rolling and treeless prairies surrounded the cantonment area.

Undaunted by the inhospitable atmosphere, the cadre began once more the job of preparing camp for the new men. On December 1st the recruits began to stream in, and continued to arrive throughout the month.

If Camp Phillips had seemed dismal to the cadre, it was utter desert to these new and inexperienced soldiers, most of them only a few weeks out of civilian life. The weather was now that of a typical Kansas Winter, extremely cold, with a constant wind of almost hurricane proportions.

Despite the weather, training had to begin. But first there was the business of classifying the new men and placing them where they were best fitted. Their backgrounds were as varied as the hues of the rainbow, representing every walk of civilian life. But soon each one was training to perform an Army job that matched his talents as closely as possible.

Basic and technical training began under the thirteen weeks Mobilization Training Program on December 28th, 1942. Every soldier remembers his basic training as a

U. S. Army Signal Corps

The 376th Infantry Regiment Rifle Team, winners of the 94th Division Rifle Match held at Camp Phillips, Kansas, Saturday, April 24, 1943.

frantically hurried period, crammed with callisthenics, close order drill, rifle marksmanship, tactical training, discipline, and more callisthenics, all punctuated with KP, policing the area, and other offensive details. For the men of the 376th all of this was augmented by the fierceness of the Kansas Winter and the inadequacy of the tar paper barracks.

When a new man joins the Regiment, the oldtimers usually tell him first about their experiences in combat, but inevitably they soon get around to tall tales of those days back in Kansas.

The Regiment experienced its first loss when Private Donald B. Gipson, Company D, died at the Station Hospital on February 10th from complications arising from an appendicitis operation. Other casualties included 33 march fractures in the first eight weeks of training. The Medical Detachment was also kept busy caring for the many serious colds and other respiratory infections caused by severe weather. The process of elimination had begun. Those who could not stand up under the rigors of basic training were discharged or reassigned. The men who remained were slowly becoming hardened soldiers.

Snow and high winds constantly harassed the Regiment during the range season.

However, 89.5% of the men qualified with the M-1; 79.5% with the Browning Automatic Rifle; 89.5% with the Light Machine Gun and 96.0% with the 37mm Anti-Tank Gun. At the end of basic training, the Regiment passed the proficiency tests conducted from March 22nd to 27th by XI Corps. At this time the Regiment consisted of 160 officers, 2 warrant officers and 3,424 enlisted men.

With the beginning of April came the unit training period. In many ways this was more rugged than basic, but it was not so rushed, and the men, now more adept at the time-consuming "off-duty" tasks that continually plague a soldier, had more opportunity for recreation. There were passes to the surrounding towns—Salina, Wichita, McPherson, and even across the state line to the metropolis of Kansas City, Missouri.

In camp, athletic activities were organized to fill the lengthening evenings. The first of these was basketball. On April 1st the 376th enlisted men's team captured the 94th Division Basketball Championship by winning all ten games they played. The 376th Medical Detachment won the Division Company Championship on April 7th. Track season followed, and despite the eternally muddy condition of the turf, interest was keen. On April 17th, Technician Fourth Grade Horace Yancey, Medical Detachment, won the Division cross-country run. What had been a Winter training chore became a Springtime pleasure with the formation of a rifle team. On April 24th, the 376th Rifle Team won the Division matches. But the favorite relaxation was of course furloughs, which were granted throughout the Spring.

Unit training included many of the Army's newly-developed "Battle" courses, purpose of which was to condition the men to the noise, excitement and confusion of combat. There was the infiltration course, which required creeping and crawling through mud and barbed wire entanglements while under fire. Other courses included day and night close combat courses, village fighting, and the attack of fortified areas. These all paid dividends in calmness and coolness when the Regiment actually entered combat.

Lieutenant Colonel Olivious C. Martin took Companies A and C and the entire Second Battalion to Nebraska on April 20th. There, during the next six days, they guarded the route of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was then on a transcontinental tour of war industries.

On May 20th, Captain Edwin S. Pilcher and Lieutenant Louis J. Ademec left for Personnel Replacement Depot, Shenango, Pennsylvania and overseas service, being the first of many to leave the Regiment in this way.

Summer found Kansas just as uncomfortable as Winter and Spring had been. The wind, now from the South, covered the marching, sweating soldiers with a film

of dust from the Mid-West's dust-bowl. On June 2nd seven more officers were released from duty with the Regiment for overseas duty as replacements.

On June 19th the Regiment, progressing from unit training to the combined phase of training, participated in eight combat-team problems, followed by two Division problems. It was at this time that the Regiment learned to work with the attached units which were to support it so ably in combat. These included the 919th Field Artillery Battalion; Company C, 319th Medical Battalion; First Platoon, Company C, 319th Engineer Battalion; and a detachment from the 94th Signal Company.

During July XI Corps conducted Battalion Combat Firing Proficiency tests, and on August 16th the Regiment was reorganized under the new Table of Organization, which, among other changes, called for the addition of a Cannon Company. Upon its activation, the Cannon Company was commanded by Captain William H. Buehrle. Strength of the Regiment at this time was 150 officers, 3 warrant officers and 3,060 enlisted men. During this month sixteen additional officers left for overseas duty.

During this time the 376th continued to excel in all phases of athletic competition. The Regimental Boxing Team won the Division Championship, and in August Technician Fifth Grade Martin Lipton, Medical Detachment, won the Division Tennis Championship.

With September came preparations to move to Tennessee to participate in the Second Army Maneuvers. Major Thomas R. Kelley commanded the advance party which preceded the Regiment to its initial area near Gallatin, Tennessee. The entire Regiment travelled by train, leaving all organic transportation behind. Upon arrival in the maneuver area, they took over the vehicles left there by the 319th Infantry of the 80th Division.

Maneuvers were like a great game, far more interesting than other phases of training. At the same time they were the best possible way of learning the many complicated details of large-scale combat operations. During the course of the problems, the Regiment was opposed by such worthy foes as the 30th Infantry Division, 12th Armored Division, and IV Armored Corps. The Tennessee countryside was dotted with pine-covered hills, beautiful to the eye, but backbreaking to soldiers laden with heavy packs. However the difficult climbs proved highly beneficial to the general physical condition of all the men. Through the maneuver area flowed the turbulent Cumberland River, which at two different times the Regiment used for practice assault crossings. This training proved useful when it came time to cross the Saar River in Germany.

Rest periods between the problems were the occasion for many delightful campfire gatherings. Food received in packages from the folks at home was washed

down with great quantities of 3.2 beer and a few shots of Tennessee mountain moonshine. With singing and story-telling, these festivities lasted well into the night. Passes to Nashville were also a means of escape from army routine.

Unlike an actual combat zone, the Tennessee Maneuver Area was a good place in which to get lost. Opportunities for individuals and small groups to "live alone and like it" were ideal. Initial attempts at large-scale operations often caused complete disorganization; consequently, squads and half-squads lost all contact with higher echelons and had to take to the hills.

At such times, the native ingenuity of the American soldier and the warm hospitality of the Tennessee farmers combined to provide adequate insurance against starvation. With hunger in their eyes GI's would approach a farmhouse, never to be turned away. The meanest shack was good for a meal. And what meals! The thought of them kindles fond memories in the mental palate of every ETO-happy Joe. Real Southern-style fried chicken, candied yams, hot biscuits, steaming black coffee, and always a large, freshly-baked pie. For additional rations there was always the cross-roads general store. Of course there was usually an MP stationed outside to keep soldiers from entering these forbidden premises, but it was simplicity itself to engage a local Huck Finn as purchasing agent.

For comfortable quarters there was the farmer's hay loft, far more conducive to sound sleep than any slit trench or pup tent. At the end of the problem the stragglers would find their way back to their outfits, no wiser in tactics but well versed in the problems of supply.

Upon the termination of maneuvers, the Regiment assembled near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and moved by truck to Camp Forrest. Pyramidal tents served for quarters during the entire stay at Forrest. During the first week there, fifty percent of the Regiment went on furlough. Over 500 men left for overseas during maneuvers.

On November 16th, 50 enlisted men transferred to the 18th Division. On the same day Captain William H. McLaine, with two other officers and one hundred enlisted men, left to guard German Prisoners of War working at Indianola, Mississippi. This left the Regiment at less than half strength. The remaining men went through refresher courses on basic subjects. Off-duty hours were spent in the small but bustling town of Tullahoma, Tennessee.

With the recall of Colonel Clay to the position of Chief of the Communications Section, Infantry School, Fort Benning, command of the 376th Infantry Regiment was assumed by Colonel Harold H. McClune on November 24th. A Colonel in the Regular Army, Colonel McClune came to the 376th from the 144th Infantry Regiment, whose Commanding Officer he had been for a short time. Previously he had

been Chief of Staff of the Puerto Rican Mobile Force for almost two years. His earlier service includes the Mexican Campaign, World War I and Army of Occupation in Germany after 1918. His decorations include the Silver Star and the Purple Heart, to both of which he has received oak leaf clusters while commanding the 376th.

Throughout November rumors circulated concerning the next station. After the over-ventilated shacks of Camp Phillips and the rocky hills of Tennessee, everyone was looking forward to the comparative comfort of "double-decker" barracks, perhaps in some permanent post in the East, close to a large city. Not until the Regiment boarded trucks and headed South on November 26th was it made known to all that the new home was to be Camp McCain in Mississippi.

The first view of the new post caused many hearts to sink. Here were the same tar-paper barracks so familiar to the veterans of the Phillips campaign, and the mud was just as thick. But happily, there were a few trees dotting the landscape.

Little time was devoted to the business of settling down and getting comfortable in the new home. Intensive training was resumed immediately. This phase was known as Post-Maneuver training. It was to be the last of the dry running; the final pre-combat stage. It included everything from a hasty review of basic subjects to the most elaborate divisional maneuvers. The first emphasis, after the basic subjects, was on the integration of a squad as a fighting unit. Realistic situations were presented, allowing leaders to use their initiative much as they would in a similar combat situation. Concurrently training was given in all phases of marksmanship. New ranges, such as the transition course and the moving target course, were set up.

Despite the full schedule, which included many night problems, it did not take long for the men of the Regiment to exploit fully all the recreational facilities of the surrounding country. Memphis, Tennessee, famed for its pretty girls, was 100 miles away. On Saturday afternoon the Memphis train was crammed wih pleasure-seeking soldiers. The citizens of Memphis greeted the 376th with typical warm Southern hospitality. The Knights of Columbus, the YMCA, the USO and the many church societies all cooperated to make week-end passes as delightful as possible. The 376th continued to maintain its reputation of being fun-loving, without being over noisy and ill-mannered.

For those who sought relief from the arid laws of Mississippi, an unoffical Saturday night headquarters was established in the crowded, smoke-filled Creel Room of the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. Those who sought quieter relaxation migrated to the smaller towns of Mississippi. In Grenada, Winona, Oxford, Greenwood, Jack-

U. S. Army Signal Corps

At a Division Review to honor the Expert Infantry units, Colonel Harold H. McClune receives the Expert Infantry Streamers from Major General Harry J. Malony, Division Commander, at Camp McCain, Miss., June 1944.

son—all quiet church-going towns—many men found the homelike atmosphere for which they yearned. Homesickness was also alleviated by furloughs, which were granted to seven percent of the Regiment at a time.

Nor were recreational facilities in camp neglected. An Inter-Company Basketball league was organized at once, with active participation by all units. Under the direction of ex-pugilist Sergeant Benny Cohen, of Company I, boxing training was given daily in the Regimental Recreation Hall. Each company had its day room, with a radio, comfortable chairs and a "coke" machine. PX's were well-stocked with beer, soft drinks, candy, cigarettes and other needs. The moving picture theatre in the Regimental area presented latest features nightly.

During the Winter, replacements began to arrive to fill up the half-strength squads. Many of the new men were former students under the Army Specialized Training Program. They brought to the Regiment much needed youth and vigor. At first these "college kids" were looked upon with disfavor by the older soldiers of the Regiment. But it soon became apparent even to the most obstinate that intellect and education did not prevent a man from being a good fighting soldier. Other

replacements came directly from reception centers. These were trained in provisional companies by experienced non-coms, and soon became integrated into the Regimental fighting team.

On February 14th the 376th moved to Holly Springs National Forest, Mississippi for two weeks of field problems for the squad. Here the squads encountered conditions which called on each man for the utmost in resourcefulness and ingenuity. But just as in maneuvers, there was the enjoyment of getting "back to nature". At the same time the Regiment began a thorough course in map and aerial photo reading for officers and non-commissioned officers.

On February 21st, Private First Class Charles P. Seaman, Headquarters Company, Third Battalion, was engaged in a grenade throwing problem. One grenade, thrown by another man, hit an obstruction on the throwing pit, and rolled back into the pit amongst Seaman and five other participants. Seaman quickly siezed the live grenade and threw it, the grenade bursting in air shortly after clearing the dugout.

For this heroic action, Private First Class Seaman was awarded the Soldier's Medal by War Department General Order 44, April 31st, 1944, the presentation being made by the Division Commander on June 3rd at Camp McCain. Seaman was fatally wounded by sniper fire during the crossing of the Saar in February 1945.

With early Spring came the graduation from squad to platoon problems. The first problems were held on the McCain reservation, but late in April the Regiment moved again to Holly Springs for a more realistic series. The platoons, entirely on their own, had to follow difficult compass courses over all types of terrain, across streams and over high wooded hills, meeting all kinds of simulated resistance.

Interests in sports mounted when the Regiment was represented in the annual Golden Gloves Boxing Tournament. Private First Class George McDonald, Company M, won the Mid-South Heavyweight Title in Memphis. Going on to the Golden Gloves finals, held at the Chicago Stadium in Chicago, McDonald dropped a very close decision to the national title-holder.

Beginning in May almost everyone devoted off-duty hours to the national pastime, baseball. The Regimental team took on all comers and each company had its own softball team. Star of the season was Private First Class Carl Heidel, Company F, who pitched a no-hit, no-run game.

Post Maneuver Training Period Number Two terminated with the Platoon Firing Problems and the Rolling Barrage Exercise. The firing problems simulated combat in minute detail. In the rolling barrage exercise the troops experienced the thrill

of advancing close to the enemy under a barrage of supporting artillery. At this time tests began for the Expert Infantry Badge. These tests covered every phase of the training of the combat soldier. Requirements included marching 25 miles in 8 hours, and 9 miles in 2 hours, with full field equipment; physical fitness tests, compass courses, and all the myriad subjects a soldier must learn before he is ready to meet the enemy. The entire Regiment undertook the tests with such vigor that it came as no surprise when early in June the War Department made the announcement that the 376th Infantry was the first regiment in the United States Army to qualify as an Expert Infantry Regiment.

For this distinction the Regiment was complimented by then Chief of Army Ground Forces, General Leslie B. McNair. At a Division review held to honor the Expert Infantry units, Colonel McClune received the Expert Infantry Streamers; one for the Regiment, and one for each battalion and company, from General Malony, who added his personal congratulations.

Although the Regiment had begun company firing problems in May, an acceleration of the training schedule caused the cessation of this program, and the immediate introduction of battalion problems. Combat experience early in the war had taught the need of thorough training of battalions as independent fighting units. This was repeatedly emphasized in the problems that followed, and the results of the training are apparent in the splendid record of the three battalions in combat.

A demonstration of the terrific fire power contained within a battallion was given for Under Secretary of War, Robert S. Patterson, who visited the Division for two days. The Second Battalion Firing Test involved preparation of a defensive area and an attack with live ammunition against a position prepared by a different battalion. Extensive artillery and mortar fire was incorporated in the problem. The test was valuable training because of the firing restrictions, which were left almost entirely in the hands of the battalion and company commanders.

From June 13th to 20th, the Regiment participated in the final phase of combat training; a rugged, complex, all-weather Divisional problem. To begin with, Regiment motored to Kilmichael, Mississippi, several miles from the camp reservation. From there they advanced, in sweltering heat, through many obstacles to Dale Road within the reservation. Here live ammunition was substituted for blanks, providing a grand finale to the situation.

Off to the Wars

On June 23rd an advance party of the 376th Infantry started out on its journey overseas. This was the occasion for many rumors as to the destination and the eventual mission of the Regiment. Until the very last, the unofficial G-2 set up in each company latrine maintained, "Oh, this outfit will never go overseas!" Training was confined chiefly to physical fitness exercises, and to making up deficiencies in the training of some of the newer replacements. Chief activity was the issue of new equipment. Password for this period was "POM" which stood for Preparation for Overseas Movement. Every man, every tent pole, every legging lace had to be POM qualified and combat serviceable before the Regiment could move. Then came packing and crating. There could be little doubt that a long trip was ahead. But the reactionaries still mumbled things about Iceland and other non-combat stations. They couldn't believe that the 376th was at last ready to enter the big show.

On July 26th the first elements of the Regiment were speedily loaded into Pullmans and departed for . . . they knew not where. The roundabout route meandered through Mississippi into Tennessee, then south into Mississippi again, down further south into Alabama, from there north once more into Georgia, through the scenery of the Carolinas and Virginia, then through the Nation's Capital, where the doughfeet yelled uncomplimentary remarks at the MP's along the route. After Washington the train headed into Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and around New York City and deposited its duffle-laden passengers at Camp Shanks, near West Nyack, New York. Shanks is a pretty camp, nestled in the pine hills of the lower Catskills. WAC's are numerous and friendly, the PX's overflowing with good things, and the trains to New York City run at frequent intervals. Every one wanted to stay there a long time. But it soon became apparent that such was not to be the case.

Everything that remained to be done before the Regiment could ship was accomplished in a hurry. New gas masks were issued and explained, "abandon ship" drills were given, censorship rules qualified. The supposedly strict POE physical turned out to be a "short-arm" in double time. When all these things were done, short passes to New York City were issued. Knowing that they had little time left to look at America, most of the men tried to see as much of its largest city as possible in a few hours. Some got only as far as the first bar on 42nd Street, while two men from Tennessee enjoyed the ferry ride from New Jersey so much that they made the trip fifteen times.

On Saturday, August 5th the entire Regiment again took the train for New York

City . . . This time not to return the same day. Every man and officer carried all of his T/E equipment from the train to the ferry. As the ferry touched the New York side, a Transportation Corps Band broke into the strains of "Sidewalks of New York." The American Red Cross served lemonade and doughnuts, which refreshed every one enough to make the haul up the gangplank. At the end of the gangplank was the largest ship that any of the men had ever seen. In fact it was the largest ship the world had ever seen—the famed HMS Queen Elizabeth. When the loading was complete the entire division plus numerous smaller detachments were aboard.

The motors of the Elizabeth started to churn the waters of New York Harbor at exactly 0725, Sunday, August 6th Soon every one was taking a last look at the American shoreline.

Although quarters were close and often uncomfortably hot, the sea was smooth and almost everybody enjoyed the entire trip without a trace of mal de mer. Daily routine was determined by the ship's calls, which were mostly chow, boat drill and blackout. Only two meals a day were served, but these occupied most of the daylight hours, the vast number of men necessitating six shifts in three mess halls. The food, though usually ample, was typically English, and strange to the palates of most of the men. After the last shift of the morning meal, every one reported to the boat deck for "abandon ship" drill. At this formation news and announcements were published.

Ireland was sighted on Friday, August 11th. After sailing down the scenic Firth of Clyde, the Elizabeth dropped anchor in the harbor off the picturesque village of Grenoch, Scotland. Not until the next day did debarkation begin.

Despite the blazing sun, the orders called for the wearing of overcoats and the carrying of all equipment. By the time land was reached, everyone was sweltering. But the Red Cross came to the rescue with beverages and doughnuts. And there was a kilt-clad Scotch bagpipe band playing weird melodies as the men boarded the unfamiliar English trains. The train trip from Grenoch to Hullavington, England was filled with unusual and lovely scenery. And for the first time men of the 376th heard the now historic plea, "Any gum chum?"

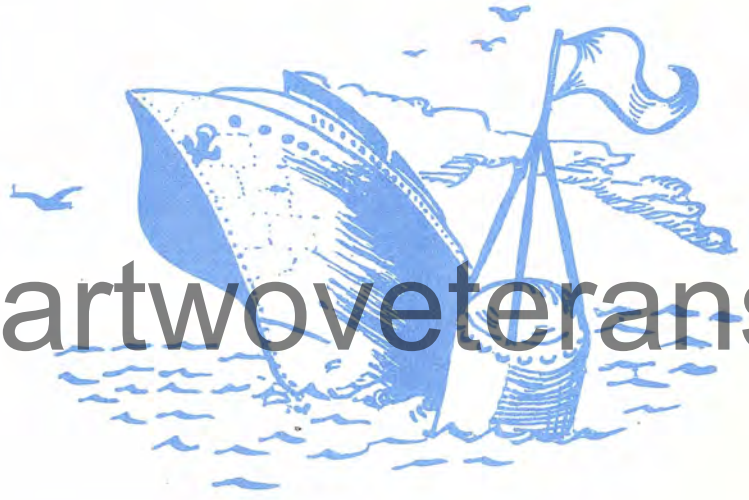
At Hullavington the troops were met by members of the advance party who had been preparing the camp site for over a month. The Regiment was located at Pinkney Park, situated one mile from the village of Sherston, Wiltshire, England. Quarters were pyramidal tents, with headquarters and mess halls in Nissen huts.

The Regiment immediately began training, consisting mainly of hedgerow tactics, conditioning marches and range firing. Many valuable tips were received from

officers who had returned from Normandy in regard to hedgerow fighting. New vehicles and crew-served weapons were issued, as was ammunition and all other equipment needed to fill combat loads.

As usual the men of the Regiment applied themselves to off duty activities as assiduously as they did their official functions. Dances were held at Pinkney Park, with partners recruited from neighboring civilians and WAAF's. Bristol, Gloucester, Malmsbury, Cheltenham and Chippingham were visited nightly. Most of the men were fortunate enough to get passes to London, where the Red Cross provided rooms, food, and a tour of the city.

It was on September 5th that the organic transportation left Pinkney Park for the embarkation area at Southampton. The next day the rest of the Regiment marched to Hullavington, entraining at the same station where they had detrained a month previously. On the afternoon of September 6th troops were filing up the gangplanks into the HMS Cheshire at the Southampton docks. That evening, under cover of darkness, the 376th left the blacked out coast of England behind. Destination: Somewhere in France.



CHAPTER II Forgotten Front

Arrival in France

It was the afternoon of September 8th, 1944 when the HMS Cheshire, carrying two battalions and some special companies of the 376th Infantry Regiment, dropped anchor off Ste. Mère Eglise on the Normandy coast. Some hours later the first LCI's grated to a stop on the sands of Utah Beach, and the first streams of cold and heavily laden men filed down the ramps and set foot in France.

The beach was quiet in the gathering darkness, and there were only rusted tangles of wire, old shell cases, and craters that already were sprouting tufts of grass to testify that 94 days before on these same sands American assault forces had chiselled one of their first precarious toe-holds on Festung Europa. This time the landing was unopposed except by the tide which kept many of the LCT's, LCI's and "Rhino" craft with which the landing was made hovering in the darkness off shore past midnight.

All during the night of September 8th, and the cold and drizzling dawn of September 9th the landing craft continued to move in, and the troops continued to file slowly ashore, gather in groups and move off inland in slow, winding columns.

worldwartwoveterans.org

For most it was the first sight of France, but there was little to see. Only flat, uninhabited moorland that seemed, in the darkness, to stretch endlessly inland from the beach.

It was a memorable march, from the beach to the marshalling area between Carentan, and Ste. Marie du Mont, with a light drizzle of rain making a sticky quagmire of the roads over which the Regiment moved, burdened with sodden packs that included "everything on the Form 32 except the form itself."

The march was a straggling and noisy affair and "griping" was rampant, favorite subjects being France in general, the rain and the mud in particular, the lack of transportation and the distance to the bivouac area which, for some companies, was as much as ten miles.

The first bivouac area on the continent, much to the disappointment of those who had consoled themselves during the long miles of the march with thoughts of the warm, or at least dry houses which would fall to their lot for the night, turned out to be a green but sodden assortment of orchards and pastureland. Here, as Technician Fifth Grade Glen F. Kohl of Headquarters Company, First Battalion explained, "with the slight amount of strength remaining in us, we managed to unroll our blankets and, careful of the places where the stale odor of cows was the strongest, drop on top of them."

Here, during the next few days, the Regiment paused, spread in seeming confusion over acres of pasture. But the pause was not for rest. Hardly were the packs unrolled when training began again—specialized training in hedgerow tactics that set rumor-mongers going in a burst of renewed activity. Every one applied himself tensely and earnestly, knowing that this would be the last of training.

By September 12th the Regiment had moved again This time by truck to another bivouac area 7 miles northeast of Rennes where they halted to await their transportation. The unloading of many of the trucks had been delayed by the same equinoctial storm that had mired the roads to Carentan four days before.

It was while the Regiment was at the marshalling area that the men had learned what their first mission was to be—the containing of the Lorient pocket on the Atlantic coast of France. It was here near Rennes that they learned even official announcements are subject to change. But changed or not, this was still the first combat orientation. The moment had been long awaited, and the words were no less awesome and momentous when they came: "to contain and screen the enemy in and about St. Nazaire."

Finally this was "it".

At last the trucks had come, and following the staffs and commanders who had previously set out to reconnoiter the area to be occupied, the Regimental convoy moved out for the coast of Brittany.

It was 0900 on Sunday, September 17th that the 331st Infantry of the 83rd Division was officially relieved, and the 376th, two years and two days after its activation as a member of the 94th Division, began its first combat mission.

First Assignment

"To contain and screen the enemy in and about St. Nazaire." This was the first mission, and to understand its import we must first glance at the map of France and learn what the "big picture" was on September 17th, 1944 when the 376th took over its new duties.

During the preceding two months the tide of the Wehrmacht in France had ebbed at an ever increasing tempo before the onslaught of General Eisenhower's spearheads. First from Normandy, then, after the breakthrough at St. Lo from the Breton Peninsula, and finally, under the miraculously swift and devastating thrusts of General Patton's armor, from north central France. In September the last long tentacles of Nazi might west of the Siegfried Line were fast crumbling to nothingness.

So rapid was this ebbing of the Wehrmacht flood that backwater tidal pools of resistance were inevitably left in its wake. With the logic of water finding its level, these forces poured into natural centers of resistance along the Atlantic coast of France, then turned menacingly to face their would-be captors with their backs to the relative security of the sea.

These were the "forgotten fronts"—forgotten by a press and public whose eyes were fixed on the titanic struggle raging further east. They will never be forgotten by the thousands of American and French troops who held some 75,000 strongly fortified, well fed, and well equipped Germans at bay along this coast from late Summer until the last of the island strongholds surrendered with the final collapse of the Hitler War Machine on May 8th, 1945.

The "forgotten fronts" stretched along 300 miles of French coastline, from Lorient on the underside of the Breton Peninsula all the way to the left bank of the Gironde River above Bordeaux. Their existence denied the use of France's greatest Atlantic ports to Allied shipping, and continued to furnish safe harbors for the U-boat wolf packs that, with the liberation of France, would have otherwise been hard-pressed for refuelling stations. Of the 75,000 Germans isolated in these areas, approximately 34,000 were divided among the Pointe de Grave Peninsula on the Gironde, Le Tremblade, the island of Oleron, and the La Rochelle region The remainder was concentrated in St. Nazaire and Lorient.

In St. Nazaire, the region with which we are primarily concerned, some 23,000 troops were occupying an area of between 200 and 250 square miles in size, which forms a rough triangle on the map. One side of the triangle is the Atlantic, another side the Loire River. The third side, if we complete the triangle with a

straight line, is some 45 miles of gently rolling hedgerow country, interspersed with almost impassable salt marshes. It is this third side which was the mission of the 376th, along with other units of the 94th Division, and a number of FFI units, to occupy.

In containing this ring of defenses, the 376th Infantry formed the core of the Nantes Task Force, which was established on September 18th under the command of Brigadier General Henry B. Cheadle. This task force included, in addition to the 376th Infantry and elements of the 302nd, the 919th Field Artillery Battalion; the 473rd Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AW) SP Battalion; Company C, 319th Engineer Battalion; Company C and the first platoon of Company D of the 319th Medical Battalion. Also included were signal and other miscellaneous detachments.

The sector of this defense ring assigned to the 376th was a line running nearly 22 miles north and south from the Loire below Le Temple de Bretagne up through Fay and Blain to the vicinity of a road junction 5 miles north of Blain where ten roads came together like the spokes of a wheel. It was this road junction that was appropriately dubbed "the spider" by the men of Company L who have much cause to remember it.

The Regimental CP was established on September 17th at Heric, a small and ancient farming town 7 miles east of Fay and 15 miles north of the city of Nantes. This was an ideal location, as it was almost directly behind the center of the defense line, and almost equi-distant from the three main centers of resistance that were established at Blain, Fay, and Le Temple.

Of these three centers, one was assigned to each infantry battalion. As the areas were first allocated upon taking over from the 331st, the First Battalion drew the sector nearest the Loire around Le Temple. The Second Battalion was assigned to Fay and vicinity, while Blain fell to the lot of the Third Battalion. North of the Third Battalion was the 302nd Infantry of the 94th Division, and to the south, between Le Temple and the Loire, several FFI units held positions on the left of the First Battalion. These units were at first poorly organized, but later received arms and equipment from the U. S. forces through the Regiment and became a vital link in the St. Nazaire chain of defense.

Throughout the Regimental line, a Main Line of Resistance was maintained with two rifle companies of each battalion on line and one usually held in reserve. No large scale offensives were attempted throughout the campaign, as the mission of the 376th was not to clean out, or reduce the pocket. Other than a few assaults on limited objectives undertaken from time to time with the object of straightening the lines, the entire action was limited to patrolling, observing,

and repulsing the occasional small scale attacks launched by the Germans.

It was not a "phoney" war in any sense of the word. Hardly a day passed without clashes along some portion of the line. The whisper of artillery passing overhead and the shrill whine and crashing of the 88's soon became a familiar sound to every one. But there were many days when nothing happened, and the Autumn hedgerows were quiet as if no enemy were lurking in them. These were monotonous days that passed slowly in the damp and cold of the dugouts. But they served as an important lesson in two of the worst phases of modern warfare: its waiting and its silence.

U. S. Army Signal Corps

Typical St. Nazaire dugout, combination of Yankee ingenuity and any material available. Here Private First Class Norman J. Pierce of F Company relaxes with Stars and Stripes after coming off front line guard duty.

The Hedgerows

The story is often told in the 376th Infantry of the Colonel who arrived in the St. Nazaire sector one day to inspect the front line positions. After visiting several dugouts and guard posts he expressed his surprise at the quiet. "Why don't you move forward?" he asked the battalion commander who was with him. "It's obvious there aren't any Germans within miles of here." Whereupon a German soldier thrust his head out of a nearby hedgerow and said in perfect English, "I see you're new around here."

This story is somewhat apocryphal, and has undoubtedly been told of several different fronts, but it is particularly adaptable to St. Nazaire where such deceptive silence was a common experience. As Private First Class Richard J. Kamins, of Company A describes it, "It was listening to strange sounds and seeing phantom warriors." It was days on end of seeing nothing and night after night of tense and incessant listening, and of hearing nothing. Yet always there was the feeling that the enemy was lying in wait in the next hedgerow, or lurking just beyond the limit of vision in the darkness. The moments when the Germans stopped being shadows and became imminent and threatening reality; the sounds of a fire-fight, shellfire, or even the mere rattle of tin cans in the warning net around the dugouts came sometimes almost as a relief from the monotony of waiting.

To the casual observer, the St. Nazaire front did not have the look of a battlefield. In the small, hedged-in fields a few hundred yards behind the lines and even in the early days, in front of the lines, cows were grazing and farmers went about their business in the fields. They pushed their slow and nondescript carts along the roads as if the war were the business of those who fought it only, and none of their concern. Even the line itself was hardly distinguishable from the surrounding fields. Here and there gray lattice skeleton showed through the red tile of a farmhouse roof, a wall was crumbled, or a field was pocked with craters that looked like divots gouged in a giant golf-course. Otherwise there was little sign of war.

Every hundred to two hundred yards along the line was a dugout, but these, of necessity, were well camouflaged. From such vantage points as the church steeple in Bouvron, the Germans were eternally on watch for signs of telltale smoke or new humps in the landscape that had sprung up overnight. Each dugout, within a miraculously short time after the raw earth was first heaped on top of it, had became an inconspicuous part of a hedgerow corner or a tumbled bit of fence.

These dugouts were the front line. There were no communication trenches

between and few foxholes. The dugouts were home, shelter, cover, guard posts and gun positions all in one, and they were as varied as to comfort and interior arrangement as the individual tastes of the occupants. All were of a basic design with an entrance camouflaged by undergrowth, cut down through the yellowish sandy soil. The walls were of sandbags, revetted with dirt to form a gentle slope as well as to provide maximum protection. They were roofed with corrugated iron buried so deep under the earth and sod that it was proof against anything but a direct hit from a 240mm howitzer. There was little danger from these, as those that the Germans had did not have sufficient observation for such pinpoint accuracy.

Each dugout had gun and observation ports in at least the three walls facing the enemy. Around each was an elaborate system of trip-flares and warning devices such as tin cans tied together in strings with trip wires across the most likely approaches. Booby traps were at first used to supplement these warning nets, but after several heedless cows and uninformed French civilians had come to grief on them this practice was largely discontinued.

Most of the dugouts housed from three to five men, so that three of them would easily take care of a squad. Considering the average distance between dugouts, this gave each squad a frontage of about a quarter of a mile. Each platoon was thus responsible for nearly a mile of front, which was a rather wide area for so small a unit; the customary platoon front being something nearer 150 yards. However, such seeming over-extension was thoroughly in keeping with the containing mission in which these units were engaged and was unavoidable if the Regiment was to cover its assigned frontage of approximately 22 miles; a distance that would not be assigned in normal circumstances to anything less than an entire division.

Each squad, that is each three dugouts, had a telephone connected up with its platoon CP, which in most cases was located in the comparative luxury of a farmhouse a short distance behind the line. As ordinarily the guards stood their watches in their dugouts, these phones, which somewhat exceeded the tables of equipment for a rifle platoon, were a convenient means of making hourly reports to the platoon headquarters. They also had their recreational uses. On many occasions they were used to "pipe" music to the forward positions from Command Post radios. During the Army-Notre Dame football game in November several men who interrupted the program to phone in routine reports were classed by eager listeners as out and out saboteurs.

The interiors of the dugouts were made as comfortable as their size and struc-

ture would permit. Most of them had at least straw mattresses for the occupants, and several more resourceful individuals even managed to acquire box springs to sleep on. Another staple item was stoves. These were largely improvised—often from large French milk cans which were adequate, if not ideal for the purpose when a hole was cut near the bottom of one side for ventilation and stoking. The occupants of one dugout even went so far as to import a full-fledged cooking stove from a nearby farm. However, it was not often that these stoves, improvised or otherwise, could be used to any great extent. The resulting smoke proved more of a hazard than the cold.

Chow for these men in the squad areas and for the weapons platoons, usually located in buildings just behind them, was served hot, and brought to the platoon Command Posts by jeep. Laundry facilities were provided by the Quartermaster, but most of the men preferred to use a building set aside for this in their area and do their own, as that way they got their clothes back more quickly. These buildings also provided facilities for shaving and washing more extensively than was possible in the dugouts.

Ordinarily two rifle companies of a battalion would be on line at a time, with the third held in reserve; the reserve company being constantly rotated. The company in reserve, however, had little opportunity for additional rest or recreation, as the time was invariably filled with those old stand-bys, care and cleaning of weapons, close order drill, and road marches. Recreational facilities were somewhat limited, first of all because there was little time for them, and second because few were available. At one time Company F reported to a Regimental observer that the sum total of reading matter available in the company area was seven books.

Twelve hour passes were at first granted to visit Nantes, where many members of the 376th had their first experiences with cognac, French beer, women and the far-famed "calvados." There were also passes to Paris but these could be granted only sparingly, and even the Nantes passes were later cut down to a maximum of six hours. Brief and infrequent as the passes were however, there are still many fond memories of Nantes lurking about the Regiment. And even the long cold days in the dugouts when often as not "Jerry" would wait for you to start something before returning it in kind produced their share of nostalgia in the grim days that were still to come.

Patrols

During the months at St. Nazaire when the line was firmly fixed and changed little from week to week, or even month to month, the main action consisted of point to point contact with the enemy through the use of patrols. Most of these were sent out with reconnaissance missions, though occasionally information thus gathered would subsequently call for a combat patrol with a specific "pinpoint" objective. Scene of most combat patrols was the "spider," the Brest-Nantes Canal west of Blain, and the country around Bouvron.

Roughly an average of one daylight and two night patrols were sent out daily by each battalion, though, of course this figure might vary widely with circumstances. The Regiment, between the 17th of September when it took over the St. Nazaire sector, and the end of the year when the organization for departure had begun, accomplished a total of 634 patrol missions of all kinds.

It would be difficult to classify these patrols as to strength, composition and general mission. This information, as well as the route to be followed, means of communication and time of departure, was established and sent to the companies concerned by the battalion the day before the patrol was to set out, and all of these factors varied with each patrol. This was the usual variety. In addition the Third Battalion had their "raiders," a group of five men led by Private Benjamin J. Desko of Company I who were often sent out under Battalion control for special night reconnaissance missions.

If we are to obtain a clear picture of the type of operation usually carried out and the circumstances under which these patrols operated, we must look back through the Regimental files and the reminiscences of the men and officers who performed them, and follow several missions that were actually undertaken from their starting points to their accomplishment—or in some cases, their failure.

Some examples of typical reconnaissance patrols can be found in notes made by Regimental observers who were sent from time to time to check on the activities and performance of the various companies on the line. The quotations that follow are from notes made by one of these observers on two patrols from Company F sent out on the 14th and 15th of December:

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"On 14 December a half squad day patrol was sent to a lone farm house directly in front of First Platoon defense area. The objective was in full view of the front lines. A .50 cal. MG was set up in position with mission of supporting the patrol. One 81 mm mortar section was designated as priority call for the patrol. The patrol carried one 300 radio which was in a net with Bn

and Plt CP. The patrol accomplished its mission. Excellent detailed information was obtained. One German hand grenade, and one letter which had been used as toilet paper were found and brought back. The patrol was briefed well by the battalion S-2. He gave information that a previous patrol had placed a satchel charge in the farm house to blow it up but the charge had not exploded. The patrol brought back information that the charge was no longer there. The patrol took particular note that a truck had been to the farm since the last rain and that wagons which had previously been there were missing. The patrol stated that the wagon tracks ran up to where the truck had stopped, then disappeared. They deduced that the wagons had been hauled away by the truck. This information confirmed a report two nights before that noise from a truck had been heard from that vicinity . . ."

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"Daylight patrol of seven men was sent out 15 Dec. to a hill with the mission of observing and adjusting fire on any enemy emplacements. The weather was rainy and foggy. Visibility was very poor. The Bn S-2 delayed the patrol for one hour but the weather did not clear so the patrol was sent ahead . . . Priority of fire from 60mm mortar section was given to the patrol. The patrol consisted of 1 BAR, 2 carbines, 3 M1's and a radio operator with a 300 radio. A cannon officer was located at the platoon CP to receive and adjust calls for cannon and artillery fires. This patrol is a usual one and has been performed many times. The patrol reached its objective and went into a position from which to observe. The men were disposed so as to give maximum flank security. The radio operator, after about fifteen minutes of observation saw some movement behind some bushes about 100 yards away on the reverse slope. Lt. Mason and one man went to investigate. While en route to investigate, a German MG opened fire, soon another . . . The patrol pinned the enemy down with BAR fire. The radio operator became excited when the second MG opened fire. He believed the patrol was being outflanked and sent back word to that effect without consulting the patrol leader. The report was false. Immediately upon contact the patrol sent word back and all mortars, artillery and each platoon was alerted. The patrol called for 81mm mortar fire . . . The mortars fired about 30 rounds and then the patrol began to receive enemy mortar fire. At that time artillery was called for . . . The enemy was close so the patrol withdrew to a defilade position to allow arty fire. The fire was effective. Orders were given to the patrol to return.

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The mortar and artillery mission mentioned in the second patrol was typical. Heavy weapons, artillery and Cannon Company played a very important role in covering, supporting and sometimes coming to the rescue of these patrols. The way this worked is that every time a patrol started out, battalion and heavy weapons CP's were notified. Cannon Company, or the supporting artillery, as well as the 81mm mortars, then would aim at the first "check point" along the patrol's route of advance, ready to fire at or near it if need be, until the patrol called in that

they had reached the point. Then the guns were laid on the next prearranged "check point," and so on until the patrol returned. During the day these "check points" also served as points from which routine reports of progress could be made. At night however, reports were only made in emergencies.

One of the first patrols undertaken during the stay at St. Nazaire was a large reconnaissance patrol which served as Company C's baptism of fire. Scene of this mission was the rolling hedgerow country in the vicinity of Le Temple which, in the early days of September, was the area assigned to Colonel Russell M. Miner's First Battalion. The patrol consisted of 27 men under the command of First Lieutenant Ben R. Chalkley, and its mission was to probe deep into enemy lines in an effort to learn as much as possible of his strength and disposition in the area. A reconnaissance patrol is not expected to get involved in much fighting, but in the light of what was to come it is fortunate that the size and armament of this particular patrol was adequate to engage the enemy if it became necessary.

The patrol started out in full daylight down a highway leading towards a chateau, occupied at that time by the FFI. The section of the line which the patrol was to pass through was outposted by the French, and therefore it was necessary to orient them on the route and mission before getting under way. After the FFI had been brought up to date on the proceedings, Lieutenant Chalkley's men continued on in deployed formation across the open fields, patrol leader, messenger and radio operator in the center of the formation. They had not gone far, however, before they were greeted with a sudden burst of machine gun fire. Everyone hit the dirt, and it was some moments before it was discovered that their first taste of "enemy" fire was only the French, doing a little target practice in the area.

After this the patrol proceeded uneventfully for over a mile, coming finally to the top of a ridge overlooking a shallow valley to their front. At this point they changed direction slightly and pointed towards Chateau Kerlan which was believed to be occupied by a large number of Germans. The approaches to the chateau, across the shallow valley, were completely without cover, only natural cover in the vicinity being the fringe of woods along the crest of the hill to their front which was in all probability full of Germans.

Followed by the patrol, the scouts had reached a point halfway down the forward slope of the hill when things began to happen. A number of snipers, accompanied by bursts of machine gun fire, opened up from their front, pinning down the scouts and causing the rest of the patrol to scramble for cover. This time it really was the Germans, and Private First Class Russell H. Riggs, wounded in the shoulder by a sniper, became the Company's first casualty. Immediately after this German

mortars began to come in on the patrol which had managed to reorganize on top of the hill where there was at least some cover, and upon Riggs and Private First Class Paul V. Hart who had remained behind with him in the open to help bandage his wound. Seeing the dangerous position of these two, Sergeant Guellermo Jaso and Private First Class Gerald D. Davis disregarded the incoming mortars and sped down the hill across the open to help them.

Just at this point some friendly 81mm mortars from Company D began to come over, and the 60's with the patrol were put into action and began traversing the whole area where the German positions were. Between them they effectively silenced the Jerries for long enough so that the four men in the open could get safely back to the top of the hill. Then, under light mortar fire, the patrol began to withdraw.

On their way back a concealed machine gun opened up on them from the left rear, but was soon silenced by rifle and BAR fire. During the brief scuffle caused by this incident Private First Class Howard S. Heulitt somehow lost contact with the patrol and got left behind.

Hardly had Lieutenant Chalkley's men polished off the machine gun when they found themselves face to face with a very surprised column of Germans, crossing the road just ahead. The Jerries were so astonished they could do nothing but stand and gape until Private First Class John Thomas cut loose with his BAR. The burst was low, but the Jerries took off like a flock of sheep without making any attempt to fight back.

During the critical moments on top of the hill, Lieutenant Chalkley had radioed his situation back to the Company, and asked for support. Now as they proceeded back towards the lines, they met their support; several halftracks loaded with men from the Third Platoon. Two men were missing from the patrol, Heulitt, and the second scout, Private First Class Norman Polner, who had been pinned down during the first of the firing and had been unable to get back to the patrol, so the halftracks kept on in an effort to find them.

The halftracks met with some mortar and machine gun fire during their search, to which they replied by spraying the hedgerows with their 50 calibers, but they were unable to locate the two men and suffered several casualties, one man being fatally wounded when the leading vehicle ran into a mine. The patrol, including Riggs who, in spite of his wound, had got back under his own power, returned safely. Heulitt and Polner, having finally found their way back through the FFI lines, returned the next day little the worse for their experience.

Another typical mission of those early days of St. Nazaire was a combat patrol

conducted by Company A on September 22nd with the purpose of knocking out a particularly bothersome enemy artillery OP. The story is told by Private First Class Jack Zebin of Company A:

Who of us can forget the scenic beauty of Brittany? The apple orchards and neat farmlands divided by those ancient hedgerows. Those same hedgerows that gave us so much comfort and safety in tough spots unfortunately gave us our headaches also, as the enemy used them with all the cunning that can be gained by a determined force in a defensive position.

Able Company was on line on the outskirts of the small town of Fay. Our platoons were dug in on a rather thin line with two men to each position. We had been sweating out very accurate artillery fire for four or five days and we realized that Jerry had a very good OP from which he was directing his fire.

On the two days preceding 22 September 1944 we had sent out small reconnaissance patrols to try and find this OP. They were successful in finding the spot, but had run into heavy enemy opposition each time. The enemy had dug in around a beautiful chateau on high ground which overlooked Fay, Bouvron and Le Temple, and from there was able to direct artillery fire on practically all of the First Battalion's positions.

On 22 September the order came down from Battalion for Able Company to organize a combat patrol of 32 men to go out and knock out this thorn in our side. Lieutenant Tom Hodges, Platoon Leader of the Second Platoon, was to lead the patrol. He had led the reconnaissance patrol on the previous day and knew the terrain. Lieutenant Hodges knew the mission would be extremely dangerous, so he asked for volunteers. When sixty volunteered to go he decided that forty-five would be enough.

The patrol was loaded for the kill. It had two light machine gun squads, and one 60 mm mortar squad. Two BAR teams and riflemen loaded down with ammunition and grenades made up the rest of the patrol. He also took along a 300 radio which was in direct communication with our 81mm mortars and supporting artillery. Due to the size of the patrol, he designated T/Sgt McIntyre to control eighteen of the men and one machine gun squad. He himself would handle the remainder.

After a good noonday chow the men were briefed as to the mission and the NCO's checked them for ammunition and to see that they had no unit identification on them. The plan was to make a wide circle and then to come in on the chateau from the left where there was high ground. Flank security was provided for, and the patrol was set to move out.

The weather was ideal; a beautiful sunny day, with not a cloud in sight. The patrol moved out in fine fashion, everyone knowing his job, and everyone confident that the job would be done.

Back at our forward OP, our Battalion Commander, Colonel Miner, a man whom we had all learned to love and respect, and our Company Commander, Captain Shetler, were in direct communication with the patrol. Also on hand was an artillery liason officer, and Lt. Springer of Dog Company was there to give the men support with his much vaunted 81's.

The patrol had been moving along nicely for over an hour without meeting any enemy, but were now approaching the territory where we knew Jerry had been. PFC James Alex, the first scout, had just started up a hedgerow when all hell broke loose. Jerry was directly ahead with well concealed machine gun positions, and a few minutes after the fire fight started, began laying very accurate mortar fire around the patrol.

Lt. Hodges immediately organized a firing line and called for mortar fire which came in very quickly and accurately. After about thirty minutes of heavy fighting, Jerry began to withdraw and our patrol started right after him. The results of this encounter were for us one casualty — Blackie Johnson with a piece of shrapnel in his leg — for the Germans three casualties.

In pursuing the enemy, first scout Alex got ahead of the patrol and in coming around a hedgerow, was shot and seriously wounded. The second scout, PFC Holton, immediately signalled the patrol and again a fire fight was begun. PFC Wakester, in spite of heavy enemy fire, and in complete disregard of his own safety, crawled out and gave Alex first aid.

Seeing that Alex was bleeding very badly, and needing immediate aid, four of the men, Kettler, Jenkins, Costello and Murlin, crawled out to him and dragged him back. They then proceeded to make a litter. With only bayonets and pocket knives they cut down two small trees and with their shirts and belts made a litter. With two men carrying and two covering, they proceeded to carry Alex back. They carried him for over a mile all the way back to the starting point of the patrol where he was immediately rushed to the aid station. Unfortunately, in spite of their gallant efforts, Alex died from his wounds later that same day.

In the meantime the enemy, with superior observation and better concealment, tried to outflank the patrol, but Lt. Hodges quickly moved his men to counter the threat.

The patrol had again overcome the enemy resistance, killing two and wounding four others. There were many acts of bravery in the course of this action. The men were functioning beautifully as a team with every weapon at their command being put to good use. The mortar squad, in spite of losing sight and bipod for its weapon, proceeded to fire very accurately without them. The machine gunners were firing without their tripods. It was a fine example of what can be done by well trained doughboys.

At times Jerry was on one side of a hedgerow and our boys were on the other. The grenades were flying thick and fast. At one point a Jerry grenade hit PFC Chandler's helmet, bounced off and exploded harmlessly nearby.

The men of the patrol, after overcoming this last resistance, proceeded on to the chateau, where they scouted out all of the enemy's positions and brought back information which later proved very valuable when we moved up our lines. The men returned after being out for five hours, a very happy but tired bunch. Final score reads: two casualties for our side, nine casualties for Jerry — a job very well done.

A favorite spot for patrol activity was the country around Bouvron. The town itself had a tall church steeple which provided an excellent OP for the Germans, and subject of constant speculation was the question of how strongly occupied the town was, whether the steeple had been knocked out yet, and whether it would be possible to take the town. One of the many patrols sent into this strategic area in search of answers to these and other questions was one that has become one of the milestones in the history of Company K. This was a combat patrol consisting of that company's First Platoon, that stepped over the line into "no-man's land" at 0730 on the cold and drizzling morning of November 11th with the mission of locating enemy dispositions in the vicinity of the town of Bouvron, about 3,000 yards in front of the lines.

It was not yet light when First Lieutenant Thomas A. Daly and his men, along with the Weapons Platoon and some BAR men from the Second Platoon, were called together for briefing in a small metal hut in the reserve area. By the light of a hissing Coleman lantern they learned what was in store for them. Division G-2 believed the enemy had withdrawn from Bouvron. The patrol's job was to find out if the enemy was still there. If he was, the task ahead was to engage him, find out how strong he was and then pull back through the line set up by the Third Platoon which was acting as support, and protecting the flanks of the patrol.

Breakfast that morning was at 0430 for the First Platoon, and soon afterwards the trucks were pulling out for the assembly area just behind the lines. Dawn had come by the time the First Platoon with its attached machine guns and BAR's moved past the outposts into the still, sodden country between the lines. But the stillness did not last long. As the patrol glided cautiously towards the Bouvron church steeple, looming in the grayness ahead of it the air was split with the sharp, hurried cracking of the dreaded German MG 42. Apparently Company K's Staff Sergeant Henry Williams, whose sarcasm had waxed eloquent on the subject of there being no Germans in Bouvron, was right after all. The town was indeed occupied.

It was shortly after this first burst of machine gun fire that the artillery Piper Cub, hovering dutifully above the fight, reported that reinforcements were joining the German advance posts. The answer to this discovery was an all-out barrage by the 919th and by Cannon Company, both of which poured shells into German gun positions and farm houses where troops were concentrating. Meanwhile the BAR's of the patrol had opened up in answer to the machine gun, and the 60mm mortars went into action, covering the patrol as it advanced. The Germans replied to these with their own mortars and artillery which increased in intensity all morning.

By 1200 the mission of the patrol was considered accomplished, and the order came to withdraw. Shortly afterwards the patrol had reorganized under artillery cover and began to move to the rear.

Three men failed to return with the patrol, two who had been slightly wounded by German mortars and had been evacuated, and Private First Class John A. MacDonald who was killed.

On the credit side: 8 German prisoners taken and many killed both by the patrol and the artillery which scored at least one direct hit on a farmhouse.

Another patrol that is memorable in the chronicles of Bouvron and vicinity is a night patrol with a reconnaissance mission, featuring First Lieutenant James W. Cornelius and a selected group from Company C.

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Company C, after its first week of duty on the line (as Private First Class Raymond Fournier tells it), had moved into a reserve position in a woods near battalion headquarters which was situated in a large French chateau. About nine o'clock of our first night in reserve the Battalion was directed by Regiment to send out a small reconnaissance patrol to the vicinity of Bouvron, and our Company was designated to furnish the patrol. This was to be a very special mission to determine the truth of the intelligence received by Regiment that German Infantry, tanks and Artillery were massing in the town of Bouvron for an attack which was to take place early the next day.

With this in mind Captain Duckworth selected his men as carefully as possible. Lt. Cornelius, who had led the first combat patrol made by the Regiment, was selected as leader. T/Sgt Maddock, Sgt Soka, Pfc Goldman, Pfc Skipworth, Pfc Maniatty and myself were selected to follow him. I was chosen because of my knowledge of the French language and Pfc Maniatty because he was an experienced radio operator who could maintain good contact with our base.

After making careful preparations, blackening our faces, discarding all excess equipment, ridding ourselves of all letters and papers, sharpening our knives, donning wool knit caps instead of helmets--we set out for battalion headquarters. At the chateau we were oriented on our mission, our route, and where we could expect to find German installations and garrisons.

It was exactly 2200 when a Service Company truck came to transport the patrol, the Battalion Commander, and Captain Duckworth to a very small village about half a mile from Fay de Bretagne. At this village we picked up two men from Company A who were to accompany us as guards for the radioman.

At about 2300 the patrol, accompanied by Col. Miner, moved out in the direction of Bouvron. For the first mile and a half we travelled in squad column on both sides of a muddy dirt road. The weather was fine when we started, but the sky soon began to darken, and within a short time we were walking in almost complete darkness. Finally we reached a point where the road turned to the left. We halted here while Col. Miner gave us last minute instructions before we went on. I

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don't believe any of us will ever forget the concerned and solicitous manner in which Col. Miner wished us good luck. More than anything, it made us feel we were part of an important operation.

Striking out along the road, we soon reached a large open field. Crossing the field one man at a time, we resumed our original direction through a series of hedgerows. It was decided from the outset that all of us were to rotate as scouts. The exact enemy positions were so much in doubt and the night was so black that the job of first scout was particularly nerve-wracking. When I took my own turn as first scout I felt as if I were walking in a huge dark cave, expecting at any moment to step off into a bottomless pit. All along the long and tortuous route we expected to barge into the enemy at any moment. The atmosphere was tense and strained.

We must have covered about a mile when a slight cold rain began to fall. Even though it made us physically cold and miserable, everyone was grateful for it because it provided the perfect cover for whatever noise the patrol made. The men operated perfectly, but even the slightest unavoidable noise increased the nervous tension considerably. Mentally, I vowed to shoot any noise-maker at the first opportunity.

Climbing down a small hill through very thick brush we were all forced to make considerable noise, but luckily the Germans in the vicinity did not hear us. We halted for several minutes at the base of the hill and then proceeded through what we could vaguely discern in the darkness as an orchard. At the far end of the orchard the road forked, and it was here the patrol became separated. Nothing could have been worse. In the darkness it was impossible to differentiate between a German soldier and an American soldier because we knew we were deep in enemy territory, none of us dared to venture so much as a whisper. For almost ten minutes the two parts of the patrol groped about looking for each other until finally Goldman and I bumped into each other.

Reorganizing, the patrol moved on. After about half an hour Lt. Cornelius took over as first scout because we were passing a large chateau where there was known to be a considerable garrison of enemy troops. Moving cautiously behind hedgerows and rock walls, we skirted the chateau one window of which was lit by candlelight, without encountering any enemy sentries. The entire circumference of the chateau was mined and boobytrapped. It was only because of a great deal of luck and our extreme caution that we detected and escaped the traps set for us.

About three hundred yards further on, in a small orchard, we left Pfc Maniatty and the two guards to set up a radio relay station and report on the progress of the patrol while the rest of us moved on further.

Soon we came to a small French village, supposedly unoccupied. After sending out a scout for reconnaissance we began, one at a time, to feel our way through the town, meeting again at the other side. Ahead of us lay a long, straight road, but, deciding that the route was too dangerous, we again took to the hedgerows. Later we entered a small orchard near Bouvron. In the orchard we hadn't advanced ten feet when we stopped cold. Immediately to our front we could hear German voices. The first scout had walked to within a few feet of a couple of German guards on the other

side of a hedgerow. The shock was so great that he almost collapsed into Lt. Cornelius arms. Crawling on our stomachs to peer through the hedgerow, we could hear men snoring while others talked in whispers. Occasionally we could hear the "clank" of a rifle or see the glowing end of a cigarette. The Germans were dug in all around us. Everyone began to get the shakes to a slight degree. I tried to keep cool and calm by eating an apple, but every time I bit the crunch sounded like an 88 going off in my ear. We remained in this position observing and listening for about half an hour before we decided to pull out, having ascertained from what we had heard that the Germans were not preparing for a large scale attack at dawn.

Coming back through the French village we were physically and mentally exhausted men. As if purposely arranged, every clock in town began to chime the hour as we filed past. Every chime that disturbed the supreme stillness was a crashing blow that made your heart beat faster and faster. If ever there was such a thing as psychological warfare, this was it.

Everything that happened after this seems anticlimactic. We returned to pick up our radioman, reported on our progress and began the long trek home. We were forced to exercise the same caution as before, and, on several occasions came on booby traps we hadn't found on the way out. Our luck held, however, and we succeeded in getting back without setting any of them off.

Just as the early light of dawn was breaking over the horizon, we entered the small village we had left the night before. The skies had cleared slightly and the effects of the previous few hours began to pass away. We were safe and had accomplished our mission without casualties. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

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In the early Fall another scene of much patrol activity was the "spider," a spoke-like crossroads in the tangled and gloomy Foret du Gavre. It was on the second day after Company L had moved into this area that they received orders to send a reinforced combat patrol to the little village of La Pessouis, south of the "spider" near the Brest-Nantes Canal. This was familiar ground to First Lieutenant Joseph H. Klutsch and his men who led a similiar patrol over the same area not long before; a patrol characterized by the use of half-tracks borrowed from attached AAA units.

It was familiar ground, but ground to be approached with caution none the less. On that last patrol the company had suffered its first losses when Tech Sergeant Gerrish F. Smith was seriously wounded, and Staff Sergeant Charles F. Luzader, affectionately known to everyone in the company as "Sgt Lou," was killed.

The patrol set out early in the morning with the Second Platoon, led by Lieutenant Klutsch, in the lead and First Lieutenant Charles P. Macke's Weapons Platoon in support following. With the patrol that day were Captain William A. Brightman and First Lieutenant Robert E. Foster, the company commander and

executive officer. Following the column was a communications jeep and behind it the familiar "meatwagon," or medical jeep. Also along on this patrol was Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin E. Thurston, Commander of the Third Battalion, acting in his favorite capacity--front line observer and "rifleman."

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Everything went according to plan (as Lieutenant Macke tells it) with Lieutenant Klutsch taking a group to the left and Lieutenant Foster taking his group to the right, Lieutenant Macke placing his machine guns in position and then returning to see how the mortars were coming along. On the way down the forward observer climbed atop a house from which he thought he could observe activities across the canal and also do a little adjusting. He had no sooner gotten down to say that he could not see anything when four quick rounds from a well-concealed position across the canal blew away the portion of the roof where he had been. In the next few minutes everything but robot bombs were dropped on that little town. We of course then had many targets to fire at, and with Lieutenant Foster giving corrections from his position and Lieutenant Macke relaying them to the mortars from his position the firing went on until a patrol of Heinies hit us from the rear immediately behind the mortars. Bullets from Schmeissers sprayed through the hedgerow, and the mortar section literally dove for cover to get in a position to start firing back. It seemed that every time one of us moved we were picked up and those Schmeisser bullets would start clipping the hedgerow above our heads When he became aware of the situation Captain Brightman somehow grabbed the tube of a mortar, and with Colonel Thurston pulling the pins, Staff Sergeant Alvin Marten dropping the rounds and Captain Brightman aiming the tube with uncanny accuracy we finally managed to wiggle out of a tight spot.

It would not be fitting to relate this story without mentioning the heroic deed of Private Stanton Null of the mortar section . . . who gave his life that the rest of us might effect our getaway. It was he who, along with Privates Harvey Pilcher and John Ice, first saw the Heinies and started firing at them. Pilcher, and Ice, wounded by the initial burst, played dead and we finally managed to get them out. Null, firing from the kneeling position, emptied his carbine repeatedly, holding their attention until we could get concealed. He lost his life in so doing.

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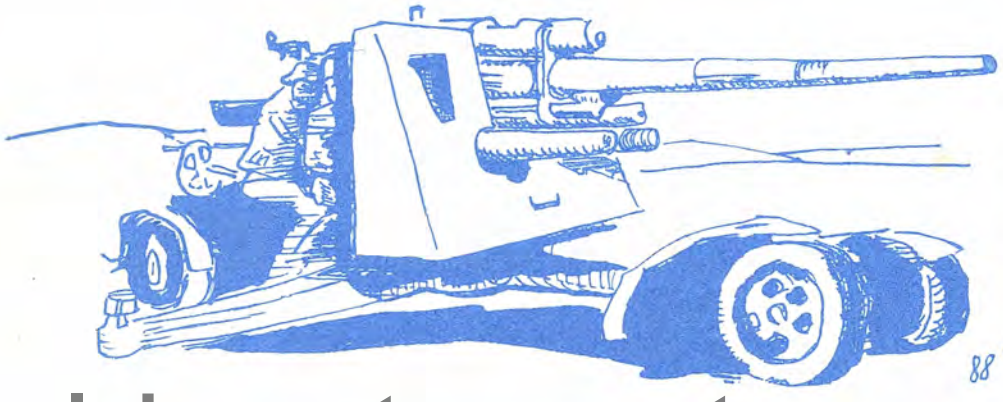
Another episode deserving mention occurred at an outpost that was dug in in front of the lines on November 19th. The positions were suddenly fired upon by four German 88's which repeatedly traversed the entire area. Whereupon Privates First Class Joseph M. Nicholas, and James L. Belliston, Jr., both of Company L, got

out of their foxholes, climbed a nearby tree which afforded observation, got telephone communication with the artillery, and adjusted fire on the 88's with the result that they were soon as effectively out of action as if the artillery had been using their own observers for the registering.

Nicholas and Belliston's success in the role of forward observers was a fruit of the Regimental policy that all men, regardless of their primary duties, should know how to adjust artillery fire. These two men had been studying an article on the subject that appeared in the Infantry Journal.



Milestones

It would be difficult to compile a chronological history of the events that took place during the three and a half months at St. Nazaire. There were not enough events for one thing; the situation was not one that developed and changed from day to day. Although, when it left Brittany in January, the 376th had performed its mission, its mission had been to maintain the status quo. The Blain-Fay-Le Temple front had changed little since September 17th. In the light of this our story of those days is more of a series of episodes than a history. The nearest we can come to making a chronicle of it is to take a sweeping glance over the whole period and pick out milestones. Some of these will have military significance in that they are problems solved, or steps taken in the face of certain circumstances. Others will be only recollections, of interest mainly to those who have a share in them.

Perhaps the most significant milestone in the life of any organization or individual in the war is the moment of first contact with the enemy—the first impact of battle. The moment, for it is always a moment, when the first shot is fired, or the first man falls, and those who see and hear are changed in that instant from novice to initiate in the blood-brotherhood of the combat wise.

To the 376th battle initiation was a series of such episodes, coming to each company at different times and in different ways. But in all the Regiment the first to learn that this was the beginning of the "real thing" was Company K.

It was on the evening of the first official day of combat—Sunday, September 17th—that the Germans sent a boxcar loaded with explosives rattling down the tracks into the town of Blain. The boxcar, with its deadly cargo, jumped the bombed-out tracks, continued on into Company K's area near the railroad bridge on the outskirts of town. Here it exploded, killing Private John T. Miller, and wounding several others who were in the vicinity. Of these Sergeant James L. McMillen, also of Company K, can claim to be the first casualty evacuated through medical channels in the Regiment.

This was the first blood drawn. Within the next three days each company and each man who carried a weapon in the Regiment had learned at first hand in his own way the stern truth of the philosophy of "kill or be killed."

Other "firsts" followed in quick succession. Company E can claim to be the first company in the Regiment to take up positions on line. To Company C goes credit for the first prisoner taken by the Regiment, and to Company B credit for the first actual engagement inflicting losses upon the Germans.

The first prisoner was a frightened eighteen year old sniper picked up by a patrol

led by First Lieutenant Clovis H. Youngblood of Company C. The young sniper surrendered after being pinned down by rifle and BAR fire, and seemed glad to be a prisoner. He was much impressed with American artillery and had apparently had quite enough of it.

The first large group of prisoners came in the next morning. They were not Germans, however, but Russians serving in the German army as artillerymen. Seven of the group walked into the town of Fay which at that time was occupied by Company A. Two of them volunteered to bring in the rest of the battery who were waiting to surrender. The rest of the group, which totalled one officer and 47 enlisted men, destroyed their battery of 155mm guns in the vicinity of Bouvron before coming in. The officer had in his possession a map showing German artillery concentrations and locations of other gun positions. After this the Germans, somewhat mistrustful of their unwilling co-belligerents, placed all other Russian organizations in their pocket under close guard, and issued an order to shoot any who attempted to surrender.

Although it was undoubtedly not the first exchange of shots between the 376th and the Germans, the first actual fire fight for the First Battalion and probably for the Regiment came when a 12 man German patrol hit the outposts of Company B while it was manning the OPLR. The patrol appeared during the noon meal when everyone was in for chow except one man at each position. One of the outposts spotted the patrol coming and immediately contacted First Lieutenant William H. King, leader of the Third Platoon. It was the Third Platoon area that the patrol was approaching.

Lieutenant King immediately sent everyone back to his position, and with Tech Sergeant Fritz H. Gibson, and Staff Sergeant John F. Nagy, hurried to the positions nearest the oncoming patrol.

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We got there in time to get every one in a good firing postition and then waited tensely for the enemy to get closer. We were afraid someone would get trigger happy and start things too soon. But no one fired until Lieutenant King gave the order. The order did not come until the lead man in the Jerry Patrol was only about 15 yards from our positions. Then the men all opened up at the same time and the Jerries just dropped in their tracks. The leader of the patrol attempted to get a MG into position to fire, but our BAR man opened up on him and blew the top of his head practically off. The rest of us continued to fire while Sgt Nagy went back to the CP and brought up a mortar squad which set up immediately behind the line of riflemen where even the gunner could see the target. They were so close to our lines that the mortar squad could only

fire behind and to the flanks of the Jerries, which kept them penned in. After this the return fire from the enemy died down.

The screams of the German wounded finally got under our skins, and Sgt Gibson and Corporal Frank Anderson (medic) went forward with a handkerchief tied to a stick to help the wounded and get them out of the way. They received no fire so the Assistant Squad Leader, Sgt Lawson and Lt. King and Sgt Nagy went forward also to help in carrying in the wounded. While out in front of our positions, Sgt Lawson, with Pfc Linder who had also come up, came upon four Germans who were desperately trying to dig in with their bare hands to escape the shrapnel from the mortar shells which were falling very close to their positions. They immediately surrendered. The operation netted four dead, four wounded, and three unwounded prisoners. Only one of the patrol was unaccounted for.

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One of the more interesting phases of the St. Nazaire mission was the series of unique technical problems that faced some of the Regiment's specialized sections. Biggest of these headaches was perhaps the one that fell to the lot of Captain Thomas J. McIntyre, the Regimental Comuunications Officer and his crew of experts.

Communications men are among the least sung heroes of an infantry regiment. Their job is neither conspicuous nor, in the sense that a rifleman's is, dramatic. Yet without them the best of infantry regiments would soon crumble into an inchoate mass of men and materials, powerless to strike or even move. Daily they perform near miracles, but since these are technical miracles, beyond the province of the majority who benefit by their results, they are usually taken for granted. It is more apt to be the occasionally "snafued" wire or juiceless radio that brings them into the limelight.

Captain McIntyre's problem at St. Nazaire was the length of the front line. Between the "spider" and Le Temple was space enough for a division to operate in normal circumstances, and the men of Tech Sergeant Franklin H. Neumann's wire section shook their heads hopelessly at the thought of attempting to extend the signal facilities of a mere regiment over such an area. The problem of wire alone—that of laying out the more than 200 miles of lines that would be necessary in such an extended situation — was a formidable one. There simply were not 200 miles of wire in the Regiment.

Telephones too were a problem. The twelve alloted on a Table of Equipment that had been designed to fill the needs of compacter warfare did not come near filling the bill, and the departing 331st, that somehow had acquired a total of some fifty phones, was sympathetic, but left none of them behind.

It was the initiative of Warrant Officer Walter G. Dobinson that saved the situation. The FFI, hopelessly tied down themselves due to lack of transportation, proved a remunerative source of information as to the whereabouts of abandoned or captured Wehrmacht equipment, and Mr. Dobinson, with his driver, Technician Fifth Grade John P. Durika, were often seen in those early days speeding about the countryside as they ran all possible leads into the ground.

It was not long before this search brought forth an amazing assortment of relics and "gems" of signal equipment. The regimental signal supply room soon began to take on the appearance of a "combined corps signal dump and a city junk yard."

There were French commercial installations, battered German field phones, old American switchboards (vintage World War I) electric motors, handsets of all descriptions, multi-colored Wehrmacht field wire, and assorted radio parts by the boxful. It was this maze of tangled wire and broken parts that developed, under the endless patience and ingenuity of Sergeant Neumann and his men into one of the most intricate communications nets ever devised by an infantry regiment.

One of the more colorful aspects of this hook-up was the message center on wheels which was constructed from an old boxcar discovered by Staff Sergeant Jack L. Bowler and Private First Class John P. Jasper in the town of Ancenis nearby. The astute carpentry of Jasper and Technician Fifth Grade James J. Sommers, Jr. soon turned it into "one of the finest message centers in Northern France;" complete with office and sleeping accomodations for the entire message center crew. It was a sad day when time for moving came in January, and the boxcar, its small wheels proving inadequate to cope with the sticky French mud, became hopelessly mired and had to be left behind.

During the months at St. Nazaire the only real offensive action that could not be classed as a patrol was a push undertaken in the Third Battalion area with the object of straightening the lines north of Bouvron. Center of activities during this advance was the area along the Brest-Nantes Canal in the vicinity of La Pessouis.

It was on the morning of October 6th that Company I jumped off along the south bank of the canal in the face of shelling and small arms fire which was particularly heavy in the vicinity of the old chateau just east of La Pessouis. Late in the afternoon they passed through the town, which the Germans had hurriedly evacuated in the face of the advance, and occupied the high ground beyond the town. Here their troubles really began. As they started to dig in on the slopes of the hill, artillery began pouring in from both directions. Apparently the artillery with the 302nd Infantry across the canal had spotted the digging and had mistaken Company I for enemy troops. Under fire from both sides they were finally forced to

withdraw east of La Pessouis again, and to allow the Germans to reoccupy the town.

All during the next two days the Second Platoon of Company I, commanded by Second Lieutenant Pablo Arenaz, laid siege to the town they had once taken and been forced to relinquish. With them was a mortar section from Company M, commanded by Lieutenant James K. Tracy. The siege consisted mainly of a murderous barrage laid on the town by these mortars, as well as by one of Company I's own 60mm mortar squads.

It was on the morning of the second day that an SS sergeant, clad in camouflaged jacket, walked towards the besieger's line, whistling and with his hands in his pockets. Under the muzzles of an outpost's M1's he explained his reason for surrendering, "I've been on the Russian front, but I've never seen so many dead in one town." So saying, he cheerfully gave up.

Once again La Pessouis was in American hands; this time for keeps. On the morning of October 9th when the push was over and the Third Battalion was relieved, an advance of 3500 yards had been made.

One of the interesting sidelights of this period in the history of the 376th was the series of truces arranged between October 23rd and 28th. These were effective from 0700 to 0900, and from 1500 to 1900, and their purpose was to allow the French Red Cross to carry out the business of evacuating 9,000 French civilians from the German-occupied area. These truces were hardly a relaxation for anyone on the lines. There was a tense silence about them, with the men of each outpost ready at their weapons, and sharply alert for the first indication of a violation of the truce.

Few violations occurred, but the Germans had a disconcerting habit during the days when these truces were held. Each morning and evening in the last few minutes before the suspension of hostilities was effective they would lay an artillery barrage on some portion of the line, secure in the knowledge that there could be no counter battery from the American side due to the onset of the truce. In retaliation the 919th and Cannon Company often resorted to this ruse themselves. There were many however who claimed that revenge was not complete until American shells had landed on "Jerry's" only movie house, an occurrence which was bitterly deplored by the Nazi officers who, the story goes, maintained that such action on our part was extremely detrimental to their morale.

Only major change in the front line deployment occurred on November 2nd when the First Battalion, which was in reserve at La Gacilly, moved to the Lorient Sector near Hennebont to relieve the Third Battalion of the 302nd which subsequently took over the First's former positions at St. Nazaire.

The three battalions had been taking turns in Division reserve at La Gacilly and when the First's turn came they found themselves, just as the other battalions had, deep in an intensive training program, the purpose of which was ominously clear to everyone.

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The Westwall on the big front was still a German product (as Captain Henry C. Bowden Jr. of Company B explains) and we had heard a lot about its great pillboxes from way back. In fact we had trained for pillbox reduction back in the States, but had kind of forgotten it after the new type of warfare we had become accustomed to at St. Nazaire. So training in reduction of pillboxes got the vote, and as the A & P Platoon built dummy pillboxes, the companies organized into assault detachments and Major Sam Roper scouted ammo dumps for extra ammo.

The training area was, we thought, typical of the type of country we would see when and if we hit the Siegfried. Three dummy forts were built to support each other. They were on the military crest of a hill, and the center one covered the mouth of a draw. For a couple of days the separate assault detachments worked with the individual weapons of an assault team. The 319th Engineers came down and gave us instruction in the use of the flame thrower, bangalores, pole and satchel charges. They ended their instruction by putting on a demonstration of how to attack a fortified area.

After all this priming, the doughs in the assault teams were pretty anxious to get at these dummy forts with all those special tools and really find out what they themselves could do. Everybody in the Battalion was pretty cocky anyway. There was hardly a man who hadn't shot at a Kraut and most of them had been shot at by a Kraut, and had been under artillery several times. Even the Battalion CP had been shelled a couple of times.

An assault team from each company jumped off early one morning firing everything it had. We used the 81's as artillery preparation, and they didn't spare the ammo. The HMG's in support fired box after box of tracer and ball and lifted their fire only after the assault teams were closing in on the forts themselves. The rifle companies fired their 60's from close behind the teams, and sometimes were even attached to them. The LMG's were sometimes attached and sometimes just followed along, displacing every time their firing was masked. The doughs who handled the flame throwers and demolitions were sometimes too aggressive. On more than one occasion they almost ran into the machine gun fire. Bazookas were fired as frequently as the rifles and from any angle or position. The 81's would lift to fire beyond the targets when the assault teams got too close, but would continue to pound the hilltop with artillery effect. Many times the flanks of the teams would be pinned down by fire from one of the other companies, and hand grenades were thrown, around in a manner that seemed almost careless. On numerous occasions the men of the company not taking part in the problem were pinned down by fire from an automatic weapon that was acting as support to the assault teams, and it even became SOP that spectators assume the prone position.

The companies ran these problems time after time, using live ammo each time and each time

becoming more aggressive and more efficient. This type of training was a company commander's dream. There was no problem in keeping the men interested, there were no restrictions on ammo, and we were not as careful as we had been in training in the States. We had learned from our stay at St. Nazaire that it paid to be aggressive and it seemed that everyone in the Battalion realized it. We also knew that it was just not in the books for a division as well trained as the 94th to stay on a forgotten front till the war was over. All these things, put together, led to the spirit that went into the realistic training we got at La Gacilly. It was the best training we had ever had in this type of warfare, and later on in the game when we really began to play for keeps, we knew we were ready. We knew how to take a pillbox, and how to use the special tools that were used for the job.

To many people in the Division, La Gacilly was just a little French town with a beer joint and a few good-looking French babes. But to the First Battalion it was ten days of training that later proved to be most valuable in the accomplishment of our most important mission.

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When the First Battalion moved to Lorient after its "rest" period in La Gacilly nobody knew exactly what to expect. There were many rumors afoot in regard to a big German push that might soon open up in that sector. Source of the rumors was largely unofficial reports from the FFI who, in their characteristically mercurial and effervescent manner, sometimes tended to jump to conclusions. However some weight was lent to such reports by the fact that the greater part of the Division's artillery was at Lorient. Whatever the actual G-2 was, it was apparent that the threat of attack was stronger there than it was in the St. Nazaire pocket.

Information brought back by the officers who had made the preliminary reconnaissance of the area to be taken over from the Third Battalion of the 302nd was not encouraging. They brought word that 1,000 rounds of artillery had fallen there in one day and that the positions left much to be desired in the way of warmth and comfort. Everything was underground. Even the battalion CP was a mere dugout with logs and dirt piled six feet over the top. Perhaps the most disconcerting thing about the new area was the vast frontage which the one battalion, together with a battalion of the FFI, was going to have to cover. Extended as a battalion front had been at St. Nazaire, the area that the 302nd's Third battalion had covered at Lorient was even wider.

When Colonel Miner's Battalion first moved into the new area, it initially took over the same positions which had been left them by the 302nd. Company B moved into the same dugouts that "I" of the 302nd had occupied on the right of the area, while Company C moved in on the left. The area between the two strong points established by Companies B and C was held by the FFI. Company A, in battalion reserve, set up in the vicinity of the battalion CP.

The enemy, as they soon learned by constant and aggressive patrolling, was if anything more elusive than he was at St. Nazaire. Near Strongpoint One, which was in "B's" area, patrols seldom contacted the Germans until they had advanced some 2000 yards in front of their positions. In front of Strongpoint Two they were sometimes encountered as close as 600 yards. Main strongpoint of the Germans was the battered town of Kervignac, situated approximately in the center of the Battalion front, which they used as an artillery OP. The area around this town was the scene of constant activity as daily patrols were sent out to keep tabs on the enemy strength there. An attack on this town was planned late in Decem ber, but abandoned when it was learned the Division was leaving the area.

Until the arrival of the Battalion no prisoners had been actually captured in the Lorient Sector. A few had come in voluntarily, but none had been taken by force. The distinction of taking the first one went to First Lieutenant John Narewski who led a patrol behind the German defenses and captured a German machine gunner.

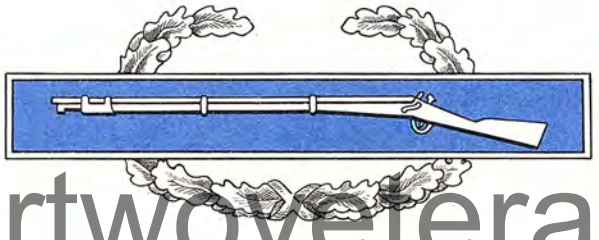
Despite ominous rumors and forebodings, the Lorient Sector turned out to be if anything quieter than St. Nazaire. There was a moderate amount of artillery which almost invariably came in at 1000 in the morning and 1600 in the afternoon, and there were some casualties as a result; among then Private First Class Samuel Previte of Company D who was killed when an 88 scored a direct hit on his machine gun emplacement. But other than this, the Germans initiated very little activity of any kind, and the men soon began to venture out of their foxholes and emplacements to seek more comfortable quarters. By the middle of December when the Battalion left Lorient a number of men were living in wooden frame houses right on the front line and finding that the risk was negligible.

Life at Lorient was a series of curious incidents, and somewhat colorful episodes arising out of working hand in hand with the FFI. The countryside itself was more picturesque than that of St. Nazaire, and the operations there had a more intimate flavor. From several places on the front line one could look right down into the German occupied town of Lorient, and watch activity along the wharves.

One of the many incidents characteristic of the days at Lorient is told by First Lieutenant Joseph A. Coffey of the First Battalion Communications Platoon. On reconnaissance in Hennebont, site of the proposed alternate Battalion Command Post in case of a German breakthrough, Lieutenant Coffey was tracing tangled wire circuits with his assistant, Sergeant Kenneth Perigo. One set of wires which they followed disappeared under a pile of rubble. This in itself was not surprising as the entire town of Hennebont had been reduced by artillery to a mere shell; it was the fact that voices were coming from under the rubble that called for investigation.

Painstakingly digging their way through the ruins, the two wire experts came finally on a small subterranean room which had been part of a cellar while the house above it still stood. It was from here that the voices were coming. A Frenchwoman was sitting at an elaborate and still functioning switchboard, busily engaged in maintaining civilian telephone connections between the two neighboring towns of Auray and Plouay, apparently oblivious of the cataclysmic nature of her surroundings. At a small table behind her sat an elderly man, apparently her relief operator, quietly eating his supper.

Two events which stand out in the history of our "forgotten front" took place in December on two succeeding days. It was on December 29th that Colonel Harold H. McClune assumed command of the St. Nazaire Sector. Sector Headquarters being dissolved, and its functions reverting to the Regiment for control. For the first time since its entry into combat, the Regiment became the 376th Infantry Combat Team. On the following day, each battalion and each company except Headquarters and Service were formally awarded the Combat Infantry streamer, and the 376th Infantry became officially the veteran outfit it was soon to prove itself in the "big league" battles for the Siegfried Line.



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The French

Nobody who was with the 376th Infantry at St. Nazaire will be likely to forget the French, both the civilian French of Brittany, and the French fighting units. They will be remembered not only for the close cooperation and deep friendship that existed between them and the men of the Regiment, but also as ardent, if sometimes over-ebullient fighters who taught us much about our common enemy and the grim business of fighting him.

When the 376th first came to St. Nazaire, the French who were fighting there were a chaotic and miscellaneous assortment of resistance groups, mostly without arms or any means of waging war other than a grim determination to fight and destroy the "sal boche." Of the 25 different groups into which these guerrilla fighters were loosely organized, most belonged to the FFI, but there were many others. The regular French Army was represented as well as the Marines and Navy, and these groups were mixed in with remnants of the Polish, Belgian and Dutch armies, and a scattering of French peasants from the neighborhood who joined the fight with whatever weapons they had at hand whenever the spirit moved them. There were also a number of individuals who, though hungry for German blood as their more organized conferes, still clung to political opinions that prevented them from joining with them. These were the men who appeared from time to time in the various headquarters of the 376th and begged to join the Regiment and fight with the Americans.

One of the first jobs facing the Regiment—the whole 94th Division, in fact—was tracking down the leaders of these various groups and organizing them under one command. This was in no sense an easy task as the operational procedure of the FFI and allied units was far too elastic and spontaneous to include anything so conventional as a command post or even an established location for headquarters.

In those early days before they had become organized and integrated fighting units under Regimental control, the French fought in any sector of the line in which they happened to be, and the sometimes "calvados-inspired" mission of their patrols was more often shooting than reconnaissance, or the acquiring of enemy information. Nobody could be sure in those early days just what was going to happen when a French patrol was sent out. Often the patrol would receive its instructions—perhaps a reconnaissance mission—and disappear eagerly into the night. During the next ten or fifteen minutes utter bedlam would break loose in front of the lines, and the patrol would then return and announce that they were out of ammunition. Patrols of this sort often resulted in a high local mortality rate among the Germans, as

well as a considerable bag of sparrows and other small game.

Out of this largely unarmed confusion of eager guerilla fighters, the Regiment soon created some semblance of order. Nearly 3,000 German small arms, many mortars, a large supply of ammunition, and finally captured German artillery were scraped together. The French were instructed in the use of the last item by Division artillerymen. By November 14th the following French units were placed under the command of the 376th Infantry: 17th Battalion Chausseurs a Pièd, 1st Battalion 32nd Regiment, and 6th, 7th and 8th Battalions of the FFI.

The individualists who were not members of these outfits, but had applied directly to the 376th for permission to fight with the Regiment were given M1's, uniforms, and other necessary equipment and were assigned to rifle companies. They received no pay, but considered ample food, rations and a chance to fight the Germans reward enough.

In return for this they gave their all. They proved to be the most eager soldiers in the Regiment, ready at any time to go out and kill "boche," and failing completely to understand the American practice of taking prisoners. At first the sergeants to whose squads the Frenchmen were assigned had linguistic difficulties in handling their new recruits, but after a few weeks they claimed that these men had become an indispensable part of the squads.

The final episode in the relations of the 376th with the French fighting forces and government came in January after the Regiment had moved on to its new mission in Germany. On January 29th, General de Gaulle, awarded the Croix de Guerre for "exceptional military services rendered in the course of operations for the liberation of France" to two officers and three men of the Regiment.

Colonel Harold H. McClune, Commanding Officer of the 376th, and First Lieutenant James W. Cornelius were awarded the Croix de Guerre with Palm, while to Staff Sergeant Robert W. Lodin, Technician Fifth Grade Antony M. Palladino and Private Warren R. Heen went the Croix de Guerre with Bronze Star.

Off to Germany

Ever since the Germans had begun their December counter-offensive in Belgium the rumor mills had been grinding out "hot poop" on where the Regiment was going. The stories were as numerous as the tellers, but on one thing all were agreed: the 376th would not long remain in the comparative quiet of St. Nazaire. Something bigger was in store.

By the end of December the truth of this had become apparent. Advance parties of the 66th Division were already appearing on the lines, and trucks and equipment of the incoming 263rd Infantry were gathering in the rear areas. The day finally came on January 1st, 1945. It was at 2045 that evening that the 376th Infantry, after 106 days on the line at St. Nazaire, was officially relieved, and destined for a new and as yet unknown assignment.

Chow that afternoon was a memorable occasion. In the midst of the confusion of moving the Quartermaster had not forgotten it was New Year's Day, and the Regiment, spread over acres of winter field only a 1,000 yards behind the lines, enjoyed a turkey dinner with artillery still whistling over their heads. It was at this point, just as each man was casting baleful glances at the mountainous pack he would soon have to shoulder for the moving out, that the Christmas mail came through. For a number of men the pleasure of receiving as many as five packages from home was somewhat dampened by the imminent problem of where and how to carry them.

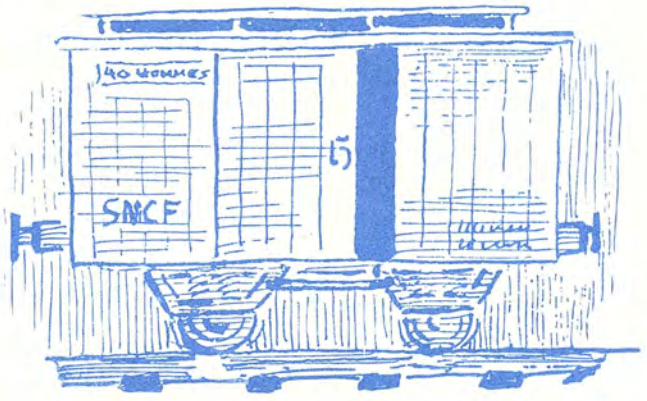
That evening, having eaten or left behind the contents of the Christmas packages that could not be carried, the seven mile march to Vigneux began. At Vigneux most of the Regiment bivouacked for the night, the luckier ones quartered in a series of battered and moribund shacks that had apparently once been barracks. On the morning of January 2nd they moved by truck to the assembly area at Chateaubriant.

Chateaubriant was the last stop before setting out for the new and to most, still unknown destination. Here the Regiment bivouacked in pup tents on a open and windy field which was soon covered with the first snow of the season. Passes to Chateaubriant were eagerly welcomed, not only as an opportunity for a final celebration, but as a pleasant means of finding shelter from the weather.

The three days of waiting at Chateaubriant for the trains that would take the Regiment on the last long lap of its journey across France marked the end of the St. Nazaire epoch of their history.

It had been a colorful epoch, and an instructive one. It had been over three hard

months of combat; combat of a sort that was arduous and dangerous enough to condition the men to the ways of war and give them the calm sureness of veterans, yet mild enough so that after three months of it the vitality of the Regiment had not been drained by losses or fatigue. It had been a unique apprenticeship and the 376th went forth to the greater battles that still lay ahead unscarred by its experience, and with the confidence of men who have been under fire and know what they can do. They were ready.



CHAPTER III Hitting the Switch

Boxcar Travel

Winter at last had really set in. The first snow of the season that had begun to fall on the pup tents outside of Chateaubriant had continued spasmodically during the next two days, and it was bitter cold. On the frosty afternoon of January 5th, with hands stiff and numb, and overcoat collars turned up, the men of the 376th prepared to load on the trains that would take them to their destination. Spirits, already dampened by the biting weather, were not improved by a first look at the trains.

One of the many items which had become comparatively scarce in France during four years of war and occupation were passenger coaches. Many of these that had not been turned into twisted and rusty masses of scrap metal by Allied bombing of strategic French rail yards had been transported to Germany to serve as transport for the Wehrmacht. There were not enough left to move whole infantry regiments across France. The only alternative was the "40 hommes 8 chevaux" boxcar of World War I fame. It was a seemingly endless procession of these that waited that day in the Chateaubriant railroad yards.

The French boxcar is considerably shorter than its American counterpart, and

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Goodbye to the Forgotten Front — Doughs of the 94th Division wait for trains to the Big Show in a barren marshalling area near Chateaubriant.

subject of much discussion was the question of just how it was possible to get 40 men or 8 horses into one of them. Loading tables of the 376th called for 100 pounds of straw for bedding, and approximately 27 men in each car. General opinion among the men who were hard put to find room for themselves as well as their bulky packs and equipment was that 27 was the absolute maximum.

The "40 and 8's" were designed neither for comfort nor cold weather. They had no seats and no lighting and there was no means of communicating between cars while the train was moving. In Winter, light was a problem even during the day. Most of the cars had small panels high up in the walls that could be used for windows, but the icy blasts of winter air that poured through them when they were open prohibited their use. Even the sliding doors in the center of the cars which were the only other source of light could be opened only part way without freezing the occupants.

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During the three day trip a few of the hardier souls braved the icy wind by the doors where they could watch the snowy scenery slip by. But most remained wrapped in their blankets on the straw-covered floor, dozing, talking, playing cards or reading when there was sufficient light. Meals were irregular in timing but extremely consistent in type. "C" rations supplemented by more "C" rations. Often these were heated in the kitchen cars and served during stops.

Among the more striking differences between American and French railroads are the comparative cruising speeds, and the apparent whimsicality of French engineers. All night long the boxcars would jolt and rattle and pitch from side to side as if the train were hurtling along the tracks at breakneck speed, yet dawn would find it just pulling into a town perhaps fifteen miles from where it had been the night before. Another problem was stops. Often a two or three minute stop would lengthen into half an hour or more. On other occasions when a fifteen minute or half-hour stop had been announced and the men had jumped off to stretch their legs or attend to the demands of nature, the engineer would apparently change his mind inside of three minutes and start off without warning. Those who had ventured off the train were left to get back aboard as best they could, and a wild scramble would ensue at the doorways of the moving cars.

For three days the trains moved eastward, skirting Paris to the south and passing through Lorraine. Finally, on the chill evening of January 8th they pulled into Thionville near the junction of the French, German and Luxembourg boundaries. It was there that the men of the Regiment first heard the guns of the Western Front, rumbling amidst the heat-lightning flashes of distant artillery on the horizon.

At Thionville a brief stop was made for coffee before the trains moved onward again. The final destination, which was reached later the same evening, was Uckange, a smaller town south of Thionville. There the packs were rolled and shouldered again and stiff with cold and long sitting in cramped positions, the men at last got off the trains and loaded almost immediately into trucks that were to take them to nearby towns where billets had been arranged for the night.

All of the Regiment could not travel by "40 and 8." The organic vehicles had to be driven across France in time to be at the destination when the bulk of the troops arrived. So the motor convoy was made ready to leave Chateaubriant on January 4th, the day before the foot elements were to board the trains. Colonel Harold H. McClune and half his staff accompanied this convoy.

At the time of departure, the Regiment's orders were to proceed to Rheims, France, to go into SHAEF reserve, ready to be used wherever necessary on the Western Front. Plans at that time called for about a week of coordinated infantry-armor training in Rheims.

Amidst a driving snow storm before dawn of the 3rd the vehicles pulled reluctantly from the adhesive mud of the Chateaubriant assembly area and headed east across France. The bad weather that accompanied the departure was only a hint of what was to follow. As the day progressed, the cold became more intense and

the snow flurries more frequent. To add to the misery of driving in such weather, the need for adequate anti-aircraft defense made necessary the rule that all jeeps and weapons carriers be driven without tops or sides. The whistling wind whipped through the open vehicles, making it impossible for the occupants to keep warm no matter how they tried. Most drivers wore both sets of woolen underwear under their uniforms, and covered them with one or more sweaters and an overcoat or mackinaw. But the drivers had no mittens for their freezing hands, only the inadequate gloves which the Quartermaster was not able to replace until later in the Winter.

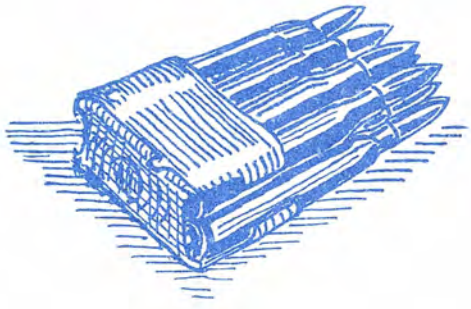
Nor did the end of the day's driving provide relief from the bitter cold. There were no warm billets in which to thaw frozen bodies. Instead the convoy bivouacked in puptents in an open, wind-swept, snow-covered field. By morning the shelterhalves were stiff with ice. Only someone who has had the experience can realize how demoralizing it is to arise from what little warmth one has managed to create within the confines of a sleepingbag, and bring one's stiff body into contact with the early morning chill; then attempt to fold a frozen and muddy piece of canvas into something resembling a pack. So it was on this dreary January morning. With nothing warm but the motors, the column headed once more to the east. The cold grew more fierce and the snow increased as the convoy reached its supposed destination.

Upon arriving in Rheims every one in the convoy was ready for a rest. But it was not to be. The orders for the Division had been changed since the departure from Chateaubriant. The 376th Infantry Regiment was in SHAEF reserve for approximately 20 minutes. Now it was assigned to the Third Army. The convoy was to go to Sierck, France to join the XX Corps.

Hardened to their fate, the drivers once more hit the icy roads on what they hoped would be the last leg of their journey. The terrain beyond Rheims was more rugged than anything that had preceded it, and the weather was no better. But the trip was made without undue mishap, and the vehicles were in Sierck by the time the trains had arrived at Uckange.

The soldiers who had come by train were a bit amazed to find themselves practically at the front. Upon departure from Chateaubriant they had been informed that they were going to Rheims for at least a week of training. The change of destination had been given to the Transportation Corps men in charge of the trains, but not to the passengers. As a result, the men who boarded the trains contemplating a week of good living, clambered off the cars trying to adjust themselves to the idea of going on line almost immediately.

That night, the night of January 8th, was the eve of a great new chapter in the history of the 376th. By daylight on the morning of January 9th, Third Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was to be relieved, and the men of the Regiment were to have moved into their first positions on the Western Front; positions from which they were to push across 100 miles of stubbornly defended German homeland in the next 75 days. At last the curtain was rising on the main event; the event for which two years of training had been the preparation, and for which more than three months of actual combat at St. Nazaire had been but the dress rehearsal.



The Switch

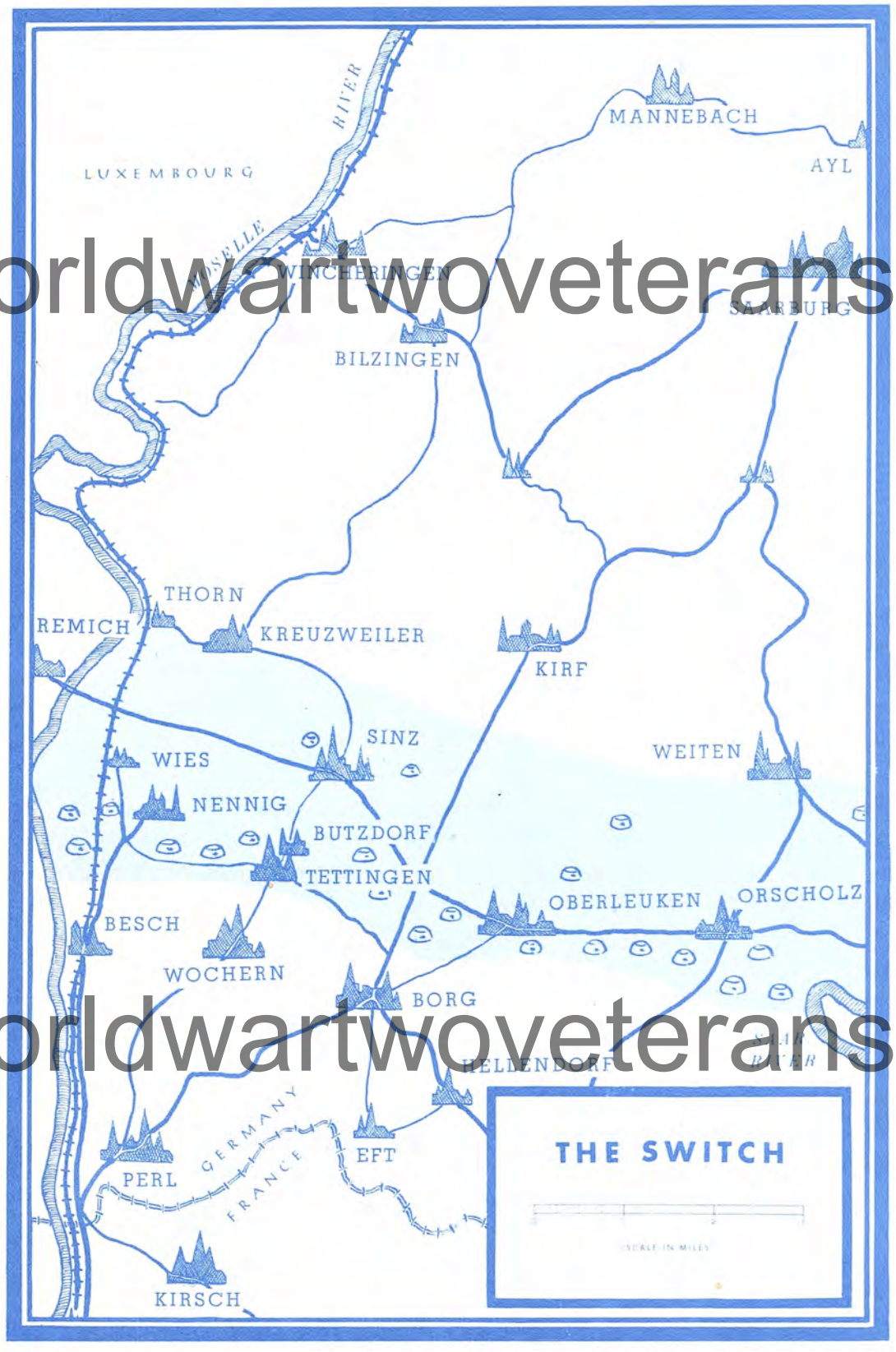
Regt CP at SIERCK . . .
1st Bn CP at PERL . . .
2nd Bn CP at EFT . . .
3rd Bn CP at KIRSCH . . .
All troops closed in 2330.
Relief of 3rd Cav Rcn Sq will be completed by daylight 9 Jan.

SANDOZ
S-3

This was the message sent to 94th Division G-3 from the 376th during the early hours of the morning of January 9th. This was the setting of the stage; the announcement that the Regiment was ready to begin its first mission in Germany. It was a mission of imposing significance. Just how significant did not become a matter of common knowledge until months later when the Battle of the Rhine was in its ultimate stages. Only now, long after the smoke of final battle in Germany has cleared, can we look back on the task that at that time lay before the Regiment and see it in the light of the greater over-all strategy of the Allied Armies, complete with its causes and antecedents.

Properly speaking, the Siegfried Switch Line was not a part of what was generally thought of as the Westwall, though it was hardly less formidable. It was a narrower belt of fortifications, running at right angles to the main line, from the Saar River above Merzig to the Moselle River in the vicinity of Remich on the Luxembourg side. For 12 miles it wound its way over steep hillsides, terraced with vineyards, and dotted with thick clumps of spruce forest, passing through or near the towns of Oberleuken, Borg, Tettingen-Butzdorf and Nennig.

Purpose of the Switch was to guard the approaches to Saarburg and especially Trier, vital communications center some five miles northeast of the junction of the two rivers. It also served as an outpost defense ring and buffer for the main Westwall defenses on the other side of the Saar, which were a crucial link in the whole Siegfried chain. As far back as 1942 when General Eisenhower presented his plan for the Battle of Germany to General Marshall, Allied military leaders had realized that this heavily fortified outguard would have to be breached before any large-scale penetrations of the main Siegfried positions could be made. If it were not, the part of the main line it shielded could not be neutralized and would be a constant threat to the flanks of any penetration made elsewhere. Once the Switch was overcome, a wedge-shaped salient could be thrust into the German line between the two



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rivers, imperiling their flank to the northwest. Such a wedge would also provide a firm springboard for further Allied attacks to the east.

With this strategy in mind, the 90th Infantry and 10th Armored Divisions had been thrown against these positions early in December. But their attack had achieved only partial success when, on December 16th, events on the Western Front took an unexpected turn. Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt, mustering what strength remained in the failing Wehrmacht, launched a final and desperate blitz against the American First Army to the north.

The first days of this never-to-be-forgotten "Battle of the Bulge" were so alarming that all major offensive plans had to be abandoned temporarily to save the situation. Most of the 90th Division and all of the 10th Armored were hastily withdrawn from the Saar-Moselle sector and speeded north to stop the panzer columns that were rapidly advancing through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium.

For the moment further attacks on the Switch were out of the question. Liquidation of the "Bulge," which by Christmas Day had reached near catastrophic proportions, had first priority. Best that could be done in the Saar-Moselle area was to keep matters as they stood. This mission, which was purely a holding one, was assigned to the Third Cavalry Reconnaissance Group which held that section of the line without attempting any offensive action until the "Bulge" was choked off and relegated to history and bitter memories.

By the last week in December the situation had improved; not greatly, but enough so that certain operations could be undertaken that would have seemed too risky a week earlier. Among these were the transfer of the 94th Division from the relative limbo of Brittany to SHAEF reserve where it would await a Western Front assignment as soon as the situation cleared enough for the offensive timetable to be resumed. Possible reason that the 94th had not been transferred to a more active front during the most crucial days of the "Bulge" was that reinforcement units could be sent more quickly direct from the ports of debarkation on the Channel. It is entirely possible that if the 66th Division had not lost so many men when one of its ships was torpedoed crossing the Channel, it would have gone to the Western Front that first week in January while the 94th continued its holding assignment on the Atlantic Coast.

After the twenty minute stay in SHAEF reserve at Rheims the 94th was assigned to the XX Corps of General George S. Patton Jr's renowned Third Army. Under the Command of Major General Walton H. Walker, the XX "Ghost" Corps had played a dramatic and brilliant role in the Third Army's blitz through France. Now the 376th, with the rest of the 94th, was to join it and take up defensive positions facing

the Switch until orders came through to carry on where the 90th had been forced to leave off three weeks before.

The positions which the Third Cavalry Squadron had inherited from the 90th, and which they were now relinquishing to the 376th Infantry were within sight of the dragon's teeth and snow-filled anti-tank ditches that marked the frontier defenses of the Switch. First mission upon relieving the cavalrymen was to establish an MLR and an OPL which would be maintained until the orders came to start the offensive.

The dragon's teeth wound through a series of small farming towns which had themselves been converted into formidable strong points. In addition to dragon's teeth, anti-tank ditches, communications trenches and barbed wire, the approaches to these towns were guarded with mines and by pillboxes, which had disconcertingly perfect observation from neighboring steep bluffs.

Facing this ominous array of power, the men of the 376th began the work of setting up an MLR just south of the front line villages of Besch, Wochern and Borg. The morning of January 9th was biting cold and they worked under cover of an early morning ground haze. The job of hewing foxholes and gun positions in the iron-hard frozen ground was far from easy. But one thing at least could be said for it; it was a good way to keep warm.

In these positions, from the 9th to the 13th of January, the 376th waited, poised like a wary fighter, watchful eyes glued on the quiet winter countryside ahead where the enemy also watched and waited. On the left, in and around Besch and Wochern was the First Battalion. To the right, near Borg and Hellendorf and extending as far east as Oberleuken, the Second. Behind them the Third Battalion prepared the reserve positions.

It was not good weather for patrols. A man dressed in olive drab is too good a target against the unbroken white of snow in such open country. But there was constant patrolling, and it was not long before white outer garments began to appear, hastily improvised out of sheets, or any piece of white cloth large enough to serve the purpose, that could be found in the nearby towns. Day after day these ghostly sheeted figures moved forward over the snow, cautiously probing in front of the lines towards where the Wehrmacht lay snug in their concrete pillboxes and fortified villages. From the lines themselves came the snow-muffled sound of pick-mattocks chunking in the frozen ground as foxholes widened and deepened and new emplacements were dug.

Chill winds swept the towns along the Moselle mud flats and crept into sleeping bags to torment the resting sentries along the OPL. Fingers, toes, and noses turned

numb with cold. Houses abandoned in apparent haste by German civilians obeying Hitler's order to evacuate the fighting zones were left intact, complete with coal, food and livestock. These the troops used for shelter and billets wherever possible. Only thing that could be said for the weather was that it was ideal for hunting. There was plenty of game—deer and rabbits especially—and marksmanship was excellent. Often the crack of an M1 ringing out in the clear sub-zero air would mean that at least one company would be having something other than "C" rations for supper that evening.

Those first five days, from the 9th to the 13th of January, were quiet as many of the days in Brittany had been. But they were to be the last five days of any kind of quiet for a long time. On January 13th the warning order came:

. . . 94 Div will conduct offensive operations within Z involving not more than one reinforced Bn in ea operation . . . 376 Inf will atk at daylight 14 Jan 45 . . . 1st Bn atk at 0730 14 Jan 45, seize and hold the town of TETTINGEN-BUTZDORF. Be prepared to repel counterattacks from the W, N or E.

o o o

This was the gist of the Regimental Field Order which reached the ears of only the battalion commanders and their staffs. But it was not long before Lieutenant Colonel Russell M. Miner had his order before his company commanders, they in turn had oriented their platoon leaders, and so on down until each rifleman knew the part he was to play at 0730 in the morning when the Battalion was to move forward through the dragon's teeth and take the town of Tettingen.

Receiving the news the men looked at one another significantly and said little. Each knew that this was the first real test. The battle about to begin would be a battle in its fullest and most terrible sense—a far cry from the skirmishes of St. Nazaire.

Tettingen-Butzdorf

By 1800 on January 13th the Third Battalion had relieved the First of its positions along the MLR and OPL, and Colonel Miner's men had pulled back to the vicinity of Wochern to reorganize for the jump-off on the following morning.

Grouped around glowing stoves in dimly lit rooms, the men were oriented on the job to be done. It was not going to be an easy one. First of all the Switch Line was a mighty opponent for a single reinforced battalion, narrow as the attacking front might be. Colonel McClune himself, whose plan had been to make a coordinated Regimental attack, was a little uneasy at the prospect of striking with so small a force. But XX Corps had been specific in this respect and there was no alternative. Second, the men were on edge This was their first attack on the Western Front, and it was not as they had anticipated it would be. During the last days in Brittany they had heard many talks on armor-infantry coordination, and had been told that such attacks would be carefully rehearsed beforehand. Here there was no opportunity for rehearsal and no tanks. True, Company B of the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion would be attached, but they were to be used only if absolutely necessary. Company C of the 319th Engineers would clear a mine free path to the Line of Departure; the 919th Field Artillery, other units of Corps Artillery and Cannon Company as well as Company C of the 81st Chemical Battalion would pound the enemy positions in preparation for the attack. But from there on it would be up to the doughs to close with the enemy and destroy him. There were no tanks, because it was not a situation in which tanks could be used effectively. Nonetheless, each rifleman in the First Battalion was acutely aware of the unique feeling of hollow aloneness that comes to the infantryman before such an attack as this was to be.

In the darkness before dawn of January 14th the attackers were given a hot breakfast, and each was loaded with enough "C" ration to last him the rest of the day. Everyone draped himself with as many bandoleers of ammunition as he could carry, and hung grenades from every available pack-strap ring and buttonhole. Otherwise the load was light. No one, in spite of the intense cold, carried more than one blanket, a shelter half or a raincoat. Speed and maneuverability came first. No man could be so loaded that he was unable to attack aggressively.

It was at 0730, with six battalions of artillery still engaged in making the little town of Tettingen look like "the capital of hell" that the First Battalion crossed the LD; Company A on the right, Company C on the left, and Company B in reserve.

The air was filled with the whine and jolting of artillery that formed a moving

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First Battalion Infantryman under fire from German artillery dashes for cover. Scene is a shell-pitted orchard just outside village of Tettingen.

wall a scant 200 yards in front of the attackers. Terrain was unfamiliar, and snow and bitter cold were silent allies of the defenders of the town, but everything went smoothly. Private First Class Philip L. Russo, Company I machine gunner, who witnessed the entire attack from his position on the Third Battalion OPL, said it was an almost perfect attack: . . . "just like we used to do in training when no one was firing back at us."

Surprise is a formidable ally of advancing infantry when they are the ones to do the surprising, and it was a sharp weapon in the hands of the First Battalion that morning. The defenders of Tettingen were caught off guard, first by the stunning blasts of artillery and then by the swift, determined attackers who closed in so quickly in its wake. There were hurried attempts at futile resistance and some firing from windows and trenches in and about the town. But the attackers closed in implacably and by 0815 it was all over. Companies A and C were, for the moment, in undisputed possession of their first objective.

With surprising ease the first round had gone to the 376th. But there was no time to pause and contemplate the victory. The silence that followed the last shots of the first encounter was tense and threatening. With feverish haste Com-

pany C began the business of setting up perimeter defense against the counter-attacks that could be expected momentarily. Company A had hardly paused to catch its breath when it received orders to move on and take Butzdorf.

Just as a good boxer will invariably bore into an opponent still staggering from an unexpected blow, it is axiomatic in the infantry that, when the element of surprise has been initially achieved, it must be followed up. Tettingen had been "caught with its pants down." Butzdorf across a few hundred yards of open ground from Tettingen, might be open to surprise as well. Company A was to jump off at 1000 and find out.

At 0953 the comparative silence was again broken by the jarring slam of exploding shells, landing this time on Butzdorf. The men of Company A, facing north from the streets of Tettingen, watched them fall and waited. This was the seven minute preparation for their attack; the inevitable softening up that a target of infantry receives before the foot-soldiers move in for the kill.

At exactly 1000 they set out again. This time however, the Germans were alert and the attackers had hardly gained the northern edge of Tettingen when the fire-cracker snap of small arms fire coming dangerously close filled the air about them. It was followed by the unmistakable whine of incoming artillery. Further advance was, for the moment, impossible, and the men hugged the ground while Captain Carl J. Shetler called back for further artillery assistance. After five more minutes of softening up, fire from Butzdorf itself slackened and advance was again possible. But the troubles of Company A were just beginning.

The open grqund between the two towns was comparatively flat and completely without cover. To the east it rose sharply to form a ridge which overlooked the flats and both towns as well. This ridge was an ideal location for mortars, and it was soon obvious that the Germans had taken advantage of it. Half way between the two towns Captain Shetler and his men heard the familiar popping sound from the ridge. The barrage was murderously accurate, and to the men who took the full brunt of it in the open, it was "like standing at the bottom of a well and helplessly being stoned by a group of small boys at the top." When the smoke had cleared there were numerous casualties, among whom was Captain Shetler, mortally wounded by flying fragments.

Once across the open, the attack went more easily, and by 1142 Butzdorf too had fallen. The Company, now commanded by First Lieutenant David F. Stafford, set about preparing its defenses for expected counterattacks. The attack had succeeded initially, but the long, finger-like salient which the taking of Tettingen and Butzdorf had produced thrust 2000 yards into enemy-held territory, and was

only some 400 yards wide. Strongly defended as it was, with the added fire-power of Company D and the cannon fire which First Lieutenant Hjalmar W. Nielsen could bring to bear at a moment's notice, it was still vulnerable, and would be harder to hold than it had been to take.

The main problem at this point, aside from hewing defenses out of the frozen ground around the town and keeping an eye out for further attacks at the same time, was the several hundred yards of open ground that Company A had just crossed. To reach Butzdorf from either Tettingen, where Company C was still dug in, or Wochern, Battalion hub of supply and communications, it was necessary to cross this open ground under perfect observation by enemy artillery and mortar observers. But if Company A was to receive much needed supplies and ammunition, if artillery-disrupted communication wires were to be maintained, and if the many wounded that still lay on the field where the attack had passed were to be reached and evacuated, it had to be crossed. And it was crossed many times. It was crossed by men like Privates First Class Donald W. Meals of Company A and Wesley E. Phillips of Headquarters Company, First Battalion, who constantly disregarded their own safety to keep the telephone wires intact, and Private First Class Russell Merritt, one of the many aid men who risked their life to get the wounded to cover.

It was in no small measure due to the heroism of such men as these that Company A was able to hold out during the next four days when their positions at Butzdorf became a veritable "Bastogne" and they came near to being written off as lost by their battalion.

It was at this time that the "Caldwell Bib" first put in its appearance. Artillery is unavoidably impersonal as to its victims and will blow up a medical man as quickly as an armed soldier, but it soon became evident that German riflemen were at times equally indiscriminate. Consensus of opinion was that this was partly due to the red crosses in white circles which the aid men wore on their helmets not being distinct enough against a snow background. Major Samuel W. Caldwell, the Regimental Surgeon, had finally devised a solution; a white, armless jacket with a large red cross front and back which could be slipped over a field jacket and could not fail to be seen even at a distance. Captured Nazi battle flags provided the red for the crosses, and Red Cross workers in Thionville manned their sewing machines. By the time the First Battalion attacked Tettingen all front line medical personnel were provided with these bibs, and many lives were saved in the following weeks while snow remained on the ground.

The first counterattack came at 1225. A reinforced platoon of about 40 German

infantrymen descended on Butzdorf from the excellent approaches afforded by the woods just to the east. But the defenders of the town were not to be so easily daunted, and drove them off with little trouble, killing about ten of them.

Nothing more happened during the next hour, but at 1335 Company B was moved up from its reserve positions near Wochern to strengthen "C's" defenses in Tettingen. The First Platoon was sent on up to Butzdorf to reinforce Company A. However, the afternoon passed quietly. It was a time of waiting and "sweating out" the enemy's next move. Artillery and 120mm mortar shells fell continuously on both towns and on the only routes of approach to Butzdorf.

In the early hours of January 15th the shelling increased. 120mm mortars, 105's and 88's rained down devastatingly on Tettingen, Butzdorf and Wochern as well. This was the prelude to the first of the really strong counterattacks which came at last at 0300. Four hundred infantrymen swept down from the high ground on three sides of Butzdorf and, covered by heavy supporting fires from emplacements overlooking the town, succeeded in completely encircling it. At the same time part of this force attempted to encircle Tettingen.

With a crackling roar that echoed from the ridges to the east, the First Battalion struck back. The darkness was shattered with blinding flashes as three rifle companies, the mortars and machine guns of Company D, and all available artillery, adjusted with deadly accuracy by forward observers and infantry alike, raised a solid wall of flying steel in the face of the attackers. It was a fanatical assault, and time and time again the first waves thrust to within fifteen yards of the defender's positions, only to be hurled back and annihilated.

There were some busy moments for Company D in Tettingen during this attack. Mortar and machine gun positions were well spread out, and it was not long before the pounding of enemy artillery in the streets of the town had completely disrupted communications between them. But Staff Sergeant Estle E. Templeton was equal to the occasion, and during the heaviest enemy firing continued to move from one gun position to another, coordinating their fires, while at the same time he bore the burden of adjusting both mortar and artillery fire. It was his inspiration and leadership that kept many machine gunners coolly and determinedly behind their weapons while the enemy repeatedly approached to within a few yards of them.

After more than two hours of such desperate fighting, ammunition began to run low. A hasty check showed that only 1,000 rounds remained for the heavy machine guns. Considering the fact that 32,000 rounds had been used since the attack began, this was not going to last long. Somehow some one had to get back to the ammu-

nition dump at Wochern and get some more. Hand carrying as much as would be needed would take too long—it would have to be brought up by truck.

So far no vehicle had dared the road from Wochern to Tettingen. Even had there not been an attack in progress it would have been practically suicide to risk it. But if Tettingen was to be held there was no alternative, and Corporal Donald W. Kreger, Company D transportation corporal, immediately volunteered for the job. He returned without mishap and with 64,000 rounds of ammunition, but by that time one house in the area defended by "C s" Third Platoon had been taken. Kreger's next job was to contact the TD's and have them bring fire on the house with 90mm cannon. When this had been accomplished he moved from one gun position to another, cheering the gunners on, and picking off Germans with his M1 as they were pinned down by the machine guns.

For three hours the battle raged at its fullest. Then, shortly before dawn, the smoke at last drifted away and all was quiet again. The First Battalion, grimy, exhausted and bleeding, still held Tettingen and Butzdorf. Hundreds of still and twisted shapes scattered on the shell-blackened snow of nearby slopes bore mute evidence of the attackers' fate. There had been 120 prisoners taken—these were the remainder. Almost the entire enemy force had been wiped out.

Again after this it was comparatively quiet. Artillery and mortar fire continued and the defenders of Tettingen and Butzdorf were forced to stay close to the heavier walled cellars. The houses themselves, by this time crumbled and tottering, offered scant protection, and walking the streets by daylight was inviting almost certain disaster.

The next counterattacks came on the evening of January 15th. Company B in Tettingen bore the brunt of the first of these. But there were only fifty in the attacking force this time and the survivors were soon driven off. Not long after this four Mark V tanks, accompanied by infantry, rumbled down the slopes towards the flank of Company C but the defenders, in their dug-in positions around the town, were ready for these as well. Bazookas were added to a stunning volume of small arms, machine gun and mortar fire, and two of the tanks retired from the field, smouldering from close range hits. The remaining two, as doughs of Company C closed in on them with bazookas and satchel charges also beat a hasty retreat. Most of the infantry that had accompanied the tanks was either killed or wounded.

All that can be said of the next two days, January 16th and 17th, is that there were no further counterattacks, and that the shelling continued. Much could also be said of the paralyzing cold, of the lack of sleep, of the dead and hollow look of

weariness that was beginning to come into the eyes of the frostbitten and isolated survivors of Company A and B's First Platoon. But there are many times when the actuality of modern war is beyond the power of mere words written afterwards. During those two days Company A still held Butzdorf. What it cost them to hold Butzdorf is better left to the memories of those who were there, and will bear the mark of those days and the days that followed for the rest of their lives.

These were grim days even behind the front line. In Wochern 9 were killed and 24 wounded by enemy artillery, and on several occasions there were direct hits on the Battalion Aid Station. Not once, however, were the all-important medical supply and communications operations seriously interrupted. Wounded were evacuated by litter bearers who were forced to seek cover along with their charges en route. There are countless stories of individual heroism behind the simple statement "forward companies were resupplied with ammunition and rations."

At 0300 on the morning of January 18th a patrol sent out from Company A returned with two prisoners from the 11th Panzer (Ghost) Division. This was the first definite indication that an armored unit of this calibre was in the vicinity, and preparations were immediately made to reinforce all anti-tank defenses and bring up extra bazooka teams. At daybreak that morning the First Platoon of Anti-Tank Company under First Lieutenant George W. Peters moved up from Wochern and began to dig in their guns around the town.

The attack came at 0715. It began with twenty-five minutes of artillery preparation on the two already crumbling front line towns. Crouching in their emplacements, the defenders knew that, in spite of all they had been through, the worst was yet to come, and this was the beginning of it.

Following the artillery preparation came tanks and infantry of the First and Tenth Companies of the 110th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the 714th Infantry Regiment. In the last few days the Germans had learned to their surprise and sorrow that the Regiment facing them was a fierce and capable one, and not to be taken lightly. Against it they were now sending the best they had.

This time the tanks literally swarmed down the slopes to the north and east of Butzdorf, and vast numbers of supporting infantry came with them. The tanks caught Lieutenant Peters' 57's still digging in, and one of his prime movers was knocked out by a direct hit from their 88's. At the same time Lieutenant Peters and his Platoon Sergeant, Joseph J. Quentz, were wounded by another 88 and had to be evacuated.

Once again the withering firepower of an entire battalion was turned against the attackers; small arms, machine guns, artillery, and mortars slashing at the

infantry, while bazookas and 57's pounded the oncoming tanks. But this time the enemy had sheer weight of numbers overwhelmingly on his side and by 0755 tanks had reached the center of Butzdorf and their 88's were firing point blank into the walls of houses still held by the desperate fighters of Company A.

But the defenders fought on. Tanks tha had entered the town were singled out and buttoned up with small-arms fire, then attacked by bazooka teams. Those that were stopped were finally finished off with satchel charges, and before long the streets of the town and the nearby fields were landmarked with smoking hulks.

Meanwhile Cannon Company, back behind Wochern, was working its gun crews in two shifts as the missions kept coming back from Lieutenant Nielsen and anybody else who could get communications. It seemed as if everybody in the battalion knew the concentration numbers. By the end of the day 70 missions had been fired — a total of 1143 rounds. From the Jerry point of view this was 19 tons of shrapnel and explosives.

On top of this the 919th was having its biggest day since its arrival in combat. During this one day the battalion fired a total of 72 missions—3132 rounds.

By 0835 that morning the infantry that had supported the tanks had been cut to ribbons and were forced to withdraw, and the remaining tanks retreated with them. There had been many moments when the outcome seemed in doubt, but Tettingen and Butzdorf were still in American hands.

While this attack was in progress Private First Class Virgil E. Hamilton of Company D was driving his jeep from Tettingen to Butzdorf. With him was Transportation Corporal Bernie H. Heck, and Corporal Earl N. Vulgamore, who at that time was Company D's mail clerk. For the past four days the road from Tettingen to Butzdorf had been no place to be driving a jeep—to be caught there on the morning of January 18th was practically suicide. But there was only one road, supplies had to get to the companies on line and these three men had volunteered to bring them, so there was no alternative.

Among the supplies in Hamilton's jeep that morning was a bazooka, complete with a plentiful supply of rockets, which was being rushed to supplement Company A's anti-tank defenses. None of the three men in the jeep had fired a bazooka or knew much about using one. They were not supposed to. Their job was not firing them but seeing that they got to those who did.

They had not gone far along the road when four German tanks suddenly loomed in front of them, apparently unaware of the approaching jeep. Hamilton however, quickly sized up the situation and adroitly swerved his vehicle behind a farmhouse before it was spotted. There was only one thing to do, and Corporals

Vulgamore and Heck did a remarkably fast job of assembling the bazooka and getting the rockets out of their boxes. There were a few moments of puzzlement as to the proper technique of loading, but by the time the first of the tanks had rattled within range everything was ready.

It was Hamilton who finally shouldered the bazooka while Vulgamore and Heck feverishly unpacked the rest of the ammunition and stood by to reload. From his concealed position behind the farmhouse he took careful aim at the lead tank, now about 40 yards away, and fired. There was a deafening roar and the tank, hit squarely amidships, went up in flames.

Hamilton, spurred on by his success, let fly at the second one just as one of the astonished crew was raising the hatch to see what was going on. He was scanning the horizon for American troops or planes when the rocket creased his stomach and caromed down the hatch into the tank. The score was now two down and two to go.

It took five rounds to get number three, the guns of which were ready, but still silent for want of a visible target. It was after this that the fourth tank turned tail and set out at full speed for a less unhealthy area. But there were two rockets left and the three impromptu bazookamen set out in hot pursuit. When the last rocket had been fired number four had shared the fate of the other three, and four smoking hulls were all that was left of the formation.

After this the three men continued on to Butzdorf to deliver their supplies, apologizing on arrival for being late, and for delivering a somewhat used bazooka without ammunition.

All during the day infantry and tank attacks continued against the two towns. Companies A and C, near to total exhaustion, and reduced to not much over half strength after four days of continuous fighting and "sweating out" artillery barrages, fought on and still repulsed the attackers who once more during the day reached the streets of Butzdorf and even began to dig in on the flat ground between there and Tettingen. The odds were fantastic, but they continued to give their all and were determined to stand together until the end that was beginning to seem both near and inevitable. Message received by Battalion from the Commander of Company A that afternoon: "No alternative, will fight it out to the finish."

That day, January 18th, will be remembered by Company A as one of the darkest and most terrible in their history—yet one of which they may be justly proud. Out of the smoke and confusion of that day and the days before come many names that will be long remembered: the name of Staff Sergeant

Joseph R. Mendrick of Company D who, on January 15th, rescued three comrades from the upper floor of a house in Wochern that had been set on fire by enemy mortars and which was full of small arms ammunition and grenades that exploded as they burned; of Privates First Class W. T. Pillow and Jack Zebin of Company A who, in the face of point blank 88 fire from oncoming tanks, manned a bazooka and destroyed four enemy armored vehicles; of Corporal Duncan N. Leach, Jr., of Company A who, with a borrowed bazooka, knocked out one tank, crippled another, and then calmly proceeded to pick off the occupants of the two tanks with his rifle as they emerged, all while under intense machine gun fire; of Private First Class Earle T. Mousaw who, in Butzdorf on January 18th, took charge of his machine gun section after the section leader was wounded and, though wounded himself, inspired them by his own example to hold out through two tank attacks during which the guns of one of the other sections were overrun.

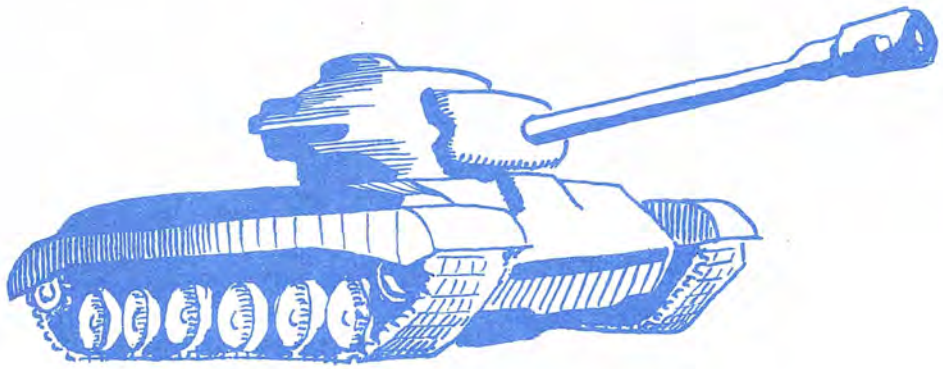
These are only a few. The credit for a stand such as the First Battalion was making in Tettingen and Butzdorf goes as much to those who will be nameless in the years to come as to those whose names are singled out and preserved by records or awards. For success in battle is the result of a teamwork where no one man's part is less important than another's, and is equally the achievement of all who shared its suffering.

Shortly before noon two platoons of Company F, which had been engaged in clearing out pillboxes in the woods to the west, were attached to the First Battalion and sent to the vicinity of Tettingen to support Companies B and C. Towards evening the rest of the Second Battalion began to move up to relieve the First.

But the situation was desperate in Butzdorf. Under constant shelling and counter-attack the men of Company A and B's First Platoon fought from the houses; moving from house to house as their defenses shifted by means of "mouse-holing" the walls with blocks of TNT and crawling through. They had beaten off the best the enemy had to offer and still held what they had taken. But there is a limit to the endurance of even the strongest and most determined. Casualties had reduced the company to not more than 100 men, and many of the survivors were nearly helpless from trench foot, frost bite and the last stages of weariness. One way or another the end could not be long postponed. That evening after further tank attacks had again threatened to overrun the streets of Butzdorf, it finally came. Orders came to pull out, and the battered and weary remnants of the defenders of Butzdorf fell back to Tettingen under cover of heavy smoke. The time was 1830.

At the same time the relief of the First Battalion was completed and the Second Battalion moved in to occupy the new line which still included Tettingen.

This five day saga is an impressive monument in the history of the First Battalion. Swiftly and skillfully they had hammered the first crack in the Siegfried Switch Line, and for five days had stubbornly held their initial salient against incredible odds. That they had to relinquish one town is unimportant. What is important is that during that time ten Germans had been killed to every one American. There had been 170 prisoners taken, and eight tanks and eleven half-tracks, left silent and broken on the field, testified to the effective and valorous fighting of the infantrymen. Far outnumbering the Americans as they did, elements of one of the best divisions Hitler could put in the field had more than met their match in the men of the First Battalion.



Nennig-Wies-Berg

During the first days of the attack on the switch there were two major battles in progress at the same time. So far we have followed only the First Battalion which was occupied with driving a long, thin salient into the eastern part of the sector assigned to the 376th. To the west the Third Battalion was carrying on a simultaneous assault, object of which was the taking of Nennig, Wies and Berg, three heavily fortified towns along the bank of the Moselle. Between these towns and the battlefield of the First Battalion was a large tract of woods which the Second assaulted on January 16th with the object of straightening the lines.

On January 13th Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin E. Thurston, Commanding Officer of the Third Battalion, first received word from Colonel McClune that he would attack Nennig. There were no details as yet as to the exact date, time or attachments. It would be necessary to await the outcome of the initial attack on Tettingen and Butzdorf before these particulars could be definitely established. But it was not too early to study the ground over which the attack was to move. For the results of Colonel Thurston's reconnaissance we turn to his battle critique of the Third Battalion operations from January 15th to the 19th:

A study of maps, aerial photos and a cursory reconnaissance showed that the town (of Nennig) consisted of 48 thick-walled stone buildings, set in the mudflats dug by the Moselle and two small tributaries flowing into it from the east, and nestled close to the rock cliffs which rise steeply to the east of town. To the west and south of Nennig stretches a wide and deep prairie, quite flat and broken only by a few gullies and streams.

The approaches to the town are ideal for defense. To the south along the main road where the ground is flat, mine fields, tank traps and pillboxes form fearsome barriers. From the east an attack must rush down a steep hill with consequent disorganization, or must pass along a very narrow gorge which a machine gunner or six riflemen could easily defend. The approaches from the north are easier, but all pass through narrow defiles which also are easy to defend. The west would appear to be the most logical approach, provided the attacking force could get across the level ground.

The town is protected first by the village of Berg, 600 yards to the north, which holds some twenty buildings, including a powerful "Schloss," and by Wies, a somewhat larger group of buildings 1500 yards to the northwest of Nennig. All three of these towns lie in a hollow, commanded by steeply higher ground to the east and northeast.

Boiled down, the information available indicated that the attack would be a formidable task. A previous attempt (by the 90th Division) to take the town from the south had piled up before five

pillboxes. An attempt from the east meant a long and meandering route through unreconnoitered forest and very probable contact with pillboxes and mine fields not charted. That left only the north and west approaches worth considering. If the attack could come as a surprise and could cover the three miles between the front lines and the objective unobserved, it might have a chance from either of these directions. Therefore, since the west route would be shorter, and the railroad would serve as an excellent line of departure, I chose to try that method of attack, and accordingly warned the company commanders and my staff that I planned to hit Nennig from the west.

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By early afternoon of January 14th the details of the attack were forthcoming. At that time the commanding officers of the units that were to support and be attached reported to the Third Battalion CP in Besch. Also at the CP were General Malony, General Cheadle and Colonel McClune. When everybody had arrived the remaining details of the Regimental order were handed down, and Colonel Thurston outlined his plan of attack. The plan, which an hour and a half later had the approval of all concerned, was, as stated in the Third Battalion Field Order issued that evening, as follows:

* * * * * * * *

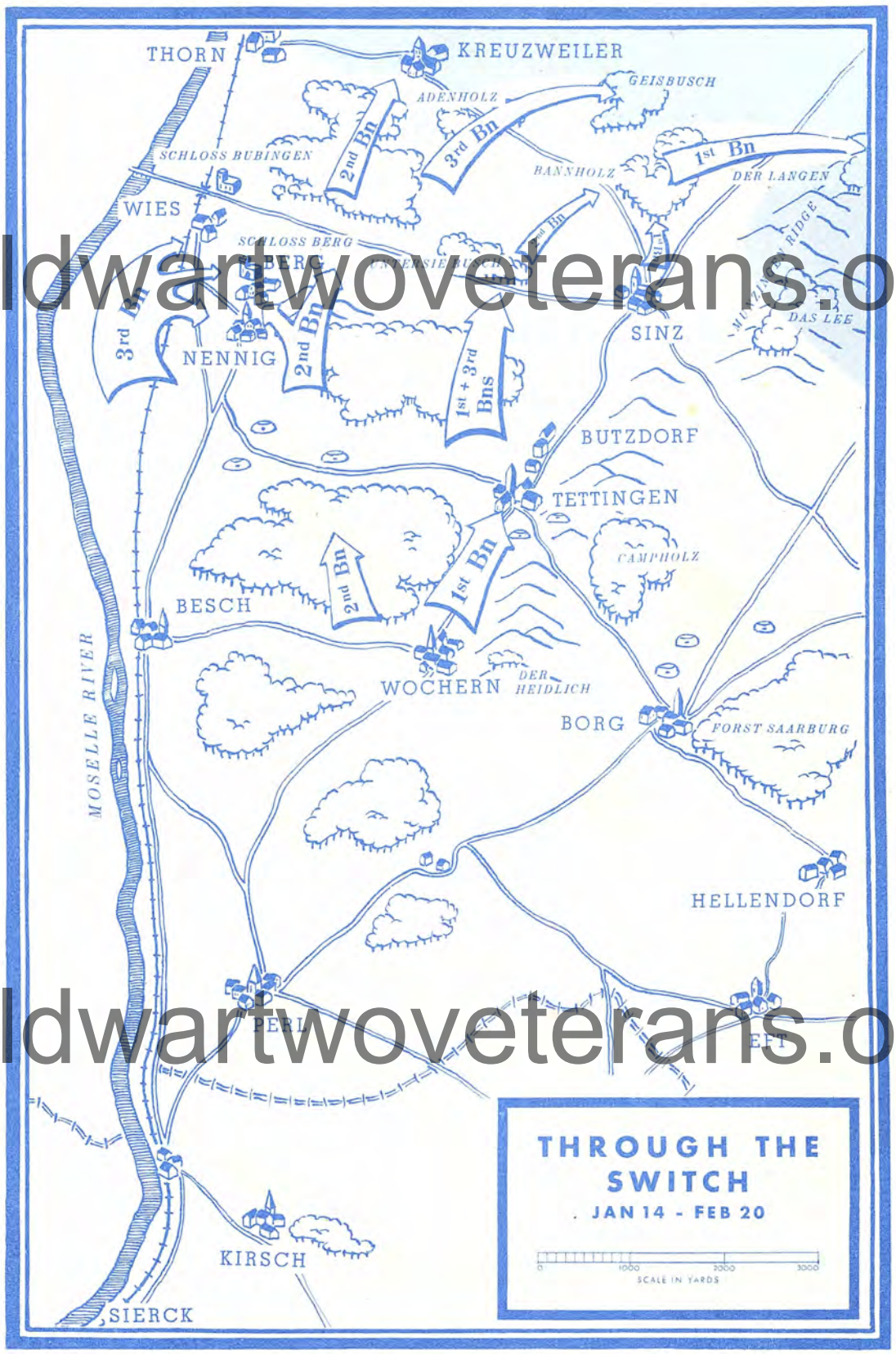
2. This Battalion, with a Chemical Company and Engineer Company (less one platoon), and one platoon TD all attached, and supported by six battalions Field Artillery will attack, capture and hold NENNIG.

Formation: Column of Cos, K, L, I; LD see overlay (along tracks), time of attack 0715 . . .

3. Co. K with one sec 81mm attached will capture and hold NENNIG. It will take up a defensive (position) to the east and south of that city after having captured it.

Co. L following Co. K at 500 yards will relieve north platoon Co. K upon capture of NENNIG, will then capture BERG and WIES from the rear. Co. L will defend the line North half of NENNIG-BERG-WIES. Co. L will be responsible for protecting the north flank of the Battalion during the attack.

Co. I will await orders in BESCH. It will protect the Engineers in mine removal by one squad and will secure the LD.



Co. M, less one mortar section, will initially protect the north flank of the attack by one platoon of .30 cal.; upon capture of NENNIG it will protect the areas of Cos K and L by one platoon respectively of .30 cal. It will be prepared to give general mortar support to the attack.

Engineer Company, beginning at 0300 15 Jan, will clear a lane from BESCH to LD, removing all mines and taping this lane. It will furnish four pole charges each to K and L Cos and will carry forward four flame throwers to be used by the latter companies.

Chemical Plats will furnish smoke at 0705 on areas designated . . . prepared to continue the smoke till further notice. It will be prepared to fire targets of opportunity.

A & P Platoon will move ammunition by hand to NENNIG.

AT Platoon will furnish eight mines and carriers each to Cos K and L. It will remain in reserve at BESCH.

4. Aid station—BESCH; DP—BESCH; administrative details later; evacuation—BESCH.

5. Axis of signal communication—BESCH-NENNIG.

CP's—Bn—BESCH opens 141900, Cos—open BESCH same time—thereafter select and report.

THURSTON

In the chill dark of early morning on January 15th the Engineers left Besch to begin the long and arduous job of sweeping the route of approach clear of mines. This was at 0300. Two hours and fifteen minutes later the battalion column was shuffling into position in the dark streets of Besch. The route of approach was a long and circuitous one, stretching diagonally northwest towards the river and meeting it at a point 1000 yards west of the LD along the railroad tracks. The route then followed the river for some five hundred yards to a point 1500 yards northwest of the town itself, and concealed from it by a slight rise in the open ground. From there it doubled back south and east to reach the tracks directly west of the town. Company K, the lead company, reached the LD at about 0705, just at the time the chemical mortars began to lay their screen of smoke between the attackers and their objective. The Germans in the town, looking into the gray

pall of smoke to their south and west must have known that something was up, but could not have known from which direction it would come.

Company K ran into its first snag when it discovered on arriving at the railroad tracks that the Engineers had not completed their mine sweeping, and that it would not, as a result, be possible to cross the LD on time. However, the artillery continued its preparation, supported by Cannon Company, for another 30 minutes until the situation could get straightened out.

Finally, at 0745, "K" crossed the Line with the heavy weapons following. Their formation was First Platoon on the right, Second on the left, and Third in support.

The smoke was thick by this time—so thick that even in the gathering light of day it was hard to see where you were going. It was not long before Captain Julian M. Way became aware that, in striking east from the tracks, he had not hit the point he was expected to hit. As he and his company moved through the gathering smoke, plain open country continued to loom ahead of them instead of the houses of Nennig. They had gone too far north and had reached a position somewhere between Nennig and Wies.

About the time this discovery was made Captain Way was further disconcerted to find that his Second Platoon, which had been on his left flank, was no longer there. They too had got lost in the smoke. Immediately he tried to contact his erring platoon and bring them back, but soon realized that this would take valuable time and changed his mind. He assigned his support platoon, the Third, less one squad, the mission of the missing Second. If the element of surprise was to be turned to good use there was nothing to do but continue the attack immediately, striking Nennig from the north instead of the west.

As the leading elements of "K" reached the outskirts of Nennig, they broke into a run as they had been instructed to, and raced into the town yelling, and firing into every building. The surprise was completer than they had expected. Even after their delay in starting, and the smoke, which should have indicated to the Germans that something was about to happen, many of the defenders were still in bed or eating breakfast. Those that were alert were watching to the south. In less than an hour the town had fallen at a cost of only a few casualties. Thirty-five Germans were taken prisoner, and thirty more were killed. The rest of the garrison beat a headlong retreat up the draw towards Sinz.

Meanwhile the wandering Second Platoon was having far more serious difficulties. After it had become separated from the rest of the company it had turned north, and was soon approaching the town of Wies. According to later estimates,

U. S. Army Signal Corps

Gun crew waits for 20 German tanks advancing along road near Besch.

there were some 50 Germans garrisoning the town, and the Second Platoon soon found itself engaged in bitter house to house fighting in which the platoon leader was wounded and about a squad was lost.

While K was thus engrossed in taking Nennig and Wies, Company L was following 500 yards behind them, having crossed the LD at 0818. By 0900 one platoon of L reached Wies, where they assisted the Second Platoon of K in taking the town which did not fall until 1630. During the Wies attack the Germans captured several men who were trusting enough to observe a short truce which their medical men had requested. The rest of the company held back in some confusion as to what turn the situation had taken. It was not until afternoon that enough information on exact positions was available to Captain William A. Brightman, Company Commander of L, for him to send a platoon into Berg. Finally, at 1730, with Captain Way looking for his Second Platoon which was still in Wies, Berg fell, and with it the last of the day's three objectives came into American hands. Total cost of the day's operations had been four killed and seventeen wounded.

As it was with the First Battalion when it had taken Tettingen and Butzdorf the day before, the initial capture of Nennig, Wies and Berg had been, except for the fight at Wies, comparatively easy—far easier than holding them would prove to be in the next few days to come.

Once the three towns were taken, the main problem was preparing the defenses, which, if the area just taken were to be properly outposted, would cover some 3,000 yards. To Colonel Thurston this frontage seemed a little over-extended for even a battalion—certainly it was for two companies, so that evening at 2130 Company I, which had assembled in Besch after the completion of its mission of outposting the battalion front during the attack, was sent to Nennig. Upon arrival they took up positions on the south and west edges of town.

The night passed fairly quietly. There were no disturbances other than light, although frequent patrol activity, most of which centered around Nennig itself. The town was too large for every building to be occupied by the men of Company K, and the Jerries had a disturbing habit during the night of infiltrating with small patrols into the buildings that were not occupied. As a result Captain Way, his executive officer, First Lieutenant Ralph C. Brown and First Lieutenant Jess Hodges, leader of the Weapons Platoon spent most of the night driving them out with the aid of Company Headquarters personnel who were the only "reserves" of manpower available.

At this time, since the Engineers had not succeeded in clearing the road to Nennig from Besch, supply and evacuation were beginning to be a problem. There were no additional men for carrying supplies available in the Regiment except the Mine Platoon. These Colonel McClune turned over to the Third Battalion. Colonel Thurston then organized a carrying party of about forty men and, leading it himself, set out from the Battalion CP in Besch to Nennig, carrying food and ammunition.

Communications had been excellent all day. The companies had kept constantly in touch with the Battalion CP by phone, and the SCR-300's worked perfectly. Often messages were relayed from Nennig to Besch via the "Benning School Solution" OP which Battalion S-2 in conjunction with the I and R Platoon Leader, had set up across the river in Luxembourg. During the attack on Nennig and subsequently, this OP conducted frequent fire missions and furnished much valuable information which could never have been obtained by an OP located on the east bank of the Moselle where there was no high ground that could be used. With the OP located on the bluffs across the river, the Germans could make no move in the vicinity of Nennig without being detected.

The first real opposition since the three towns had been captured came on the following day. At 0300 on the morning of January 16th artillery began to fall on Berg. For fifteen minutes a concentrationfrom at least two battalions battered the town, and in its wake came the first counterattack. A combat patrol of about 100

men moved up under cover of darkness through the wooded draw leading into Berg from the east. They fanned out in front of the town and came forward yelling "hands up!" and "surrender!" in English, concentrating their attack on the machine guns which the artillery had forced to move into the lower stories of the "Schloss." Some two hours of confused and heavy hand to hand fighting followed during which Second Lieutenant Dale E. Bowyer of Company L lost one of his platoon's attached machine guns and one whole rifle squad which was captured by the enemy. The squad however, subsequently got away from its captors, and returned unharmed. Finally the patrol was repulsed and driven off, leaving about 60 of their number dead on the field.

In Nennig too it was far from quiet that morning. At 0400 enemy artillery and mortar fire heralded the next attack which came from the draw leading to Sinz. Company M's machine guns, posted above the draw, first spotted the attackers who came forward on the run, shouting obscenities and invitations to surrender as had the attackers of Berg. The attack hit the area covered by Lieutenant Thomas A. Daly and his men, who held their fire until the Germans were almost on top of them and then opened up. At the same time First Lieutenant Raymond J. King placed mortar fire behind the onrushing patrol so that they could not escape up the draw. Result of this was that not one of the patrol—which was somewhat larger than a platoon—escaped and all were killed or captured.

But there were more where they had come from, and they kept coming back. Near daylight mortar and artillery fire again increased in Nennig, landing with surprising accuracy in the streets where it would do the most damage instead of on top of the buildings. This was the forerunner of still another combat patrol—this time a larger one with the strength of nearly two platoons. This one was picked up simultaneously by the OP in Luxembourg and by the heavy machine guns of Staff Sergeant Leroy McPherson of Company M which were posted on the ridge north of the town. Sergeant McPherson's heavies accounted for about fifteen of the attackers before the rest broke and ran for the woods east of town.

Before this attack was repulsed however, one enemy machine gun crew had managed to work its way through Company K's defenses to within 50 yards of the CP in Nennig, and had started to fire down the main street. Their fire kept the members of a tank destroyer crew from reaching their tank destroyer while a German bazookaman was creeping up on it to finish it off. It was Colonel Thurston himself who saved this situation by braving the machine gun fire to reach a position where he could bring his M1 to bear, killing the machine gunner, wounding the bazookaman, and directing artillery fire on the rest of the infiltrating Germans.

At this time the battalion received orders to extend its line to the east, tying in with the Second Battalion which, on the morning of January 16th had advanced into the woods between Nennig and Tettingen with the purpose of straightening the lines. Company I was selected for the job, and moved east in a column of platoons at 1330. By 1530 they were in position along the south edge of the woods east of Nennig; the ground to their south, between them and the main Regimental line, still full of enemy occupied pillboxes which as yet there had been neither the time nor men available to attempt to clean out. From these, Company I began to receive heavy mortar fire as soon as they had moved into their new position.

Meanwhile the heavies above Nennig were taking an unmerciful pounding from artillery, and six more small combat patrols attempted to crack the line during the day, their main object being to infiltrate to the rear of the machine guns. But the line held firm and all of these were repulsed.

During the day communications began to fail. Wire parties would no sooner mend one break than the constant artillery fire would disrupt the wire at another point. It was dangerous and heartbreaking work, but Sergeant Floyd W. Smith, Company L Communications Sergeant, and his crew of messengers moved back and forth across open ground all day and most of the night to keep his wires in. In spite of the constant artillery and mortar fire he succeeded sufficiently so that Third Battalion observers never completely lost communications with their guns, and return fire could be kept up just when it was most needed. Sergeant McPherson of Company M lost his life at this time attempting to bring communication supplies from Nennig to his guns which were in imminent danger of being cut off.

A vital factor in the ultimate solution of the wire problem was the OP in Luxembourg across the river. Colonel McClune had his Communications Platoon work all night the night of the 16th laying wire from his CP in Perl across the Moselle, through the OP on that side, then back across the Moselle and into Nennig where the Third Battalion forward CP was established on the evening of the 16th.

The night of January 16th was similar to the night of the 15th except that patrol activity was somewhat heavier. The enemy was apparently trying to locate weak spots in the flanks of the positions. Main trouble centered around Schloss Bubingen, just north of Wies where, just before midnight, the men of Company L spotted a large enemy patrol. A combination of mortars, artillery time fire, machine guns and small arms soon routed them, however, killing about twenty of them. Company I spent a fairly quiet night, and was not as much bothered by patrols as by the incessant mortars that kept up a harassing fire most of the night. The heavy weapons were busy with small patrols in front of Company K and L which, during

U. S. Army Signal Corps

Company M mortar crew examines enemy ammunition left behind near Nennig, Germany. These shells were subsequently used against the Germans.

the night, somewhat timidly probed almost the entire front searching for a gap.

There was one large patrol at about 0500 which attempted to enter Berg from the northeast, but was completely annihilated by Lieutenant Bowyer's platoon which allowed them to get up close before opening fire. In Wies, Private First Class James F. Johnston of Company L posted in the Company OP, was hit by shell fragments, but refused to quit his post until relief appeared. He died the next day from his wounds.

During the night, food and much-needed ammunition continued to arrive by manpower, and the last man who had been wounded the first day was evacuated. But the supply situation was becoming critical nonetheless. Food was not so much of a problem, as the men were living rather well on German food picked up in the front line towns. But there was not enough ammunition to stave off a prolonged attack. Reason for this was that the Besch-Nennig road, which should have been the main supply route, was not cleared as yet, and daylight supply operations could not be carried on because of the excellent observation the Germans had over the entire area.

One thing that was worrying the higher echelons as well as Company I was the

stretch of woods southeast of Nennig that still held active pillboxes. Orders had come down to Colonel Thurston that night to attack this area and clean it out.

First Lieutenant Ravnel Burgamy's First Platoon of Company I was slated for the job. After as many flame throwers, pole charges and satchel charges as were available had been gathered together, they set out for the first of the pillboxes. The time was 2030. It was a bitter cold night and the platoon had to move across 800 yards of open, snow-covered ground. Looking more like shadows than actual men, they clung to what scant cover was offered by folds in the ground and an occasional solitary tree. Stiff and numb from the cold and from long standing in open communication trenches, the men were in no condition for what lay ahead. The cold had crept into their weapons too until some of them were almost useless. Ice had formed inside the light machine guns despite their constant efforts to prevent it, and the gunners raged impotently at bolts that would not operate when needed. Because the machine guns were useless to Lieutenant Burgamy the fire power of ten M1's and one BAR was all he could bring to bear to neutralize the pillbox, the strength of which was an unencouraging question mark.

When they had reached the steep draw in the middle of the open ground, still a hundred yards from the pillbox, Lieutenant Burgamy and Private First Class John Mauro, Jr., went on ahead of the main body, but halted when they came on a number of trip wires. Here, while the two waited within 100 yards of the pillbox the BAR and ten M1's opened up as planned. Their fire was returned, not from the pillbox itself, but from several positions around it, the existence of which had not been suspected. Immediately after this, flares went up from the pillbox, and the bark of its mortar was heard. The flares were apparently a prearranged artillery signal, for shells of a heavier calibre soon began to mingle with the mortars that by now were landing with deadly accuracy on the First Platoon. Fortunately the almost vertical slope of the draw provided cover, and no one was hurt, though many of the platoon were showered with loose bits of rock and dirt from the nearness of the mortar bursts.

One thing was plain. The pillbox was not going to be taken by any force so small as a single platoon. Lieutenant Burgamy ordered Private First Class Ray Sweeney to cover the withdrawal with his BAR, and the assault team retired hastily from the field. Receiving their report of the situation, Colonel Thurston went himself to investigate the lay of land. He ordered Lieutenant Burgamy to make no further attempts on it.

The third day, January 17th, was the quietest the Third Battalion spent in the Nennig area. Artillery and mortars fell on the three towns during the day at the

rate of about two rounds a minute, but this was light compared to the shelling of the last two days. The main problem during the day was getting supply lines open, and maintaining communications. There was very little patrol activity, and what there was was successfully driven off.

The evening of January 17th it rained—one of these near-freezing rains that, to men who must wait it out in the open, is more chilling even than snow. A sharp wind ripped through buildings and it was pitch dark. It was a perfect night for patrols and the Germans made full use of it. Following an artillery barrage that had increased in intensity to the point where it could be called a concentration, constant reconnaissance and combat patrols began hitting the entire area. They would hit in one place, bounce off and hit another. Some of them tried to get through; others merely attempted to draw fire. The biggest of these, consisting of about 200 men, hit First Lieutenant Ramon G. Fox's platoon of Company I at 0230, and surrounded it on three sides before they were driven off with the loss of about half their total strength.

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For the men in Company I (writes Colonel Thurston in his operations report covering this period) this was a most miserable night. By now they were standing in water-filled trenches, most of them soaked through by long hours in the rain, and constantly harassed by unremitting shellfire and patrols hitting from the east, south and west. Morever, their strength had fallen rapidly. One platoon that night had only 19 men, including the officer.

It was the following day, January 18th, that became the critical moment in the defense of the area. Reports were coming in of enemy tanks in the area, and Captain Brightman had observed a group of German officers on a nearby ridge-top, pulling out maps and pointing out objectives in the towns of Wies and Berg. German wire parties were observed laying wire from pillboxes to various OP's, and the Luxembourg OP was sending in reports of large scale troop movements observed just to the north. It was increasingly obvious that a major counterattack was impending.

Towards noon the firing in the entire area visibly increased in tempo so that it was dangerous to appear outside a building anywhere. About 1430 an estimated four battalions of light artillery hit Berg and Wies with a fifteen minute concentration. When they lifted fire, at least a battalion of infantry hit Berg and Wies simultaneously from the east and north, with the "Schwerpunkt" on Berg. Telephone communication failed from the cut wires, and the forward observer's radio was destroyed. However, Captain Brightman conducted the artillery fires by SCR-300, relaying the messages via Luxembourg to the liason officer at Besch. The fires were perfect. I have never seen better or more accurate support, and the attack was thinned down to where individual riflemen and the heavies took care of the remaining few.

By 1700 the last living German had loped back across the ridges and the attack had failed. From the number I saw, and from the estimates of others, I judge that a full-strength battalion attacked Berg and Wies; that some 300 dead or wounded remained on the snow-covered fields when the last shot had been fired. Moans and cries of the wounded were plainly audible from both towns.

The fourth night passed with relative quiet. Apparently the stand of Companies L and "I" had broken the back of German resistance in the area, for there were no new attacks, and even the few patrols that hit the lines that night were small ones. But the men of the battalion were exhausted and tired almost to the breaking point. Lack of food, unceasing rocket, mortar, small arms and artillery, firing day and night, had all taken their toll. Rain and cold had also done their work, and almost every man who had stood in wet clothes in the freezing trenches and foxholes during the last few days was suffering from some degree of frostbite or trench foot.

On January 19th there were still no new attacks. But small patrols continued active, and the sheer physical suffering of the men became almost intolerable. During the day the already heavy casualties of the Battalion were increased by a steady flow of frostbite, fatigue and trench foot cases which, under the circumstances were unavoidable. The trouble had been that Company I, which had suffered the largest share of casualties, had not enough men to outpost their exposed positions for four days and still rotate the men back to warmer quarters in the cellars of Nennig. But during those four days it had stood its ground in spite of rain, water-filled trenches, frost and shelling.

Relief

While the First Battalion was beating of counterattacks in Tettingen and Butzdorf and the Third was clinging stubbornly to Nennig, Wies and Berg, the Second Battalion was faced with a task of no mean proportions. The objectives of the two forward battalions, key positions though they were, were only strong points. Taking them did not force back the entire enemy line, but drove wedges into it between which was still much ground to be cleared. There were ridges and masses of forest ominously dotted with unexplored pillboxes and gun positions. Their hands full with the tasks specifically assigned to them, neither of the battalions had the time nor men to do anything about these areas, and it was left to the Second Battalion to clean them out.

In the middle of the Regimental line was a large gap, created by the two salients at Tettingen and Nennig. This part of the line had to be levelled off to safeguard the flanks of the attacking battalions as well as to establish a straight and continuous Line of Departure for further attacks that would soon be forthcoming.

This was the purpose behind the attack made by Companies F and G on the morning of January 16th on the woods southwest of Tettingen. The plan was that Company G should move into the woods from the left, mopping up all pillboxes in its path, while "F" struck from the right, astride one of the deep antitank ditches along the frontier of the Switch.

It was during this attack, while the First Platoon of Company F was held up along a road that cut across the northeast corner of the woods, that Private First Class Clair Honeycutt deliberately drew the fire of concealed machine guns along the road in order to make them expose their positions. In doing so he was mortally wounded. The aid man, Technician Fifth Grade William A. Cleary went immediately to his aid, although the machine gun was still firing, tended to his wounds, and was attempting to drag him to safety when he himself was fatally hit.

The pillboxes within these two companies' zone of attack fell at last after some hours of fighting, and the occupants, who had at first put up stiff resistance, began to surrender wholesale. By noon a large portion of the woods had been taken, the line considerably straightened, and the left flank of the First Battalion was no longer dangerously exposed.

This was a small scale attack in comparison to the assaults on Nennig and Tettingen and its cost in killed, wounded and suffering was far less. Yet it was no less significant in the big picture of the Regimental advance than the larger operations of the other two battalions. With the taking of the woods southwest of

Tettingen, east was tied in with west, and the new front was sufficiently consolidated to be turned over to the 302nd Infantry who were to carry on the attack while the 376th fell back into Division Reserve on the morning of January 20th.

During this period from the 14th to the 19th January, the Regiment took a total of 258 prisoners, killed or wounded some 900 Germans and destroyed 15 tanks and eight half-tracks. For the 376th losses were 36 killed and 146 wounded.

By noon on January 20th the entire Regiment was back at Monneran, France, and for the first time since January 8th, out of contact with the enemy. Here time was devoted to orienting new and much-needed reinforcements, the inevitable care and cleaning of equipment, and general reorganization and resupply. Some training was carried on as well, and preparations made for future operations. But what was most important to the men themselves was the hot food, the quiet, and the comfortable indoor beds where at last there was a chance to sleep away some of the gnawing weariness of battle, and gather new strength for what lay ahead.

CHAPTER IV Through the Switch

Back to Nennig

Jeez, they can't send us back up there already; we just got relieved!"

"The hell they can't. You better get a move on, bud. We're movin' out but quick."

"Somebody musta screwed up."

That was the way the talk went in the Second Battalion that afternoon of January 22nd when the alert order came down. They had been in reserve only a day and a half, hardly time to get the mud scraped off. Meanwhile the Jerries had thrown everything in the book at the 302nd and managed to knock them out of Nennig. So now the Second Battalion was going back up to help the 302nd Joes retake the town.

That's the way it went in the Infantry. Always some damn thing to keep you from getting any rest. If it wasn't the brass with a training schedule, it was the Kraut acting up.

o o o

In a small, candlelit room in Perl, Captain Simon D. Darrah of Company E passed the attack order on to his platoon leaders. The attack was to be at 0700 on January 23rd which was the following morning. Company E was to have one platoon of heavy machine guns from "H", under the command of First Lieutenant Louis R. Iacuessa, and one platoon of medium tanks. The First Platoon, commanded by First Lieutenant

Gus E. Wilkins, was to attack Nennig from the railroad tracks with one section of heavy machine guns in close support. The Second Platoon, under First Lieutenant Guerdon A. Hanson, was to attack Berg from the same LD. First Lieutenant Bernard F. Simuro's Third Platoon was to furnish security for the tank platoon.

Attacking Nennig had not been the original purpose of bringing Colonel Martin's Battalion back to the lines in the middle of its rest period. The Second had been destined to establish a Main Line of Resistance just in front of the Perl-Eft road. But while the initial reconnaissance for this mission was in progress word had come to Colonel Martin that the 302nd was in trouble. The 302nd had taken over the Third Battalion's positions in Nennig, Berg and Wies on the 19th, and had been forced eventually to relinquish Berg and part of Wies. On the afternoon of January 22nd it was having considerable trouble holding the few houses it still occupied in Nennig. So the plans had been abruptly changed, and Company E found itself with the mission of retaking the town.

The attack began quite successfully. The First Platoon, with one 60mm mortar squad, led by Sergeant David H. Godfrey, captured the first four houses in Nennig with only two casualties, rounding up a total of 22 prisoners. After this the going got rougher. The platoon split into two forces with Lieutenant Wilkins in charge of one and Tech Sergeant Nathaniel Isaacman commanding the other. When the platoon had taken three houses on the right hand side of the street, three Mark IV tanks appeared, their guns making it certain death to advance up the street.

At this point Sergeant Isaacman with Private John F. Pietrzak got up on the roof of one of the houses and continued over the rooftops until they were above the tanks. All this time they were under machine gun fire from Berg. With three well-aimed rockets they knocked out the lead tank and the one bringing up the rear as well. This left the center tank an easy prey for Private Albert J. Beardsley who set it on fire with a rifle grenade.

By taking each house, and mouseholing through the walls, the First Platoon had retaken all but about 30 houses by 1500. It had captured 88 prisoners and killed an estimated 100 of the defenders. Meanwhile however, because the Tank Platoon had entered the town ahead of schedule, the Second Platoon had advanced only 300 yards towards its objective in Berg before it was pinned down by three deadly streams of heavy machine gun cross-fire coming from the hill directly to its front, from the houses on the northeast edge of Nennig, and from the Schloss in Berg. All our tanks but one were knocked out by enemy Mark IV's, leaving the Third Platoon, which was to have provided their security, without a mission. Due to the position of the Third Platoon, Captain Darrah was unable to

move it to the rear, so the only thing to do was to commit it between the First and Second Platoons with the mission of moving forward and capturing a cemetery which was concealing three German machine guns.

One squad, under Staff Sergeant Anthony S. Rao, managed to reach the cemetery and silence one machine gun, but received a heavy mortar barrage and was forced to withdraw to the road. The Second and Third Platoons with the light machine gun section were able to move forward about 400 yards from the LD. But they were held up there until dusk when they were withdrawn under cover of darkness to Nennig where they gave additional security, and assured the holding of the town.

By 1330 it had become impossible to keep contact with the three platoons, so Captain Darrah split his headquarters group and placed the Second and Third Platoons under the command of First Lieutenant Arthur Dodson, with First Lieutenant Harold M. Maness as liaison officer. Captain Darrah, with the First Sergeant, radio operator, Communications Sergeant and three runners, attempted to move into Nennig. At this time Company G, led by Captain John D. Heath, was moving in back of the LD to the left of Company E with the intent of moving into the town of Wies and giving "E" flank protection from the north. When Company G reached Wies, Company F, which had been in Battalion reserve, moved up to fill in the gap between them and the left flank of "E."

During the next three hours the headquarters group moved towards Nennig, dodging constant sniper fire from the hill behind the town. All the way it was under observation from the Schloss in Berg, and received about 400 rounds of mortar fire. By the time the group reached the first building in Nennig there was only Captain Darrah, First Sergeant Ernest N. Dyrlund, Sergeant Milburn W. Seal and Private Jenkins Wong left in the group. The Communications Sergeant had been evacuated for frozen feet. The radio operator had got lost and did not get into Nennig until about 1900 that night. Two of the runners had been hit by shrapnel.

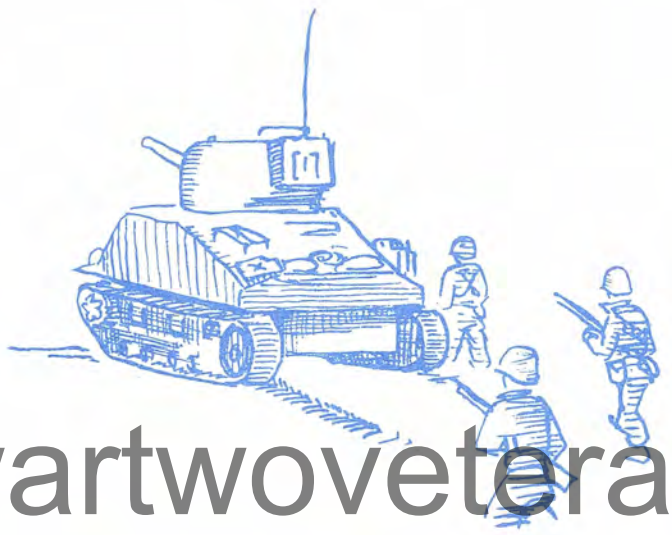
Captain Darrah reported to Lieutenant Colonel Cloudt of the Third Battalion, 302nd Infantry who gave him the latest situation. Lieutenant Wilkins was cut off in six houses in Nennig, and was unable to send any messages. By 1800 Captain Darrah, with one squad of Company K, 302nd Infantry, was able to clear out one house. Lieutenant Wilkins pushed through an additional two houses, and they finally made contact. At 2000 Lieutenant Dodson moved the remainder of Company E into Nennig under cover of darkness.

Security was posted throughout the entire town with orders to report any movement of troops or armor, as counterattacks were anticipated. At 2100 the Company received C rations, but could not do much with them. They were frozen too solid to

eat, as they were, and it was impossible to build fires to heat them while the enemy had such perfect observation on the town.

During the night, mortars, rockets and artillery fell on the town with clocklike regularity every hour, just enough to keep any one from moving about too much and to keep those who had the chance from getting any rest.

At 0700 on the morning of January 24th the First Platoon of Company E with a special platoon of the Third Battalion, 302nd Infantry, continued clearing houses in Nennig. By 1030 the town had been cleared of all enemy and for the second time in the last ten days was completely in American hands.



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Schloss Berg

By noon of January 24th the Second Battalion held a line extending from Nennig northwest to Wies. Company G was holding Wies; Company E, Nennig, and the area in between was occupied by "F". Further to the east the line was still held by the 30lst and 302nd, as the rest of the 376th was still back in Division reserve. Butzdorf had been retaken by the 30lst, and the pillboxes in the woods between Tettingen and Nennig that had given the First and Third Battalions so much trouble had finally been reduced. Only one salient was left, thrust like a pointing finger into the otherwise straightened line. The salient was the enemy occupied town of Berg with its massive and ancient Roman Schloss still bristling with enemy mortars and machine guns.

Berg, as the reader will recall from the story of its first capture by the Third Battalion ten days before, was scarcely a town in its own right. Situated on the forward slope of a hill looking down on Nennig from the north across a mere 100 yards of open ground, it was more like a northern portion of Nennig itself. Tactically it commanded the positions of Company E far too effectively for comfort. Also, as long as Berg was German held, it was impossible to use the Nennig-Wies road which ran right through it past the Schloss. Thus it served as a knife blade, thrust into the front of the Second Battalion and so effectively separated Company G on the left flank from "E" on the right that it prevented any further coordinated advance by the two companies to the northeast.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, when at 1230 on the 24th Colonel Martin received an order to attack Berg. It was to be a coordinated attack with "E" striking the town from the north edge of Nennig, and "G" attacking southeast fromWies and assaulting the Schloss. Company F would remain in its present positions as Battalion reserve. In this way a pincers would be formed around the enemy salient. However, according to best tactical theory attackers should have at least three times the fire power of the defenders, and the Second Battalion, badly depleted after its attack on Nennig, had no such advantage. The commanding terrain which the Germans held further lessened its chances of success. Both Colonel McClune and Colonel Martin realized that should Berg and its Schloss prove to be strongly held, the outlook for the attack was far from promising. But in combat it is seldom possible to choose one's circumstances and advantages. Berg had to be taken, and for better or for worse the attack was scheduled to jump off at 1300.

The mission of taking the first house was assigned to Lieutenant Simuro and his Third Platoon of Company E. The house was 100 yards from the northern edge

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Debris and Desolation — Winter scene at captured Schloss near Nennig.

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of Nennig across open ground and under direct fire from the Schloss. At 1329 a tank destroyer opened up, hurling four rounds into the house. At 1330 the Third Platoon, with two light machine guns under Staff Sergeant Charles B. Ring attached, opened fire and the riflemen moved across the open ground to the house. Lieutenant Simuro was wounded while crossing the open, but continued on, and with 26 men finally captured the house, taking 29 prisoners. At this time direct 88 and machine gun fire opened up on the house.

Lieutenant Dodson, who was in the OP at the time, sent one squad of the Second Platoon with Sergeant Vincent J. Maisto in charge to take the second house and direct some of the fire from the Third Platoon. Sergeant Ray Ketner took off with his First Squad right behind him, reaching the objective without any casualties and taking six prisoners. One of the tank destroyers got a direct hit on a Mark IV, which eased the fire somewhat. But the shelling was still so intense that Captain Darrah gave the order for Lieutenant Simuro and Sergeant Ketner to withdraw back to Nennig.

On his return, Lieutenant Simuro, who had started with 40 men, had 17 left. Sergeant Ketner had lost two of his squad. The Company then reorganized with First Sergeant Dyrlund as Platoon leader of the Third Platoon and Sergeant Maisto as Platoon leader of the Second. After this the men set up their security in Nennig for the night, still with nothing but frozen "C" rations to eat.

On the other side of Berg, Company G was having troubles too. Three days before some men from "K" of the 302nd had worked their way into the Schloss, but there had been no communication with them for three days and "G" had been receiving considerable fire from the old castle since. It was increasingly evident that the present incumbents were not GI's.

The Third Platoon had led off Company G's attack, followed by the Second and the First. Up ahead were two scouts who moved out into the open field between Wies and the Schloss. They had not gone far when mortars began to come in. Fortunately, however, there was a deep anti-tank ditch about 100 yards in front of the castle which they managed to reach just in time, One by one the three squads moved up in their wake, and the last men of the rear squad had just tumbled into the ditch when four German MG 42's opened up from further up the hill. It had been slow going across the field through the six inches of new snow that had just fallen, and the bottom of the ditch, under the snow had a thin layer of ice. Breaking through this as they tumbled hurriedly into the ditch, many of the men were soaked, after which their clothes froze almost immediately. The ditch was comparative but not complete safety from the mortars that were

still coming in. One man, leaning against the side to catch his breath, was killed instantly when a shell hit the edge just above his head, and another was badly wounded.

Once in the ditch the men scouted it in both directions. In one direction it became impassable with knee deep mud; in the other direction it veered away from the Schloss and went deeper into German lines. Only approach to the Schloss would be straight towards it across the open in the face of the four machine guns. Two men were seen in the courtyard, carrying a bazooka. They were dressed in OD's so some of the men called out to them, but received no answer. Finally two men volunteered to try to make contact with them.

The two men climbed out of the ditch and had reached the wall of the courtyard when a hail of sniper and machine gun fire forced them to turn back. It was obvious that any attack over that route would meet with complete disaster.

The Platoon Leader, seeing the impossibility of the mission, radioed for support and artillery. As a result, the First Platoon was sent around the right flank through Berg. It had only reached the first houses, however, when it too was stopped by artillery and machine gun fire.

o o o

When our support was stopped (writes Sergeant Donald D. McCort, who was one of the platoon scouts during this operation) we realized we were in a tight spot. We couldn't go back to Wies over four hundred yards of open ground covered by machine guns and zeroed in by artillery and mortars. For the same reason we could not go forward to the Schloss. We pulled up the ditch to the left away from the Schloss and let the artillery and TD's pound it.

All day long we lay there. We had come in light, wearing field jackets and with one K ration. Our clothes were wet and frozen. Our canteens froze the first hour. Our 536 was frozen. We were on our own. Every time we stuck our heads over the edge of the ditch the machine guns on the hill would open up, throwing snow in our faces. Some of the men started chopping holes in the side of the bank, trying to keep warm and to pass the time.

Finally about dark the medic said he would try to get our wounded man out. So the doc and the man, hobbling on his good leg, took off for Wies. About an hour later the medic returned and told us they were going to lay in smoke and to get out as fast as possible. The smoke came and we got, but fast.

The white snow was now black. Every few feet was a shell hole. We got back to the cellars of Wies, frozen, but we still had our skins.

It seemed certain that the Second Battalion would be relieved. Companies E and G had suffered heavy casualties trying to crack their way into Berg. The Battalion as a whole was exhausted. The continual butting against such discouraging odds had cost much in spirit as well as in casualties. Wiremen from all companies had been driving themselves day and night in an attempt to keep the lines repaired, but the enemy mortars and artillery were consistent in their destruction.

After dark on the night of the 24th, the commander of CCA of the 8th Armored Division visited Colonel Martin's Command Post in Wies. Very soon after his arrival Brigadier General Cheadle appeared with the disheartening order that the Second Battalion would again attack, this time at night, in order to establish a bridgehead for the armor to break through. The scene in the small Command Post was like one in the movies—only light was a pulsating Coleman lantern. The artillery liason officer's switchboard was constantly buzzing. Windows were plugged with mattresses to stop the shrapnel. In the middle of the room, seated around a large table, were the three commanders with their maps. Off in the shadows hovered S-3's, S-2's, aides, and special staff officers.

"I have orders that Martin's Battalion will attack at 0300 to establish a bridgehead for the armor, which will pass through and continue the attack", said General Cheadle, wasting not a word.

"General, here is my situation," replied Colonel Martin: "I have elements of two companies . . . here . . . and here. The men are dead tired, what's left of them. My communications have been constantly shot out, the only supply route is over open ground at night, and we're up against a powerhouse of a fortified enemy. We've been blasting that castle (Berg) with everything we've got, and it hasn't done a thing. We can't get close enough to it to use assault troops, and we'll have to attack over open ground all the way. My battalion has been messing with this damned thing for a long time now, and we've just petered out. A night attack by my battalion at this time would be costly—very costly. The thing we really need is a coordinated regimental attack, but we aren't allowed to do it. I have the utmost confidence in my men, and it's a good battalion, but I can't see for the life of me how my present strength can crack this thing." All this in a low, quiet voice with not another sound from the assembled group.

"My armor can't do it without infantry support, and besides, we've never seen the terrain," replied CG CCA.

"Here's what's out there, General: the damn Krauts are set up here . . . and here . . . and here . . . They have every point zeroed in with artillery and mortars, but their men are as whipped as ours. A night attack will do the trick — if we had

fresh troops with some tank support. I'm prepared to issue orders for the attack, but I won't have half of what I have now after we try it.

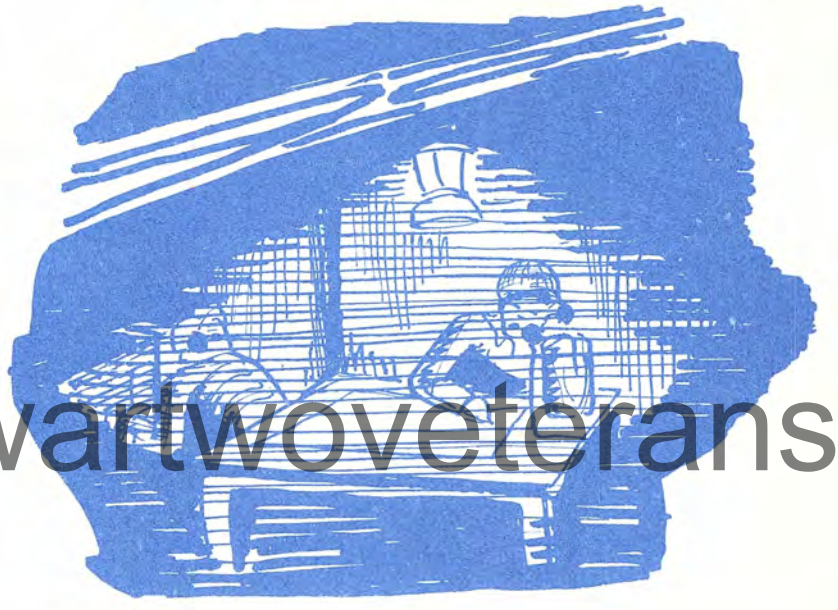
"All right," said General Cheadle. "How soon can CCA attack with their own armored infantry?"

"0600."

"Right. Here's the plan — Martin's Battalion will stand fast and be passed through by armor at 0600. After the establishing of the bridgehead, your tanks will move out and your infantry follow. Your S-2's and 3's pass on any information that you have, and . . ."

Very quietly Colonel Martin moved from the table and walked to his chair by the stove. Utterly exhausted, he rested his head on the back of the chair, and opened a K ration with the air of a man who was following the habit of many years—mechanically, hardly realizing what he was doing.

Just before daylight CCA passed through the Second Battalion and continued the attack. By 1900 on January 25th the 7th Armored Infantry Battalion had captured all of Berg, including the Schloss, but not without extremely heavy casualties.



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Attack Northeast

Colonel Martin had managed to gain a brief respite for the exhausted remnant of his Battalion, but it had been but the shortest of respites, and the real rest that everyone felt could not help but come now after days of frozen C rations and fighting in the bitter cold was not to be. Companies G and E had relieved the armored men at 2300 on the 25th and dug in for the night on the hill east of Nennig, still anticipating relief the next morning. But at 0230 on the morning of the 26th the company commanders were called to Battalion. There they learned that they were to attack once again before anybody could rest. This time northeast with the mission of occupying the portion of the Sinz-Bubingen Road which passed through the Battalion Sector. The attack would be part of a large scale offensive in which the other two battalions, by this time back on the line, would also participate.

At 0700 on the 26th they jumped off again. On the right of Company E were the remaining men of the Third Battalion, 302nd Infantry, and Lieutenant Gordon C. Weston's Platoon of Company F, 376th. On their left were the other platoons of Company F and Company G of the 376th.

Company E had not moved a hundred yards when it struck a Schu-mine field, losing four men. For a moment the advance was halted. Lieutenant Dodson, however, realizing how important it was to keep going, called the men to follow him and moved right on through the mine field.

After this the company moved about 1500 yards before it was fired on by well-placed machine guns that pinned it down on an open hill. Company E had advanced so far that, the 302nd having been held up by heavy opposition just across the LD, it found itself with no one on its right flank. The critical nature of this position soon became evident when Sergeant Gerald W. Jende of the mortar section spotted two machine guns attempting to fire on the whole company from the rear. Two well-placed shots from his M1 eliminated the danger from these, but the company was still powerless to move until 1300 when the right flank was able to move up.

At 1300 the First and Second platoons attacked over an open point of terrain facing two dug-in machine guns. The attack was costly, but netted another 300 yards and 29 prisoners. By this time Company E had reached the Sinz-Bubingen Road, and the right flank was held up by three German light tanks. It was then ordered to pull back about 150 yards and keep on line with the units on the right.

Shortly after this artillery was called for to catch the three tanks. But a wrong

adjustment was made, and the barrage, instead of hitting the tanks, landed on Company E, the platoon of Company F, and Company K, 302nd, causing very heavy casualties. Then the order came down to dig in and prepare for another night without hot food. The night passed without much artillery coming in, and Captain Whitman, Commander of Company E, managed to get some C rations up to the men which if not hot, at least were warm, and much appreciated. But few men who passed that night there on top of the hill will forget the biting cold that numbed them to the marrow as they sat hour after hour in the chill confines of their foxholes, scarcely able to move for fear of exposing themselves to the enemy who still watched from close by. The men had spent many such nights before in colder weather, and under much severer artillery, but probably never when they were nearer to complete exhaustion from the events of the preceding days.

But the long awaited rest was at hand at last. At 0900 the next morning the 301st Infantry passed through to continue the attack, and the grimy and spent remainder of what just a few days before been a full strength battalion, stumbled back through Nennig to Besch where sleep and hot meals were waiting.

In Company E alone 107 men had been lost in the last five days, including every rifle platoon leader.

Untersie Busch

On January 25th the First and Third Battalions left the reserve area in Monneran to return to the line. The much-needed rest had been fortifying, but insufficient. Losses in the previous engagement had been fairly heavy, and reinforcements had not arrived soon enough to go up on line with the Regiment. The combat efficiency of the two battalions was under par. Many rifle companies had to enlist the services of cooks and headquarters personnel as riflemen. Nor had all combat-lost equipment been replaced. However the soldiers of the Regiment were better prepared to face the onslaughts of General Winter. To protect against trench foot and frozen feet each man wore the new shoe-pacs and arctic stockings. Fingers were fortified against the cold with double mittens. Ears were covered with hoods originally designed for defense against gas and still smelling of Impregnite.

The First Battalion went on line immediately and, shortly before midnight, completed the relief of the First Battalion, 302nd Infantry, in positions west of Tettingen-Butzdorf. The Third Battalion assembled in Wochern.

On taking over from the 302nd the First Battalion was disposed with Company B on the right and Company C on the left, "A" being in Battalion reserve. The mission, to begin with, was purely defensive. The positions of Company B were along the north road running between Besch and Tettingen. "C" was in the large anti-tank ditch just to the left of "B." Company A, since it was in reserve, moved into the two lone buildings which stood in the large open field just to the northeast of Besch. The night was extremly cold—so cold that it was unwise to attempt to sleep. All during the night snow fell.

In these positions the First Battalion was to remain pending further orders, and, except for a few reconnaissance patrols, the morning of the 26th passed quietly.

Up to this time all attacks in the division area had been of no more than battalion strength. The operation for January 26th was to utilize the more usual formation of two regiments on line, the 376th on the right, the 302nd on the left. However, strictly speaking, there would be no regiment in reserve. The 301st was completely occupied with a defensive mission in another sector of the Corps Zone. Due to the confusion of the previous action around Nennig, the 376th and 302nd had temporarily exchanged Second Battalions.

The purpose of the divisional attack was to clear a bridgehead through the Switch Line fortifications so that the armor could pour through and clear out the Saar-Moselle Triangle. Combat Command "A" of the 8th Armored Division was assem-

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Artillery in Nennig — Gasoline laden American jeep burns after direct hit.

bled to the 94th's rear, ready to exploit any penetration made by the infantry.

The enemy to be faced was the crack 11th Panzer Division. Previously the defenses had been manned only by static Fortress Battalions and by elements of the 416th Infantry Division. When the German command realized that the 94th threatened to breach the line, they called in the well-equipped 11th Panzer, whose aproned Tiger Royals were almost impervious to bazooka and 57mm fire. In retaking Nennig the Second Battalion, 376th had already inflicted serious damage on the Panzer troops. But the strong 15th Panzer Regiment, prior to January 25th was still largely undamaged.

The 376th field order called for the attached Second Battalion, 302nd, on the right, Third Battalion, 376th, on left, with the First Battalion, as Regimental reserve, in its defensive positions between Tettingen and Besch. The objective was the high ground up to and just beyond the Sinz-Nennig Road, and, ultimately, Sinz itself.

The attacker had before him first a deep tank ditch, then a steep ravine, and finally a woods, all plainly visible on the reconnaissance. Just beyond the woods ran the Sinz-Nennig Road.

The attack jumped off promptly at 0700, after a heavy artillery preparation. In the right sector, the Second Battalion, 302nd, encountered light resistance almost immediately. Enemy outposts in the woods fired on the attacking forces, and called in artillery and mortar fire. Resistance increased as the assault progressed and ultimately became so strong that the forward movement of the Battalion was halted. By the end of the day the Battalion was only partially through the woods.

The Third Battalion was to move out in column of companies, L, K, I. Company L arrived on the LD (the anti-tank ditch, which was to be crossed by means of engineer ladders) at 0650, and ten minutes later was advancing in a column of platoons. But it was not long before it ran into trouble. As "L" crossed the brow of the hill to the north, along with elements of the Regimental Mine Platoon, the whole Company ran into a Schu-mine field. As the first men were hit, detectors moved up to sweep the area but had little success in locating the wooden mines. Almost at once a machine gun fired at the men in the field, and in the rush to move to cover, forward or sideward, many others were mangled by the mines.

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Innocent looking contraptions those Schu-mines. Just an old wooden box with a hinged top. Might be an empty ammo box. Or you might not even see it hidden in the snow. But, like its German inventors, whether harmless looking or hidden, it's always dangerous. Just step lightly on the top, and off it goes. No shrapnel. Only an explosive charge. Enough to blow off a foot.

Ever see a man who's just lost a foot on a Schu-mine? Looks as though some giant had grabbed

the leg and foot in either hand and snapped the bone above the ankle. The stump is a jagged mess. The rest of the body is covered with black powder in diminishing intensity from legs to head, as if some one from below had thrown up a shovel full of coal dust onto the victim.

There were lots of men in Love Company who looked like that on January 26th. None of them yelled or made any fuss when it happened. They just lay there. Some crawled out of the mine field so that the medics wouldn't have to come in after them. Lt. Joe Klutsch kept on barking commands to his platoon just as if he always worked flat on his back. The Company aid men, Pfc. John Eisenman and T/5 Bill Ittner tried to get to all the wounded. But there were too many. Chaplain Steinmeier did a lot of bandaging himself. Litter teams worked as fast as they could, but the haul was long and slow. Everybody who wasn't busy with another job pitched in to carry the crippled; litters were improvised from blankets and hurriedly-cut saplings.

No one knew quite what to say to the footless ones, most of whom remained conscious. Sympathy was out of place. Finally one of the litter cases spoke up himself:

"Hell," he said. "I got it made. I'm going home."

o o o

In the meantime Captain Brightman called for artillery on the machine guns and started his support platoon around the supposed limits of the field, but it too encountered Schu-mines. Then enemy artillery opened on the two platoons. While both platoons found themselves in this fix, Staff Sergeant Salvatore J. Vastola picked a group of men, crawled and wriggled his way through the field and attacked and silenced the machine gun. Both platoons then moved through the artillery to a series of communication trenches to the right of the Battalion zone where they had some cover and could reorganize. The Company now attempted to continue on, but found another mine field on the crest of the hill to its front and still another to its right flank. In these straits the men took cover in the communication trenches and requested tanks to break a way through the Schu-mines.

At this time Colonel Thurston sent back for primacord to blast a path through the fields and directed Company K to pass through and to the left of Company L where it too encountered another dense Schu-mine field to its left and front. Since "K" had "L" on its right, it too took cover in the communication trenches and prolonged "L's" line to the left. By that time communication between the two forward companies and the tank trap was cut by impassable mortar, rocket and artillery fire which fell impartially on the communication trenches and on the draw to the south of the two trapped companies.

Smoke was tried on the high ground to the northeast where the observers were plotting every move in the Battalion sector and a few people were able to move forward and some back. The primacord unfortunately proved almost valueless, for

it would not detonate every mine in its path. By the time this was learned the Battalion had received instructions that the First would relieve it and that it was to reassemble in the woods about 800 yards to the southeast.

At noon on January 26th when Colonel Miner received orders to by-pass the Third Battalion and continue the attack north towards Untersie Busch woods and the town of Sinz, his Battalion was still disposed in its defensive positions about 300 yards behind the attacking echelons. Company A, still in Battalion reserve, was about 800 yards to the rear.

The orders called for an attack in column of companies, "C" leading, followed by "B" with Company A moving forward to protect the left flank. Company C, commanded by Captain Duckworth was the first company to run into trouble. It came in the form of artillery and mortars and the confusion incident to the withdrawal of Company L which, earlier, had advanced in the same sector. As a result of these obstacles, Company B was ordered to swing out and continue the advance to the right, taking over the job of lead company. "C" followed, and the two companies continued to advance without much trouble.

By nightfall the Battalion had advanced well into the woods south of the Sinz-Nennig road. Physical contact was established with the Second Battalion of the 302nd, which was on the right, and a line was established, manned by "C" on the left and "B" on the right. Company A was brought forward to protect the left flank which otherwise would have been virtually unprotected, as there was a wide gap between Colonel Miner's Battalion and the elements that were attacking further west to the north of Wies. That night was a dark one and a cold one. Everything had been pretty quiet so far, but the air was filled with a tense expectancy, and the darkness seemed to be filled with lurking enemy.

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The squad from Able Company was plenty P.O'd about the patrol. They were dog-tired and a little shut-eye would go well. But S-2 had to know what was in those communication trenches to the west, so the squad was sent out to give a look.

The scouts crawled close to the trench and lay on their bellies, listening.

"Hey Mac, I hear somebody in there . . . By God, those are G.I.'s! They're speaking English."

"Careful, it's probably some Heinie trick. Just keep mum awhile . . . . . Hell, they do sound like G.I.'s" Raising his voice just a bit he gave the password. No answer . . . and then a very faint voice.

"Hell, we don't know no damn password. We been out here a week. Who are you?"

"Who the hell are you? That's the question."

"302 — Love Company. We been surrounded out here since God knows when."

"We're 376. Come on out. You ain't surrounded now."

So out they came, feebly and hesitantly. They looked more like bearded, bedraggled ghosts than soldiers. For more than a week they had been isolated in that frozen trench, standing off incessant attacks. There had been 27, now four were as cold as the ground on which they lay. And the others were so weak they had to be half-carried back through the lines. But they had held.

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That night plans for the resumption of the attack the next day were made in an abandoned German dug-out which, while highly uncomfortable and hardly the best of cover, did allow the use of a flashlight. The Battalion Commander and the two Company Commanders, Captain Bowden and Duckworth, had done considerable exploring in the woods to their front, and had a pretty good idea what they were going to do the next day. But a confirmation of the location of vital terrain features was most important. So Lieutenant William Bendure was sent for. Of him Colonel Miner says: "We will never forget him. He was one of the finest officers in both character and ability I have ever known. When he was told of his mission, which involved a penetration deep into enemy territory, his eyes just shone. He knew how dangerous, but also how important the mission was. He was eager for the assignment solely because he knew that if he returned with the desired information it would greatly contribute to the success of the Battalion's operation the next day."

It seemed ages before Lieutenant Bendure returned from his mission, but when he did, at last, he had successfully accomplished what he had set out to do. He was as enthusiastic as if he had discovered a gold mine. The next day, while leading his men with the same surging spirit, he was killed during a furious charge against German tanks and infantry.

The Battalion objective for the next day was an extensive though not very dense, forest lying north of the Sinz-Bubingen Road. It was high ground to the extent that the possessor would be at least on "even observation" terms with an enemy in Bannholz woods, further to the north, and could look down on Sinz. He would, however, be frowned down upon by the enemy on the much higher Munzingen Ridge off to the east. Moreover capture of Untersie Busch would completely secure the Sinz-Nennig Road, provided the battalions on the left took their objectives. Capture of the Sinz-Nennig road was important because once it was cleared of enemy, Combat Command A of the 8th Armored Division could use it to come in from Nennig and drive on Sinz and the high ground further to the east. It was indeed a valuable objective, and very much worth fighting for.

The attacking Companies B and C with "B" on the right, were on the Line of Departure when the artillery preparation opened. However, because the battalions

on each flank seemed to have been delayed in reaching the Line of Departure, both flanks were considerably exposed. Since the right flank offered the enemy a covered route of approach, Company A was immediately disposed there as protection. This necessity was unfortunate in the light of later events because, had Company A been more readily available as a mobile reserve, the enemy might have been driven more quickly from the objective by using "A" in a surprise flanking movement.

The Battalion advanced steadily under cover of a fifteen minute artillery preparation to within assaulting distance of the objective. The forward slope of the hill was covered with waist-high brush which offered a certain amount of concealment, but no cover. When the preparation lifted, the ensuing assault carried the Battalion over the crest of the hill, across the Sinz-Nennig road, and into Untersie Busch.

At this point, however, the battalion was viciously counterattacked by German tanks, accompanied by infantry, advancing up the reserve slope of the hill and through the relatively open woods.. This sudden and devastating onslaught forced the attackers to withdraw back over the crest of the hill into defilade. The hill sloped uniformly for approximately 75 yards, where it became slightly steeper, at this point a temporary defense position was taken up.

Upon reaching the Sinz-Bubingen Road, the enemy tanks halted and continuously raked the waist-high brush with murderous machine gun fire. The only answer to the tanks was to get the bazookas into action. But it was a bad place for bazookas. There were hits, but firing from the prone position it has almost impossible to aim, and many rounds were deflected by the heavy brush. Firing from the standing or even kneeling position would have meant immediate and almost certain death, for the machine guns were centering their fire instantly on anyone who exposed himself. The battalion's anti-tanks guns were not available because the extremely rugged and wooded country passed through during the last 24 hours had been too difficult for them.

It was indeed a critical situation. Why the tanks did not continue their advance is still a mystery. It is perhaps a commentary on the inflexibility of the German mind, so often incapable of adapting to unforseen circumstances, that they made no attempt to press their advantage.

The period that followed will be long remembered by those who lived through it. The courage displayed by the men of the Battalion in withstanding what they withstood that day as they crouched in the meager brush almost under the muzzles of the enemy tankers' guns was but another example of the spirit of America's fighting men.

In addition to subjecting our troops to the grazing fire of the tanks' machine guns, the Germans harried the Battalion line with incessant mortar and artillery fire, and time after time the spine-chilling sound of Nebelwerfers was heard, followed by the earth-shaking blasts of their rockets. In accordance with previous plans, the armor from Combat Command A of the 8th Armored Division was expected momentarily, but somehow its arrival had been delayed. In the interim, attesting to its confidence in its own artillery, the Battalion called for and received unobserved concentrations on points within 75 yards of its own positions. Surveys of the battlefield later revealed that two of the German heavy tanks were destroyed by these concentrations.

And so the duel raged, each side relentlessly and savagely punishing the other, but with the Germans as usual in their defensive positions, having the advantage in terrain and observation.

At long last word was received that the 8th Armored was definitely on the way. Lieutenant Chester Dadisman was ordered to move Company A from its position protecting the right flank to a point from which it could attack with the tanks from the left. At the same time Companies C and B received instructions to resume the attack on order. Their attack was to jump off simultaneously with the flanking maneuver. A short time later the tanks appeared, and without delay the operation got under way as planned. By sheer shock action the Germans were knocked off their perch, finally being overrun in true motion picture fashion.

Company A moved in with the lead tanks until masked by the fired of "C". Companies C and B, pressure to their front considerably lessened, swept forward once again across the Sinz-BubingenRoad and on to the objective.

The victory was both sweet and bitter. The Switch Line had been completely breached in the Battalion Zone, and for the first time in its combat history the Battalion was not looking up at the enemy. But the victory had been costly. Mute evidence of the battle's brutality was plainly visible in eleven knocked out tanks and the casualties, both dead and wounded, that the Battalion had suffered. Two of the best combat officers in the Battalion had been killed: Lieutenant Bendure, and Lieutenant Theodor E. Weissich of Company B. But there were still more casualties and much bitter fighting to come.

Company B was ordered to take up a defensive position on the right of Untersie Busch. Company A was to replace battered Company C on the left. "C" now falling back into reserve, was now commanded by Lieutenant Cornelius who had replaced Captain Duckworth when he was wounded. Untersie Busch was now a living hell. The "buttoned-up" tanks of CCA had clustered to the immediate right rear of

the woods, and were pouring great volumes of fire down into Sinz. In retaliation, the Germans, with their perfect observation from Munzingen Ridge just beyond, were returning equally great concentrations of mortar, artillery and rocket fire which did not differentiate between tank and doughboy.

At this time—the time was 1430—Colonel Miner received a message ordering the Battalion to attack Sinz at 1500 in coordination with the 2nd Battalion, 302nd on the right. This seemed incredible, and was indeed a difficult pill to swallow. The battalion had been going through a seemingly endless nightmare. However, there was no alternative but to carry out the order.

The eastern edge of Untersie Busch was quickly selected as the Line of Departure, and Company A was ordered from its defensive position to a new location near the Line of Departure. The right flank of "B" was already near the point from which the attack would jump off. Together, Colonel Miner, Captain Bowden and Lieutenant Dadisman made an attempt to look over the terrain. It was only an attempt because due to the amount of artillery still coming in more time had to be spent scrambling for cover than studying the ground.

To the left of the road into Sinz was a deep, flat-bottomed draw which ran directly into the town. The steep sides of this draw would offer a certain amount of concealment in the form of brushwood and a few trees which were scattered along them. To the left of the draw was a flat, open expanse of ground leading to Bannholz woods. Using this, the attackers would be subjected to flanking fire as well as fire from the enemy in Bannholz woods.

Orders were issued to attack with Company A on the right and Company B on the left, one company to each of the steep sides of the draw, both of them avoiding the flat bottom. Colonel Miner then ran over to the tanks, and, after considerable shouting and pounding, was able to "unbutton" one of them. After several minutes, during which the tank commander attempted to contact his battalion by radio, it became obvious that any planned coordination with the tanks would be impossible in the time available before H-hour, it now being H minus ten.

Upon returning to Untersie Busch, Colonel Miner received another message, stating that the objective had been changed and that, with the aid of the tanks, the battalion would attack to the north and sieze Bannholz woods. By this time the men had nearly completed the job of forming for the attack on Sinz over to the east. Its left flank was facing the new direction of attack.

Again a tank was unbuttoned and a tank commander consulted. The tanks, which were operating under Division control, had not yet received word of the change, and would therefore continue to fire on Sinz. For the time being it appeared that

the Battalion was going to have to attack Bannholz without armor support.

At this point a new train of events was set in motion. Lieutenant Cornelius, from his reserve position in the western portion of Untersie Busch, called Colonel Miner on the radio and reported that "either friendly or enemy tanks" were approaching his position from the northwest. The lack of positive identification was quite understandable. The situation was quite confused, and the route of approach was cluttered with heavy brush and trees.

Colonel Miner, disbelieving, ran towards the northern edge of Untersie Busch, to verify but had only gotten part way through the woods when he was greeted by the fire of an attacking wave of German infantrymen, firing from a range of approximately 30 yards. "How he escaped," as one of the Battalion officers told it afterwards, "is a miracle only God can explain."

Needless to say, upon his return it did not take the Battalion long to return the fire. Fortunately most of the men had some sort of cover as a result of the heavy shelling which was still in progress. Attempts to divert the 8th CCA from its mission of firing on Sinz were quite futile. Orders were orders, and it had received no new instructions. Several of the tanks, however, were persuaded to assist with machine gun fire.

At last the German advance was stopped by heavy frontal fire at close quarters, but because of the rolling character of the ground the Germans could not be driven out by fire alone. Company C in its reserve position just west of Untersie Busch, was ideally disposed to launch a counterattack on the enemy's right flank. It was this company, aggressively moving in on the attackers with blasts of marching fire, that finally swept the woods clear of enemy. Company C was inadvertently supported during this attack by the enemy artillery on Munzingen ridge, the fire of which was landing on the attackers as much as on the defenders.

While this last phase was in progress, the very welcome word was received that the Third Battalion would soon relieve the First. Finally, at 1800, just as the leading elements of the Third were arriving, Untersie Busch was officially announced as clear of all enemy.

Slowly and silently the men of the depleted First Battalion filed back in the darkness to their foxholes in the reserve position. They had completed their most bitter day of combat; a day that for sheer grimness surpassed even the worst days at Tettingen and Butzdorf.

By 2045 the Third Battalion had completed the relief of the First. Before the Third could dig in the new positions, the whole line was raked with a murderous concentration of artillery that caught most of the men above ground, inflicting a num-

ber of casualties. Under continuous fire the men continued to dig, despite the fact that the holes filled rapidly with icy water. For the following few days these water-filled holes were home while the Battalion withstood numerous tank and infantry attacks.

The 7th Armored Infantry Battalion was attached to the Regiment to assist in the attack on Sinz. However, reconnaissance indicated that enemy concentrations of troops and armor in Sinz were too heavy to make an attack feasible with the forces available at that time. So the Armored Infantry was released from the attachment; the Second Battalion relieved the Second Battalion, 302nd, and, along with the Third Battalion, improved its defensive positions in front of Sinz.

The enemy launched a number of fierce tank and infantry counterattacks in a determined effort to force our troops back to Wochern. But each attack was beaten off with heavy losses to the Germans. The rifle companies were all far under-strength, having lost many men not only through wounds but from Trench Foot as well. Those men who remained were weakened from loss of sleep and long hours in cramped, water-filled fox holes. But through well timed fires and the careful employment of artillery, they kept the enemy from getting too close.

On January 29th the Regiment was relieved by the 301st Infantry. Moving to the rear by the way of Nennig, the men had a chance to see the devastation wrought by two battles in the little town. Every building was damaged; most were completely wrecked. Everywhere there was the deadly smell of cordite. Burnt-out Panzers stood in the market square. There were corpses, in all conditions. One Panzer-grenadier had been run over by a tank. He was only a red smear in the snow.

Upon being relieved, the 376th went to Veckring, France, to be in Division reserve. So ended the first coordinated attack by the regiments of the 94th Division. It had not been completely successful in breaching the Switch Line. But it had gained several thousand yards, captured key positions and commanding terrain, and more important, battered the proud 11th Panzer Division into an almost ineffectual remnant. One more blow should split the Switch.

In Veckring at last there was time for rest—comparative rest at least. The days were full of training schedules, formations and cleaning combat-grimed equipment. So much so that a number of GI's, their sleep interrupted by such things, grumbled that it was more restful up on the line. The gripe is as old as the war and can be heard at any rest camp. It is an indirect way of expressing the deep and underlying affection a soldier has for familiar things—even such familiar things as formations and training schedules—when he has just come back from being under fire and seeing his friends killed around him.

UNIT REPORT
No. 5

From: 082400 Jan 45
To : 312400 Jan 45

Hq 376 Inf
31 Jan 45
Veckring, WQ/183,
France

Maps: Germany, 1:25,000, Kirf Sheet

1. ENEMY

a. Units in Contact:

(1) 416 V G Div.
712th, 713th, 714th Inf Regts.

(2) 11th Pz Div.
110th, and 111th Pz Gren Regts, 15 Pz Regt,
11th Rcn Bn.

b. Enemy reserves that can affect our situation:

(1) Remnants of the 416th Inf Div and 11th Pz Div estimated at a total of 4000.

c. Description of enemy activity during period:

At the beginning of the period the 416th V G Inf Div held that portion of the Siegfried Line between the Nied and Moselle Rivers. Extensive use of mines both AP and AT was made. From the 8th Jan 45 to 14 Jan 45 enemy activity was confined to sporadic artillery and mortar fire, active patrolling and improving his defensive positions. When our attack began on his positions on 14 Jan 45 between Tettingen and Nennig he resisted fiercely from his fortified positions with artillery mortar and small arms. Soon after our initial objectives (Tettingen and Butzdorf) were taken he counterattacked from Campholz woods with approximately 40 men but was beaten back. At 150400 Jan 45 he attacked our positions in Tettingen and Butzdorf with four Co's supported by artillery and mortars. He succeeded in surrounding the two towns but by 1100 was beaten off with heavy losses. During the period 16th and 17th Jan he harassed our positions with artillery and mortar fire while massing his forces in the woods between Tettingen and Nennig for a counterattack which was made on the 18th at 0730. The attack was made by the 714th Inf Regt, 416th V G Div and the 110 Pz Gren Regt, 11th Pz Div supported by one Bn of tanks from 15th Pz Regt, 11th Pz Div and heavy artillery and mortar fire with the mission of retaking Tettingen. This he failed to do after suffering heavy casualties in men and material, but did succeed in occupying Butzdorf after the town was abandoned. On the 19th Jan he resumed his attacks on Tettingen and Nennig employing remnants of the 416th V G Div and the 110th Pz Gren Regt, 111th Pz Gren Regt and elements of the 15th Pz Regt, 11th Pz Div. All of his counterattacks were thrown back with severe losses. During the period 25 Jan to 29 Jan he resisted our advance with artillery, rocket, mortar and small arms fire and occasionally counterattacked with forces estimated at one Co with from 2 to 7 tanks in support. At the end of the period his activity had died down to very light artillery fire.

d. Estimate of enemy strength, material means, morale and his probable knowledge of our situation:

The enemy has lost the majority of his infantry regiments and probably cannot muster more than two battalions to resist our advance unless he can furnish replacements immediately which is doubtful. He has an estimated 8 Bns of artillery and probably two Bns of Mark 4 and 5 tanks totaling probably 60. PW's indicate that morale is very low among the infantry regiments.

e. Conclusions:

The enemy may with the remnants of the 11th Pz Div and 416th V G Inf Div:

(1) Counterattack from N, NE, or E

(2) Fight a delaying action back to the Siegfried Line on the north.

(3) Continue resistance to our attack to the N with small groups of Inf and AT weapons to cover his obstacles and with the remnants of his force attack in the general direction Kirf-Borg, or Weiten-Orscholz.

(4) Same as (3) with the remainder withdrawing to the E bank of the Saar River.

(5) The enemy may if reinforced:

(a) Counterattack from N, NE, or E.

(b) Resist and attack in the general direction Kirf-Borg or Weiten-Orscholz.

(c) Counterattack our penetration and attack Kirf-Borg, Weiten-Orscholz.

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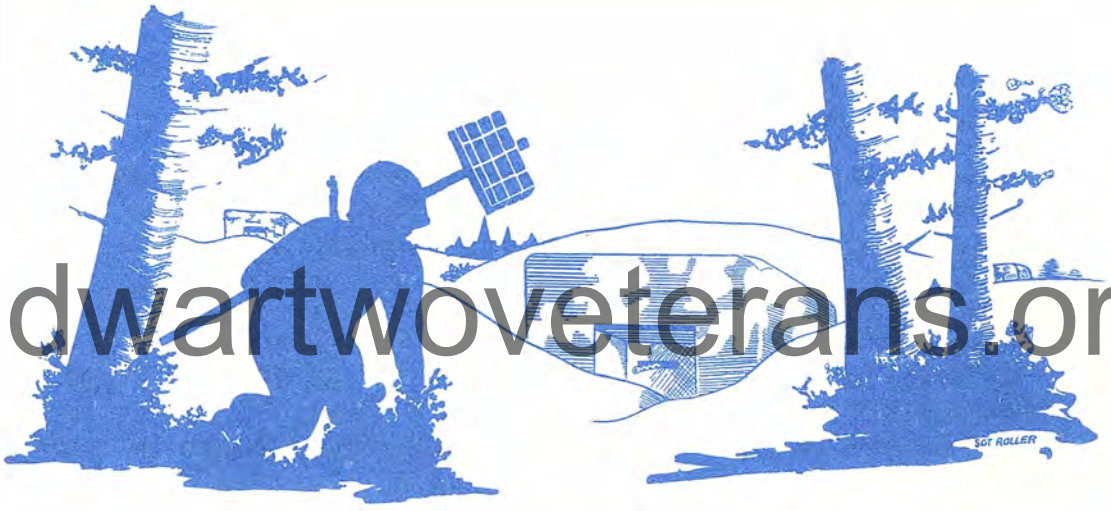

CHAPTER V The Switch Falls

Ordeal in Bannholz

The foregoing excerpt from the Unit Report of January 31st sums up the situation as it was while the Regiment rested in Veckring. Up front the other two regiments of the Division were busy taking the town of Sinz and holding on to the positions the 376th had turned over to them when it went back. Other than taking Sinz, the 301st and 302nd did not attempt any large scale offensives, so the situation had not changed a great deal when the 376th returned to the fold on February 9th, this time setting up its C P in what was left of Wochern.

On the 9th the front line roughly paralleled the road that ran from Sinz to Schloss Bubingen, just above Wies. Things were quieter than they had been. The Germans were undoubtedly feeling the effects of the maulings they had received during the past three weeks. But the situation was still full of interesting and disturbing possibilities.

It was the Second Battalion's turn to be the spearhead of whatever was coming, and back in Veckring on February 9th Colonel Martin and his staff were pouring over their maps. General objective of the next push forward was the heavily for-

ested area north of the Sinz-Schloss Bubingen road and south and southeast of the town of Kreuzweiler, about two miles further north. Specifically, the first obstacle in the path of Companies F and G, the lead-off companies for the attack that was to take place the following morning, was a dark and forbidding clump of pine woods just north of Sinz. It was a small patch of woods with nothing much to distinguish it from countless similar patches all over the Saar-Moselle Triangle except that its name happened to be Bannholz.

In the light of what was to happen in Bannholz on the following day, it might be well to glance first at the surrounding country as it might have appeared to the reconnaissance parties of the two attacking companies had they had more of a chance to study it on the gray, chill evening of February 9th.

The Sinz-Bubingen road, which at that point was the front line, formed the south boundary of a narrow but dense strip of pine woods, known on the maps as Untersie Busch. Looking northeast from the shelter of this strip of woods, one looked across nearly 1000 yards of open ground to where Bannholz stood out dark green against the winter brown of surrounding fields. Further north and to the left of Bannholz as one saw it from Untersie Busch was a hill, crested with a smaller clump of pine, known as Geisbusch Woods. Between Geisbusch and the northwest edge of Bannholz a deep ravine curved south and then around to the east, passing through the open space between Bannholz and Untersie Busch. The bottom of this draw was marshy and dotted with occasional clumps of shrubs, but otherwise, being shallow at this point, offered no cover. From the north side of Untersie Busch to the bottom of the draw was some 300 yards of gentle downhill slope, cluttered with dense and tangled undergrowth which offered moderately good concealment. The other side of the open space, from the bottom of the draw to the south edge of Bannholz sloped gently uphill and was closely cropped pasture land, offering no concealment whatever.

Running southwest from the elbow of the draw was a smaller gully which then turned northwestward into another patch of forest. This one had an apple orchard on its northern slope, but here too the ground between the main draw and the woods was completely open. Only possible covered approach which extended most of the way across the open was an old cowpath near the southeastern edge of the open ground. This was shielded on the left by a fairly dense hedgerow extending part way across the open. Finally, to enter the woods from either the southwest or northwest it was necessary to cross one of the rutted and muddy dirt roads that bounded it on these two sides in full view of anyone firing from the concealment of the pines.

Bannholz itself was shaped somewhat like a mitten; the open end pointing towards Untersie Busch across the open to the southwest, and the thumb and fingers northeastwards. It was a good place to defend. Situated high on the slope of a hill, its defenders could, secure in the concealment of the pines, cover any possible routes of approach. Inside the woods was a mesh of roads which made it, unlike many patches of dense forest, a likely place to defend with tanks.

Even from the briefest study of the area it was obvious that if the Germans chose to make a fight for Bannholz, the attack was going to be rough. And strategically, there was every reason to believe they would choose to make a fight for it.

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Sergeant Bower's face was white as he came into the room. "Roller here?" There was something in the tone of his voice that made the men in the room stop what they were doing and look up. "Roller, you're taking over. There's been an accident . . . Fikejs . . ." Sergeant Fikejs was Company F's Communications Sergeant and every one knew that he had been out that evening with Captain Whitman and the other officers reconnoitering Bannholz Woods. They did not have to be told what kind of an accident it had been.

Downstairs in the company CP nobody said much. Lt. Hawley, the Company Executive Officer had had an accident too — his leg nearly blown off by a 120mm mortar shell. Lt. Desmarais, still with blood on his field jacket, sat with his head in his hands. There was a quaver in his voice as he spoke.

"We couldn't see a thing," he said over and over again. "We couldn't see a goddam thing." There wasn't much else you could say . . .

o o o

It had been a disastrous reconnaissance;—communications sergeant and executive officer badly wounded and nothing gained. It had been too dark to see anything from the north edge of Untersie Busch, and with the 120's coming in the way they were it was impossible even to stay there, let alone go forward to get a better look. It was with a sinking feeling inside that Captain Whitman, after sending the survivors of his reconnaissance party back to the assembly area near Perl, went on alone to see Captain Sinclair in Sinz. Captain Sinclair was Commander of Company F, 301st Infantry which had made an unsuccesful attack on Bannholz some days earlier, and he might be able to provide at least some information.

Not long after midnight on the morning of February 10th the trucks began to warm up in the dark streets of Perl. An hour later the men of Colonel Martin's Battalion were clambering out of the trucks in Nennig, while squad leaders called their squads together for the march to the Line of Departure. It was still dark as the long

column moved westward along the Sinz-Bubingen road, and still quiet. But there was nothing reassuring about the quiet. After what had happened the night before nerves were still on edge, and the atmosphere was heavy with foreboding.

There was still no trace of dawn as Companies F and G gathered along the road at the south edge of Untersie Busch. It was so dark that squad leaders checking their men had to ask a man his name, even from a few feet away, to know who he was. There was no sound except for whispers, the scratch of pebbles rolled under heavy feet and the rustle and click of equipment being adjusted, sometimes to the accompaniment of stage-whisper curses.

At last it was time to start. Company G went first, striking into the open north of Untersie Busch at 0650. Captain John D. Heath's men had the job of attacking on the left of the Battalion area, hitting Bannholz from the northwest. He was to cut across the thumb of the "mitten" and occupy the northern half of the woods which corresponded to the fingers. Company F, following ten minutes later, was to take the right half of the area, entering the woods from the southwest, and occupying the southern half of the woods; the part corresponding to the palm of the "mitten".

"G's" route of advance was generally northeast, following the contours of the draw. The Third Platoon was on the right; its Second on the left. Company F, with its platoons in the same order, was to cut directly across the open, using the hedgerow for cover as much as possible approaching the woods. On the right of the Second Battalion zone was the 301st Infantry, occupying Sinz. To its left the Third Battalion, 302nd, dug in along the Sinz-Bubingen Road further west. The First Battalion was still back in Monneran in reserve, preparing to entruck and move up to Perl.

Supporting artillery was thundering on the near edge of Bannholz as the two companies moved out, but nothing had been heard from the Germans yet. It was slow going over the first part of the open space. Tangled and soaking undergrowth clung to the men's legs as they advanced, just enough to impede their progress, but too low to serve as any kind of concealment. By now it was beginning to get light — too light perhaps. Too light for the Germans to fail to see them moving across the open.

It was still dark enough, however, to make keeping contact difficult, and before long Lieutenant Gordon C. Weston's Second Platoon had swung too far to the left in an effort to stay in touch with the right platoon of "G" Lieutenant Stanley Mason's Third Platoon moved up on the right along the cowpath which gave them some measure of concealment. Both platoons had got well past the marshy bottom

of the draw before there were any indications of enemy activity. Similarly the two forward platoons of Company G were able to move all the way to the edge of the woods before the firing started, It was "F's" Third Platoon that got the first of it; a burst of machine gun and rifle fire that caught them still behind the hedgerow while it was as yet more than a hundred yards from the edge of the woods.

As if this burst had been a signal, a blaze of firing immediately opened up on the Second Platoon as well, catching it without any available cover. There was only one thing to do, and both platoons reached the edge of the woods at a dead run. Company G fared better at this point, and received almost no firing until it was actually in the woods. What it met then was only light and it replied with a heavy volume of marching fire. Each man firing from the hip as he moved forward. By 0800 Company G had reached its objective at the northeast edge of the woods. So far this part of the attack was going according to plan, and had not been too difficult.

But with Company F things were not going so well. Small arms and machine gun fire had been only the beginning. As Lieutenant Mason's platoon entered the woods enemy mortars and artillery began to come in, and without warning, two tanks which had been waiting in the thick underbrush in the southeast corner of the woods began to add point-blank sniping with their 88's to the deadly effect of tree-bursting shells.

Lieutenant Weston's platoon, which had veered too far to the west, was nowhere to be found. It was up to the Third Platoon and the three bazooka teams attached to it from the First Platoon of Anti-Tank Company to take care of the tanks.

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Pfc. Leonard L. Neff moved fast over the open ground between the clump of undergrowth and the squat nose of the Tiger. Flat on his stomach, he inched his bazooka along the ground beside him. The tank was firing at someone or something just a few yards away it seemed. The blast of the gun and the blast of exploding shells followed each other almost instantaneously, the second like an echo of the first.

Neff's ears rang with the noise as he rose a little onto his elbows and beckoned hurriedly to Pfc. Otis A. King, his loader, who was following behind him. King came up alongside, and the yellow tongue of the rocket's backflash seared the ground.

Smoke clouded the tank. Both men were breathing heavily as they got ready for the next round, and King's hands trembled as he thrust the next rocket into the tube. Again and again came the crash and hollow crack of their bazooka, and grey smoke eddied about the Tiger and its companion a little further back in the woods.

Hit many times, but still firing, the German tanks must have finally decided they had had

enough, for at last they clanked back into defilade and, for the moment, became less dangerous. But the mortars were still falling—one exploding almost on top of the two bazookamen . . . King bent over his mortally wounded comrade and saw that there was little he could do. Grimly picking up the bazooka, he continued holding off the two tanks, refusing to leave his friend until he died.

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The tanks were momentarily daunted, but far from out of action. The other bazooka teams had discovered the same thing. Time after time hits were scored, yet there was no visible effect on the tanks. Like Neff, many bazookamen approached boldly to within a few yards of one of the Tigers to discharge their rockets only to be cut down by 88's when the rockets failed to stop them. What nobody knew at the time was that the tanks on duty in Bannholz that day were equipped with "bazooka skirts," an outer sheath of armor over the vital parts which was separated from the main armor by an airspace between. The rockets would explode on contact with this outer sheath and expend their force before they had done any real damage.

Meanwhile casualties were mounting. The bazookas proving largely ineffective, there was nothing to hinder the tanks. Having blasted the Third Platoon until its attack was completely stalled, and killed or seriously wounded all of the bazookamen, they moved to the southwest edge of the woods, just in time to catch Company F's support platoon moving across the open.

The support platoon was the First with First Lieutenant Wilford P. Wilson in command. With him was the platoon of heavy machine guns from Company H, "F's" 60 mm mortar section, most of the command group, and two stretcher bearer teams. The tank's 88's caught them with no cover whatever except what they were able to scrape for themselves in the rocky ground.

The First Platoon of Company G, commanded by Staff Sergeant William B. Malloy, was having difficulties too. Its mission was to enter the woods following the others and secure the company's left flank. To do this it had to cross the open ground west of the woods in full view of the by now alerted defenders of Adenholz and Geisbusch Woods to the north. Half way across the First Platoon was greeted by a deadly hail of cross-firing machine guns, followed by mortars, artillery and 88's of the tanks that lay concealed in the edge of Geisbusch. Flanking fire is one of the deadliest threats there is to attacking infantry, and by the time the First Platoon had reached the edge of the woods half of its men lay dead or wounded on the field behind.

The rest of Company G, which had reached its objective initially, and Lieutenant Weston's platoon of Company F were running into strong counterattacks. By

this time there were enemy tanks firing on the woods from both sides as well as from within it. Enemy artillery tore at the woods, and even friendly artillery, falling on its planned phase lines, caused some casualties among the attackers for the situation had grown far too confused for anyone to be sure of being where he was supposed to be at any given time.

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"Despite the mortar barrage (as Captain Whitman tells it in his account of the attack), my radio man, runner, and myself were able to enter the woods safely at 0745, but were immediately subjected to another barrage. At 0815 I found Sgt. (Mariano) Scopoli's platoon, the Third Platoon, with two squads. He had lost contact with Lieutenant Mason. I myself had been unable to contact any of my platoon leaders since the jump-off despite repeated efforts. After a slackening of enemy artillery and mortar fire, I ordered Sgt. Scopoli to sweep the woods to the southwestern corner, then swing left and sweep the southern half of the company zone of action. In so doing he captured about 12 prisoners. In the meantime I still could gain no radio contact with either Lt. Wilson, Lt. Mason, or Lt. Weston. Believing Lt. Weston had gone ahead on the left of my company zone of action, I proceeded to the location (near the southwest edge of the woods) that I had chosen for a CP, and where I had encountered Lt. (Robert C.) Pierce (Heavy Weapons Platoon Leader). There we dropped our packs and overcoats. We watched Sgt. Scopoli take several more prisoners, come abreast of the CP location and continue his advance. All during this time we could hear the two tanks going around as they tried to get a better shot at us. Sgt. Scopoli moved down on the right, and I with Lt. Pierce's runner and radio operator, moved eastwards on the left, following in what I thought was the path of my Second Platoon. I had previously run into one bazooka team of the Second Platoon as I entered the woods, and had dispatched them after the two tanks. Trying to make physical contact with Lt. Weston, I continued on and luckily veered to the right, meeting Sgt. Scopoli and his squads about 150 yards from a point midway along the eastern edge of the woods which constituted our final objective. He had started to have his men dig in but I told him to continue his advance, as I was convinced at that time that Lt. Weston and his Second Platoon were to our immediate left and must be on their objective. Sgt. Scopoli and his two squads had hardly moved 25 feet beyond the trail near the eastern edge of the woods when they encountered the enemy dug in and firing BAR's and M1's at us. Still believing Lt. Weston to be on our left, and still searching for the missing bazooka teams, I started out with Lt. Pierce and ran into a flanking group of ten or more enemy. At this point an enemy tank could be heard moving around the southeast corner of the woods to flank us on the right. Our position looked untenable, so I instructed Sgt. Scopoli to withdraw, delaying the enemy as long as he could. I told him I was returning to find Lt. Weston and the other bazooka teams.

"With Lt. Pierce I returned along the general route I had taken and ran into T/Sgt (William H.) McGuinniss at a point approximately 100 yards from the edge of the woods along our boundary

with Company G. There at about 1030 we were subjected to another heavy mortar barrage. During this Lt. Pierce, Sgt McGuinniss, Pfc Howard R Jones, Jr., (a bazookaman whom I had found with all ammunition expended) and myself were hit. I immediately administered aid to Pfc Jones, and Sgt. McGuinniss, as Lt. Pierce seemed able to take care of himself. I found Lt. Weston in the Company G CP (near the southwestern corner of the woods) and discovered his platoon with one remaining LMG (the others having been demolished and the crews wounded by one of the tanks) had hit their defenses up on Company "G's" right, but inside the specified defensive right flank of Company "G." I immediately oriented him as to the gravity of Sgt. Scopoli's situation and ordered him to advance through his assigned part of the woods and assist Sgt. Scopoli. I would follow along with him. An intense mortar barrage prevented his immediate execution of these instructions, and we had barely reached the boundary between companies, 300 yards from the western edge of the woods, when we ran into Sgt. Scopoli returning with the remains of his platoon. He had run into an enemy tank on the way back. I then ordered Lt. Weston to organize a line running through my CP location, but to look out for those tanks in the corner of the woods near Sinz as they had already inflicted heavy casualties on the Third Platoon . . ."

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In the Company G area the situation was going from bad to worse. Counter-attacks had forced the two attacking platoons to dig in along the northeastern edge of the woods where mortar and artillery fire pounded them unmercifully. Foxholes were scant protection against artillery in a woods, and the casualties steadily increased. There was, however, only one aid man left with the Company by that time, Private Anthony J. Kapela. Kapela was faced with the staggering job of not only showing the walking wounded the way back through the shell-harried woods, but of carrying the litter cases back himself. For there were no men who could be spared to help him. Each trip back he was in imminent danger from flying fragments from mortar hits high in the pines about him, from enemy infantry or tanks that might appear at any moment in any part of the woods, and that had often before demonstrated their lack of scruples about using aid men as targets. But all that morning he made the trip over and over again, and there are many men in Company G who would not be alive today if it had not been for his courage and determination.

At first the tanks stayed out of range of the bazookas. But it was not long before they had discovered how immune they were with the added protection of their skirts. By the middle of the morning all of "G's" bazooka ammunition had been spent with little effect, and the Tigers pushed their way to the very edge of the woods. Exasperatingly and with impunity they would lumber up and down the road that bordered the woods at that point, searching out the Second and Third

Platoon positions. Finding an occupied foxhole they would move up to within a few yards and fire an 88 shell directly into it. Private Bernard F. Moan became so enraged as he watched this massacre of his comrades that he seized a machine gun and, selecting a tank that was just approaching the woods to do some more sniping, blazed at it so furiously that it was forced to button up and withdraw before it could cause any damage.

Both companies by noon were in the very direst of straits. All hope of accomplishing the attacking mission was gone. The fight had become a fight for very existence; a fight to cling to the ever diminishing possibility that any who had entered the woods that morning would ever get out again. With radios lost and destroyed, and many radiomen killed and wounded, communications between the two company commanders and their platoons were almost at a standstill. Nobody knew much about what was going on in the woods except in his own immediate vicinity.

To the individual soldier it was a morning of terror and confusion, where the enemy was just as apt to appear behind you as in front of you; of infuriating impotence in the face of the tanks that roamed the woods at will, destroying everything in the path of their guns and completely demoralizing any attempt to move either forward or back. Attackers and defenders shiped at each other from behind trees only a few yards apart, and small groups took shelter in German covered dugouts that offered some protection against even direct hits from the guns of the tanks. Prisoners were taken and then lost again as captor and captured took cover from sudden firing and lost each other in the confusion.

To make matters worse it rained that afternoon. Not just the intermittent drizzle that had kept up during the morning, but a steady, soaking rain that collected in yellow pools at the bottom of every foxhole and made a nightmare of quicksand of the churned-up ground where tanks had passed.

All during the afternoon, in spite of the artillery fire which Captain Larry A. Blakely of the 919th continued to direct with devastating accuracy from the woods, the tanks kept coming back every 15 to 30 minutes, and the casualty figures were becoming increasingly alarming. The Second Platoon of Company F was reduced to 20 men. Of the two squads of the Third under Sergeant Scopoli, seven men remained, and three officers had been lost. Lieutenants Wilson and Desmarais had been missing since early in the action, both believed to have been killed by the 88's. Lieutenant Mason had been seriously wounded attempting to stop one of the tanks with a bazooka after the bazookamen had been killed. By noon Company G was reduced to half its strength, and its casualties kept mounting during the afternoon.

Holding a brief conference with Captain Heath in the latter's Command Post, Captain Whitman finally decided to call for smoke. The smoke was refused, but he was informed that Company E was being sent up. This was at 1430. At 1530 there was still no sign of any reinforcements, and no new supplies of bazooka ammunition were forthcoming.

By this time the number of tanks that were pounding the woods had increased to about ten, and trucks had been seen to the north of the woods unloading more German infantry. It looked as if a major counterattack was imminent.

Once again Captain Whitman, whose wound by now had gone without any medical attention other than his own for many hours, contacted Battalion about the reinforcements and explained the seriousness of the situation. Once again he was informed that help was coming. At 1615, by then hardly able to walk, he attached the survivors of his Company to Captain Heath, and told him that he was going to meet Captain Darrah's men on the way up. "I'm afraid I won't be back," he added as he left.

Just as he left Captain Heath's Command Post he met Sergeant Manuel M. Delgado bringing up wire from the First Platoon. All during the day he had had no contact with them, and now for the first time learned how they had been trapped in the open and had been unable to reinforce the other two platoons in the woods.

Company E was on its way up, but the men who had survived their ordeal in the woods since the early hours of the morning had reached the ultimate limits of their endurance. For hours each man had fed his last flicker of hope with the thought that orders to withdraw would soon be coming. How and from whom they first came is still a question today. It is sufficient that they had to come, and that each man who entered the woods that day stayed at his post unhesitatingly until they did.

Stunned, mud-covered, and nearly spent, the men of both companies got themselves back across the open, still under a hail of fire from a new enemy counterattack. It was a pitifully small group to be called two companies, and many no longer even had their weapons or all of their equipment. There were few machine guns or bazookas left, and Private First Class Robert Roller Jr. crossed the open under fire carrying the only surviving radio in all of Company F.

By 1745 the Second Battalion line had once again been established north of the Sinz-Bubingen road, and the project of taking Bannholz was, for the time, abandoned. The attack had been a failure and a costly one. It had been one of those days that can be found in the combat history of any organization that has fought long enough against a stubborn and skillful enemy; a day when the most carefully laid plans

seem to be of no avail, and all the chessboard logic of waging war collapses suddenly in the face of the unforeseen.

S-2 and G-2 had made their estimates of Bannholz, and their estimates had not been far wrong. But even the intelligence personnel of a regiment or a division are not completely omniscient. There is no way, for example, on the basis of the information it was possible to obtain, that anyone could have known the tanks in Bannholz would be wearing skirts that would render the ordinarily deadly bazooka almost completely impotent. Yet it was this factor, more than anything else, that accounted for the failure in the woods that day.

What it amounts to is that days like that 10th of February are a measure of the true grimness of modern war, and are inevitable as the fact that in every battle there are some who will be killed. The men of the Second Battalion could not hold Bannholz that day because the odds against them turned out to be insurmountable. What is important is how supremely they tried.

The Switch Falls

Had the Second Battalion been successful in taking Bannholz, the other two battalions and the rest of the Division were to have launched further limited objective attacks in an attempt to inch through the Switch Line. Considering the extreme cost of these battalion attacks, it is perhaps fortunate that this project was abandoned after Bannholz. Instead of continuing the attack, the First and Third Battalions relieved the Second and Third Battalions, 301st Infantry on February 11th. The First Battalion took over Sinz and the Third set up defensive positions north of the Sinz-Bubingen Road. The battered Second Battalion went into Regimental reserve.

For the next week with the exception of February 15th, the 376th engaged in a watching, waiting war that made the older men think of the days at St. Nazaire. There were no attacks, only continuous patrols to probe the defenses in the series of woods which faced our front. The patrols reported dense mine fields and many booby traps. The Germans were determined to make the taking of the Switch as difficult as possible. To pave the way for future attacks, the Division utilized several long rage softening-up processes.

The chief of these was artillery and mortar fire. During this period the German defenders in Adenholz, Bannholz and Geisbusch Woods and in Thorn and Kreuzweiler received such concentrations of artillery as they had never known. Prisoners captured by Regiment kept asking to see the American "automatic artillery."

The Third Battalion harassed the enemy with the Phantom Platoon, which had been developed during the St. Nazaire operation. This was a group of headquarters personnel specially trained in the firing of the .50 calibre machine gun. Utilizing the guns normally assigned to the protection of kitchen trucks and jeeps, the Phantom Platoon gave the Battalion extra long range firepower. Firing usually in battery under the direction of the Compay M fire control center, the Platoon would set up directly behind the lines, firing over the heads of the riflemen in the foxholes. After several hundred rounds they would quickly change position to avoid enemy artillery.

To complete the softening-up process, the Regiment received its first real air support. Fighter Squadrons of the XIX Tactical Air Command sent their P-51's and P-47's to strafe and bomb. Getting their first close-up view of the USAAF at work, the doughboys of the 376th looked up and cheered as the planes swooped low overhead, then ducked as the empty cartridge cases from the planes' guns dropped about them.

The planes and artillery also showered the enemy with surrender leaflets and

U. S. Army Signal Corps

Chow time on the line—pause for K-rations during advance through Triangle.

safe conduct passes. These proved more and more effective as the days went by. Increasing numbers of deserters walked into the American lines. They were tired of defending the Saar-Moselle Triangle, which they considered a hopeless task. They were tired of fighting the rugged soldiers of the 94th Division, whom Axis Sally had dubbed "Roosevelt's Butchers." They said that many more of their comrades would desert if they could escape their officers. One of the deserters was a Catholic priest who had been forced to man a machine gun. He volunteered to broadcast to the Germans to give up the vain struggle. This broadcast reached the ears of Germans all along the line and was successful in bringing in many prisoners.

Living conditions in the foxholes were somewhat better than they had been during January. The cold was not quite so intense, and the snow had all melted. But it rained frequently, and soon every soldier had his own private bathtub with cold running water. However with the additional time and knowledge gained of experience, most every one was able to construct a liveable shelter of some sort. Several company command posts were housed in huts assembled by the engineers and A and P Platoons.

On February 15th the Second Battalion, 302th Infantry, attacked some pillboxes in Campholz Woods. As a diversionary action in conjunction with this attack, the 376th sent out several combat patrols and placed intense mortar fire on Bannholz and other fortified areas. The Third Battalion patrol contacted the enemy in Adenholz Woods and engaged in a brief fire fight. To support the patrol the Third Battalion sent one 57mm Anti-Tank Gun, one section of 81mm mortars, and part of its Phantom Platoon across the Moselle River to Remich. From this position they could deliver excellent enfilade fire on the German defenses.

After the terrific artillery and mortar barrages that accompanied the action on the 15th, the next few days seemed exceptionally quiet. But quiet as it was, something was in the air. There had been rumors that a coordinated division attack was in the offing. Even the GI's in the forward foxholes, who were not up on the latest word coming into Regiment and the battalion headquarters, knew that something big was afoot. The presence of the Tenth Armored Division was evidence of that. Bannholz Woods, Munzingen Ridge and the woods just south of Kreuzweiler were still full of Germans and would have to be cleaned before the Tenth could begin its drive to the north.

During the week Colonel McClune revealed the general plan of the coming attack to the battalion commanders in order to give them a chance to study the terrain and German dispositions in the area over which they would attack.

The 376th, as it had been all during the attack on the Switch, would be to the left of the other Regiments, with the 94th Reconnaissance troop on its left. In the Regimental zone the Third Battalion would have the left sector, and its attack would take it northward to Adenholz and Geisbusch Woods, just to the left of Bannholz. The Second Battalion would form the Regimental reserve until the other two battalions had jumped off and secured their objectives. It would then be prepared to move forward and take Kreuzweiler and Thorn with the help of the 94th Reconnaissance troop and the Division Defense Platoon. The First Battalion, which was on the right of the Regimental zone in Sinz, learned that its mission would be to tackle the dreaded Bannholz Woods, where the Second Battalion had come to grief the week before.

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Needless to say (as Colonel Miner tells it), intensive patrolling, both combat and reconnaissance was initiated to determine the strength and disposition of enemy forces within the woods, particularly the location of dug-in tanks and shu-mines. The information gained by these patrols, plus that obtained from prisoners, was extremely valuable in connection with plans for the projected attack. Maps, particularly photo-maps, were studied until all concerned were familiar with every terrain feature and every known enemy disposition. This was particularly important because it was known that the attack would be launched during the hours of darkness. Plans for coordination with attached tanks and tank destroyers were worked out in great detail. Continuous probing and penetration of enemy dispositions fairly well indicated that their main defensive strength was on the southern and eastern edges of the woods, with little defense in depth. Further, the enemy seemed to have no readily available counterattacking force.

It was therefore decided to risk an all-out attack with the whole Battalion, with special emphasis on speed, superiority of strength and rapid establishment of defensive positions once the objective had been gained. Plans called for Company "A" to attack west, rolling up the southern edge of the woods, Company "B" to attack north, striking at the eastern edge. Company "C" would follow "A" and, once having gained entrance to the woods, would turn to the right and sweep the interior to the northern edge. Two platoons of tanks and one platoon of self-propelled tank destroyers would closely follow "B" and "C", taking up previously designated defensive positions on the northern edge of the woods. The attack was rather unorthodox, but Bannholz was by no means an orthodox woods.

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On the 17th and 18th of February artillery continued to thunder furiously into Bannholz, Cannon Company and all available heavy mortars constributing their weight to the barrage. On several occasions five minute concentrations were fired by the artillery in an effort to deceive the enemy into thinking that an attack was about to be launched. This paid dividends, as by the time the attack actually did jump off many prisoners were captured still cowering in the bottoms of their fox holes.

It was 0400 on the morning of the 19th when the attack got under way and Companies A and C moved out of Sinz towards the objective. Ahead of them the darkness was constantly shattered by the lightning flashes of the artillery preparation. The flashes came not only from Bannholz, but all along the Division Line to the right and left where a total of 16 to 18 battalions of artillery were paving the way for other simultaneous attacks as well.

Captains Dadisman and Bowden agreed that their best plan was to advance on a narrow front, staying close to the road that ran northwest from Sinz into the woods. There were shu-mine fields on either side which they would undoubtedly run into in the dark if they spread out. Staying close together made it easier to keep contact too. The overcast sky, out of which a light drizzle of rain was falling, made it so dark between artillery flashes that it was impossible for the attackers to see more than a yard or two in front of them.

It was a strange feeling, moving forward into such stygian darkness with the ghosts of shell-blasted trees outlined only where they were silhouetted against a faintly lighter colored sky, their bases, among which everyone knew the enemy crouched in waiting, completely enveloped in darkness. It is hard to remember at such times that the enemy can see no better in the dark.

As the two lead-off companies entered the woods, the bright spears of their tracers leaping into the darkness ahead, there was surprisingly little response from the defenders, and the main problem was keeping contact with the men beside you and not mistaking them for lurking enemies.

As "A" and "B" proceeded on their mission within the woods, and Company C followed up behind them it began to get faintly lighter in the woods and groups of German soldiers began to appear out of nowhere, their hands raised in surrender. Apparently they too had been awed by the utter darkness, and had chosen not to give away their positions by firing on the unseen attackers as they advanced. Now, by-passed, they realized they were doomed and gave up cheerfully. Behind the infantrymen the supporting tanks had crashed their way into the woods. Their guns were ready, but there was no need for them. For the Germans the mere sight of the tanks was the last straw, and by 0815 the long-contested woods were at last in American hands. There had actually been very slight opposition other than mortar fire and some 20 and 40mm shells which had burst in the tops of the trees. Even the shu-mines along the edges of the woods had caused surprisingly few casualties.

During the morning the three companies worked to set up their defensive positions in the woods which were still being harried by the mortars and some artillery.

They were determined that, now the woods had at last been taken, no counterattack, however strong, would dislodge them from any portion of the ground that twice before had been assaulted at the cost of so many lives.

At 1200 Colonel Miner called the commanders of "A" and "B" together and, in the lee of a knocked-out tank, oriented them on their next task. This was to be another attack, this time to the east, which would jump off at 1300 that same day. Objective for the battalion this time was the northern portion of Munsingen Ridge, separated from Bannholz by more than a mile of completely open ground. For this second attack Company A, on the right, would take Der Langen Woods on top of the ridge. Company B, on the left, would have for its objective "Hill 399" which was the northernmost hump of the ridge. Company C would remain in Bannholz and act as Battalion reserve. Once again the two platoons from Company A of the 704th Tank Battalion which had followed them into Bannholz, would be attached.

This second phase of the attack would tie in with the attack the 301st, on the Regiment's right, was making on the southern half of the ridge, taking Das Lee Woods.

The attack jumped off on time with the smoke, provided by Cannon Company to screen them as they moved across the open, proving fairly effective at first. The attackers, who had looked with some misgivings on the coverless ground over which they were to advance, proceeded with little difficulty, receiving far less fire than they had expected. The attack was not once halted until they reached the point where Cannon Company had to lift their smoke barrage. As the last of the smoke thinned and drifted away, the leading elements of "B's" Second Platoon were finally pinned by machine gun fire; but not for long.

Tech Sergeant James Lee, seizing a BAR, managed to crawl to a vantage point on the flank of the machine gun positions. With a few well-placed bursts he knocked out two of the guns, killing six of their crews. After this the attackers continued on up the slopes towards their objectives. From there on it was not easy going for the infantry, but still was not as formidable a task as the men had expected. It was the tanks that were hardest hit. They had got under way slowly, never, during the entire attack, catching up to the foot troops. Climbing the hill they had swung too far to the left, and had advanced on top of instead of in the lee of the slight rise in the ground which was to serve as a means of screening their left flank. As a result they soon came under fire from a high velocity gun somewhere to the left. Before the attack had reached the top of the hill three of them had been knocked out.

When the two forward companies reached the crest of the hill they met with unexpectedly light resistance. Company A moved into Der Langen woods with little

difficulty, taking twenty prisoners and three tracked vehicles. Meanwhile "B" had mopped up the northern nose of the ridge, capturing the gun that had wrought such havoc on the supporting tanks, as well as a number of machine gun positions.

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It was a very great thrill for the whole Battalion to be on that hill (aside from the artillery and mortar fire we were still receiving). The northern half of Munsingen Ridge which had caused us so much trouble during the last few weeks was finally ours. Looking north from the crest as far as you could see we were looking down on enemy held ground. For a while we felt as though we had won the war right then and there.

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But this was no limited battalion attack such as had exhausted the Regiment for more than a month previous. Elements of the entire Division were moving in a coordinated drive. On the Regimental front, as the First took its first objective, the Third Battalion was advancing against Adenholz and Geisbusch Woods.

The Third's attack was made by Companies L and K with the weapons of Company M and the tanks of the First Platoon, Company A, 778 Tank Battalion in support. Company I remained in reserve to protect the Battalion's LD.

Patrols during the preceding week had discovered extensive mine fields and booby traps in the woods that were to be attacked. Engineers accompanied the advance scouts, clearing a path through the mines and marking the route with tape, Not knowing exactly what they would meet in the way of resistance, the attackers pressed forward aggressively but cautiously. Adenholz had been heavily defended, but there were indications that the Germans had begun to withdraw from their positions. Slowly but surely, as the Third Battalion advanced through the various phase lines, it became apparent that these indications were correct. The mine fields continued to be heavy and were usually covered by at least one machine gun position, but the defenders were few in number. The phase lines were named for coin denominations. The movement from penny to nickle to dime was slow. After that the tempo increased and by 1124 the Battalion struck the 'gold' of the final objective. Adenholz and Geisbusch were completely cleared.

During the afternoon of the 19th, the First and Third Battalions prepared defensive positions in the newly-won territory. For a short period, Company E was moved into the line to fill the gap between the two battalions. When the First and Third extended their lines, Company E withdrew and rejoined the Second Battalion which was moving to Wies in preparation for an attack the next day.

At 1800 on February 19th, Combat Team 376 was detached from the 94th Division and attached to the 10th Armored Division. This was an official indication that

the Switch had cracked. An opening had been made for the armor. Soon the 376th would be following the tanks through the Triangle, cleaning out what pockets remained.

One more strong point remained to be overcome in the Regimental zone. This was the roadnet around Thorn and Kreuzweiler. The job was given to the Second Battalion and the 94th Reconnaisance Troop. Thorn put up only a token show of resistance and was captured by the cavalrymen in less than an hour. Kreuzweiler proved a more difficult proposition. A first-hand account of the attack is given by Captain Frederick Standish, then commander of Company F.

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The LD was the edge of a deep draw to the south of the town, just east of the Thorn-Sinz road. With Co's F and G leading, the attack left the LD at 0600, and led across an open field toward the woods immediately south of the town. Following an artillery barrage on the edge of the woods, which lit up the field with a cold white light in flashes, the foot troops advanced at a slow run, protected on both flanks of the narrow attacking column by heavy machine guns of Co H. Just inside the edge of the woods, the men who were new to combat, some 120 in all in the two advance companies, momentarily froze. The plan of attack called for a marching fire operation to carve a swath through the woods, and probably the intense bedlam of noise caused the men fear. However, this was but a momentary reaction, and again the columns swept forward, literally tearing the trees and undergrowth to shreds by a continual hail of fire. It was impossible during the advance to give orders, or signal, or do anything but shoot and run forward. Almost before anyone knew it, the far edge of the woods was reached, and then it became apparent that it would be quite a task to actually find the town of Kreuzweiler. Fog and smoke had obliterated any trace of civilization. But Capt. Dodson and Capt. Standish agreed that the column had swung too far to the west to be directly opposite the town, and both F and G had to move to their right in order to get a straight shot at the village. As soon as the fog and smoke cleared, the companies entered the town, and cleared it, but even before the last houses had been searched, a task force of the 10th Armored Division rolled through town. Tanks, half tracks, two-and-a-half's and even jeeps. Strangely enough, while snipers were still shooting down the streets, there appeared the Armored Division Commander, in his jeep, followed by the Corps Commander in his, followed by another general in his. Surely now the Siegfried Switch had been cracked, and the whole XX Corps would pour through.

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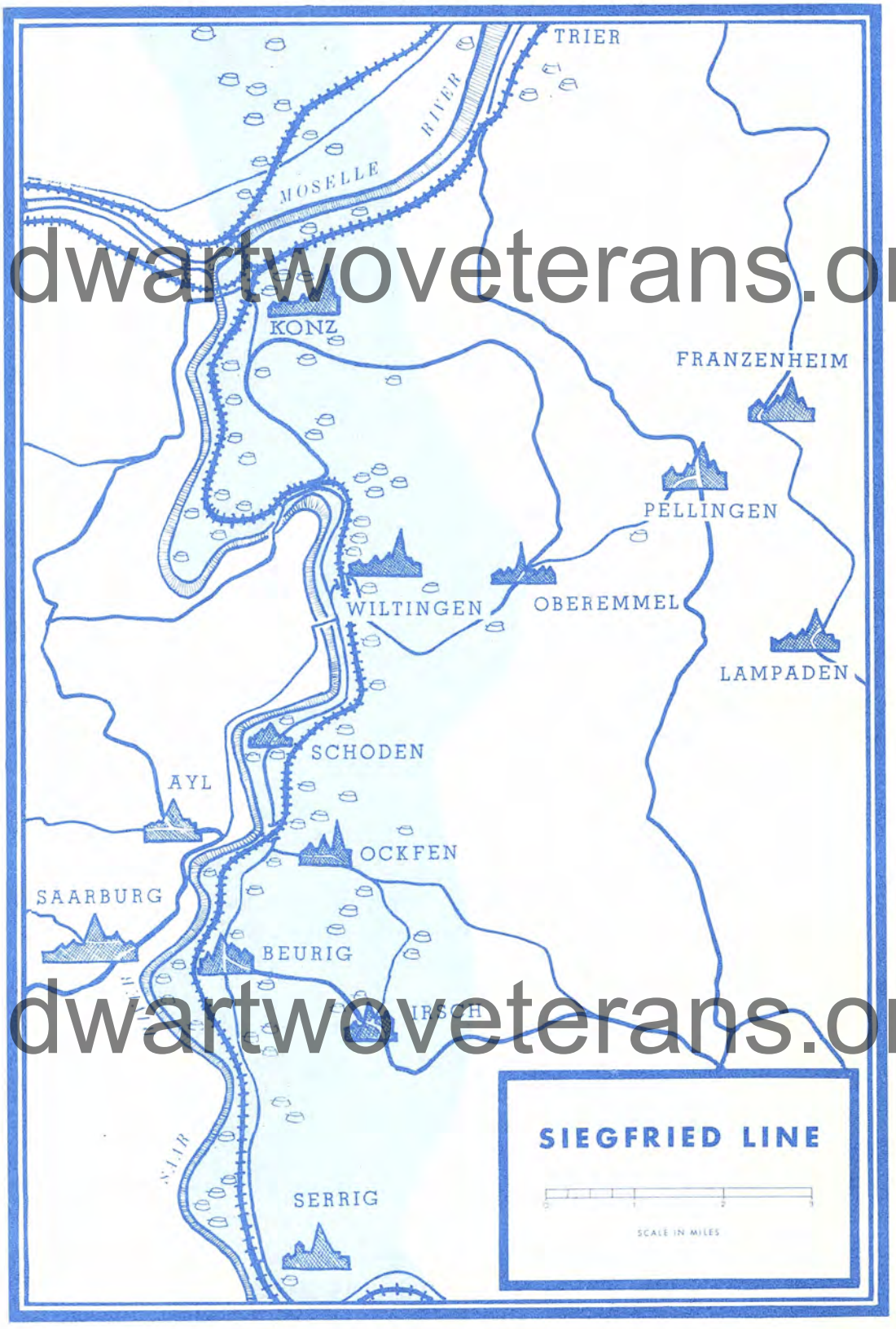
With the fall of Kreuzweiler, there was nothing left of the Switch Line. After weeks of cruel struggle, the stubborn line had bent and then cracked. By the evening of the 20th tanks of the 10th Armored were already far into the Triangle.

CHAPTER VI Over the Saar

Preparations

It had all happened very suddenly. One day it was a war of waiting; of heartbreaking and inching progress through resilient defenses that gave grudgingly, sometimes only a few hundred yards at a time, only to loom as formidable as ever at the next objective. It had been a process of painfully hewing chips from the stubborn block of the defenders' might, all in weather that in itself was a fearsome antagonist. The next day it was a war of movement so precipitous that courier jeep drivers coming up from Division Rear were often completely at a loss. They would arrive in a town where the Regimental CP had been a few hours before, only to find the town deserted except for a few GI's who could only explain vaguely with a wave of the hand that Regiment was now "up that way somewhere."

This sudden change from almost static warfare to pell-mell advance, the speed of which was greater than even Third Army Headquarters had expected, was due mainly to two things. First of all it was the result of the enemy's protracted stand west of the Saar. The Germans, rather than fall back across the Saar with the forces that remained to them after the battering they received at Tettingen, Butzdorf, Nen-



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nig and Sinz, chose to hold their triangle positions to the bitter end. By the time Kreuzweiler had fallen on the morning of February 19th, the bitter end had practically come, and their forces were so depleted that further effective resistance west of the Saar was impossible. The other factor was the 10th Armored Division, to which the 376th Infantry had been attached on February 16th. Once Kreuzweiler was taken, the tanks had an opening, and they poured through it to the north.

An armored division does not operate like the Infantry. The purpose of the foot-soldier divisions is to strike a whole objective and pulverize it so that, in their wake, nothing of the enemy is left. It is the job of the Infantry to finish whatever target they strike. What the tankers have that the Infantry does not is speed and maneuverability. Using these assets, their task is to split rather than annihilate. Their attacks are sword thrusts, deep into the heart of the enemy, that divide him, but leave him, like two wriggling halves of a severed worm, still functioning on either side. The Infantry must follow in the wake of these thrusts and finish off the pieces.

This is the basic theory of Armor-Infantry teamwork, a combination that was continually to prove its effectiveness in the days following the establishment of the bridgehead when the 376th moved north toward Trier, mopping up what remained of the enemy after the tanks had cut him off.

On the west side of the Saar, in the Triangle, the 10th Armored ran northeastward from Kreuzweiler to Mannebach, blasting the lifelines of the Germans still clinging to Wincheringen and Bilzingen. As a result these towns were occupied by the 376th with comparative ease. After this with ever-increasing momentum, the Regiment swung eastwards towards Mannebach, last town in its path before reaching Ayl, near the banks of the Saar.

The Second Battalion had taken Kreuzweiler, and together with the Third Battalion, they had moved from there northward and eastward in the wake of the 10th Armored, meeting with no opposition as formidable as that they had encountered during the early stages of the attack on the Switch. The taking of Wincheringen, Bilzingen, and other small towns in the armor's path was accomplished so quickly it could be classed as little more than a series of mopping up operations.

But the phrase "mopping up" is often misleading. It suggests as painless and routine an operation as advancing a flag on a battle map. In reality it is seldom quite so simple. When an armored division moves through a town it seldom has time to do more than shoot up the main street, knock out any enemy armor or vehicles that impede its progress, and hurl a few point-blank rounds at windows, cellars and other places where weapons covering their route are likely to be loca-

ted. Any room, any side street, cellar or wall can conceal men and weapons that did not choose to show themselves, or were not chosen as targets by the passing tanks. These are left behind intact and must be "mopped up" by the following Infantry. It is often no less hazardous for a foot-soldier to move into a town that has not been finally cleared, than it is to assault a town as yet untouched by armor.

Two days after the attack on Kreuzweiler had succeeded in ending resistance there, the Second and Third Battalions arrived in Mannebach from the west, and the First Battalion by truck from Nennig. During this time from the 19th to the 21st of February, a total distance of 23 miles had been covered, 16 towns had been cleared, 311 prisoners taken and about 25 Germans killed. Losses of the 376th were 176 battle and 34 non-battle casualties.

It was a curious situation that day, with Combat Team Headquarters actually for a time operating in front of the three battalions. The first of the Regimental Command group had arrived in Mannebach at 1141, while advance elements of the Second and Third Battalions, that had reached their objectives in Wincheringen and Bilzingen at 1215, did not arrive until the middle of the afternoon. The First Battalion, which had remained in its original position since the push to the Saar had opened up two days before, had entrucked at Nennig and did not catch up with the Regiment until 1730. Cannon Company, forever on the move during the last two days, arrived with the 919th Artillery sometime after midnight.

In the midst of all this confusion, Colonel McClune had received his initial order to cross the Saar River and establish a bridgehead on the eastern bank. His first action from his new Command Post in Mannebach was to send for the battalion commanders, who at that time, were spread all over the map. But they were all located eventually, and gathered together to hear the order that night.

The Command Post was in a small, low-ceilinged ground floor room of one of the houses on the main street. There was, of course, no electricity, and the room was lighted only by a pair of gasoline lanterns. It was crowded and heavy with smoke that hung like a fog in the dim yellow light of the lanterns. Present were Colonel McClune with his staff and liaison officers; communications men who already had their radio set up; the three battalion commanders with their operations officers; and representatives of supporting artillery. There were also representatives of the engineers, cavalry, medics, and others.

The mission was simple: the 376th Combat Team would cross the Saar River in the vicinity of Ayl and establish a bridgehead across the river at Ockfen. Time of the crossing would be 0400 the following morning.

The order completed, there was the usual buzz of questions, and the representa-

tives of the different battalions and units broke into smaller groups discussing their own particular phases of the necessary coordination. Finally the meeting broke up, and everyone groped his way through the blackness outside to his waiting jeep.

That evening the Third Battalion, that arrived in Mannebach earlier in the afternoon after marching all the way from Adenholz Woods, virtually without opposition, was lined up for chow. According to usual custom when messing in German towns, there were few messkits—everyone had found himself a plate of some description. Just as the line had started to move through, the word came down that the battalion was moving out. The area was full of smashed plates as the men from the company mess-lines moved in to pick up their packs and get ready.

Not long after, the Regiment was moving out to clear the woods southeast of Mannebach. There was no opposition in the woods, and finally the order came to dig in and wait there—that the Regiment would be crossing the river at 0400 in the morning. This was the first the men had heard of the crossing.

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It was obvious that for the crossing itself, the Regimental CP would have to be in Ayl. It was getting on towards midnight now, and the crossing was to start at 0400. Something would have to be done about reconnoitering the place right away, and Col. McClune decided he might as well do it as anyone else. Besides it would be a good chance to study the lay of the land around the crossing site.

Only his driver came with him in the jeep as he moved eastward in the darkness over the winding road. It was not long before the two were descending the final curve down the last steep part of the hill just at the edge of Ayl.

The town was quiet in the moonlight. No noise or movement came from the deep shadow-masses of the streets. Only sign that there was any life at all in the town was a small group of silhouetted figures just ahead of the jeep where the road passed the first houses.

"Probably some of the engineers," the Colonel thought, and told his driver to slow down. As they approached he leaned out, expecting the familiar hushed command to "Halt!" But it didn't come. The men, it turned out, were not the engineers. The silhouette of their helmets showed quite distinctly they were Germans—somewhat surprised ones, who, not expecting any American troops along that way just then, did not happen to have their weapons in their hands.

The Colonel and his driver executed a discreet withdrawal and got back without mishap. But it was evident that Ayl was not quite ready to be reconnoitered for a Command Post.

By midnight the Third Battalion was on its way again, moving northeast towards Ayl, which by this time had been cleared by some armored infantry from the 10th Armored Division. At almost the same time the First Battalion was moving from Mannebach straight across to the river at Ayl. Both arrived in the early hours of the morning to find the armored infantry still in possession, their outlook on life somewhat improved as a result of the well-stocked condition of some of the town's wine cellars.

But it was getting on towards 0400 and nobody seemed to be doing much about preparing for the crossing. To the men who had just arrived, the reason soon became apparent. There were no boats. The engineers had been supposed to have them at the crossing site in time for the operation, but something had apparently gone wrong. First Lieutenant Jess L. Long, Regimental Liaison Officer, was sent off to find out what the trouble was, and there was nothing for the men to do but turn in and await developments.

The Crossing

The dawn of February 22nd revealed a thick and heavy fog. The upper branches of the pines on the west bank swayed a little in the cool wind. It was deceptively quiet. The days of war's climaxes often are. The Saar that morning looked more like a piece of Connecticut landscape than an approach to the Siegfried Line.

There was actually no front line. The First and Third Battalions in Ayl were catching up on their sleep and awaiting further orders. The Second Battalion was still in Mannebach. Service Company was operating from Nieder, further to the southwest, and Cannon Company was digging in its new positions near Ayl.

In the town of Ayl it was surprisingly quiet. All during the morning there was no artillery at all, and even on the open flats between Ayl and the river where groups of engineers moved back and forth hauling boats and making other preparations for the crossing, there was only spasmodic firing. By midmorning, after the fog had lifted, the enemy had perfect observation on both the river bank and the town itself from the higher east bank and, in spite of the smoke generators, could have been fairly sure of doing some damage with any kind of an artillery concentration. But the east bank was apparently lightly occupied.

The town was a bustle of confusion, crowded with soldiers and vehicles of all descriptions. Tanks rattled up the streets and were spotted all through the town. Trucks carrying boats rumbled through the streets and squads of mud-covered engineers passed continually on their way to and from the river bank.

At 1300 half a dozen jeeps and a radio truck pulled into town from the west, bearing the Regimental Command Post party. Hardly were they unloaded when the message center crew had hung out its shingle and begun functioning in a nearby cellar. Radio and wire crews rushed about setting up switchboards and radio stations. It was Colonel McClune's policy to keep his Command Post as far forward as possible. Ayl, which he had attempted to reconnoiter literally under the noses of the enemy the night before, had been chosen because it was situated right on what was to be the point of departure for the crossing.

The 376th, being still a task force under the 10th Armored Division, would receive its new orders for the crossing from the 10th's Commanding General, whose headquarters were next door to Colonel McClune's in Ayl. The 10th Armored in turn was waiting to receive orders from General Patton.

At 1625 on the afternoon of the 22nd the order finally came through. Short and to the point, since the details were already known, the gist of the message was merely "attack at once."

Cannon Company howitzer near Mannebach on February 21st. Many missions were fired from this position during the crossing of the Saar River.

In more detail the plan of the attack as it had been outlined the night before was that the initial crossing was to be made by the First and Third Battalions. The Third was to cross directly east of Ayl with their initial objective the steep bluffs rising above the river just to the north of the town of Ockfen. The First was to cross the river several hundred yards upstream taking the high ground south of Ockfen. This high ground was a gradually sloping, flat-topped hill liberally sprinkled with pillboxes. The top of this hill would be the Battalion's initial objective. Once these two objectives were secured, the town of Ockfen would be flanked on both sides. At this point the Second Battalion was to cross the river in the footsteps of the Third and swing around the southern edge of the bluffs, capturing the town itself. As soon as it had done this, and had tied in with the battalions on either side, the flank battalions, the First and Third, were to move on to their assigned sectors of the Regimental objective which was a hill 1500 yards to the east of Ockfen. By the time this objective was secure the Regimental bridgehead would be firmly established with its perimeter on the commanding ground which all but encircled the valley in which Ockfen lay. By this time the engineers were to have constructed a bridge across the river between Ayl and Ockfen over which the 10th Armored would effect its crossing. The tanks, once across, would fan out eastward and north towards the towns of Schoden and Wiltingen.

Companies L and C were to point the attack for the two lead-off battalions, "L" to

the north and "C" to the south of the road leading from Ayl across 1500 yards of open ground to the river.

At 1630 the two companies moved out. Behind them the other companies of the two battalions lined up and prepared to follow. But things were no longer as quiet as they had been earlier in the day. The Germans, at last startled out of their lethargy, were making it so hot for the chemical troops with their machine guns that it was almost impossible for them to get to their smoke generators when they were damaged or ran out of fuel. The result was that the protecting screen failed and the Germans caught the oncoming companies moving across the open. Companies L and C had got half way to the river when they were stopped by machine gun fire from pillboxes on the opposite shore.

"L", with no more cover available than the sparce trees of an orchard, was pinned down almost immediately. Company C was at first also pinned down, but it had cover in the form of a deep ditch to its front and finally managed to reach it in short, frenzied dashes. By crawling up the ditch the men of "C" got to within two hundred yards of the river. At this point, however, the ditch no longer offered protection.

Meanwhile Colonel McClune had proceeded to the flats below Ayl with his driver, Corporal John R. Hills, and his radio operator, Technician Fourth Grade Richard J. Scheibner, with the intention of personally observing and directing the river crossing. By personally observing and directing Colonel McClune meant just that. In a hail of machine gun fire he moved about on the coverless flats, personally encouraging and urging on the forward elements of the attacking companies to renewed efforts to achieve the crossing.

But it was all to no avail. Company L was pinned down in the open and its casualties were rapidly mounting. One of the casualties was Captain Brightman, the company commander, who had been killed by one of the first bursts. Company C was pinned in its ditch, and the Company Commander, Lieutenant Cornelius, was wounded. It was clear that until darkness at least it would be useless and far too costly to attempt any further advance towards the river. It was, in fact, necessary to wait until darkness even to get a number of the men back from their exposed positions on the flats. This had been the second attempt to cross the river. This time the boats had been ready, but the men had been unable to reach them, and many of the boats had been badly damaged by machine gun fire. There was nothing to do but postpone the crossing again; this time until 2300 that same evening. Most of the men took advantage of the pause for a bit of rest.

At 2300 Company C again led off for the First Battalion. This time, though the

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company moved forward over the same route, it was protected by darkness and the going was somewhat easier. But not a great deal easier. Tracers danced around the men like fireflies as they double-timed across the orchard on the way from Ayl to the river. Artillery flashed menacingly around them as they dragged the heavy assault boats to the water's edge. But this time Company C got to the river.

At this time Colonel McClune, again directing the attack from the bank of the river, was seriously wounded by shrapnel in both legs, and was evacuated by his radio operator and driver. Scheibner, the radio operator, reported back to the command post that the Regimental Commander had been hit, and Lieutenant Colonel Raynor E. Anderson then assumed command of the Task Force.

Getting the boats in the water was only the beginning. As they rowed across, the inevitable machine guns opened up again, laying a veritable screen of fire around them, fortunately not too accurate in the darkness. Several yards from the far bank the boats began to get hung up on partially submerged barbed wire. It was useless to try to force them the rest of the way ashore in the darkness with bullets still splashing on every side. The only alternative was to scramble out of the boats and wade ashore, stumbling over the tangles of wire.

For the first few minutes after landing in this fashion the first boatloads of Company C were completely disorganized. But order was soon established, and Lieutenant Chalkley, now company commander and the only officer left with the Company, reorganized the men into platoon groups. The Company was to advance to the top of a steep hill directly to its front and secure the right half of the Battalion's initial objective. Second Lieutenant Tom D. Huthnance, a sergeant at the time, describes the ensuing action:

Lt. Chalkley led the Third Platoon straight up the side of the hill, knocking out one pillbox which was camouflaged to look like part of the road bank. A third of the way up they landed in a Jerry communications trench. The enemy was throwing hand grenades and machine pistol fire into the trench to such an extent that they were pinned down and forced to remain there for the rest of the night. Here Sergeant Orville Strong, our Communications Sergeant, was killed by a potato masher, and Lt. Chalkley was struck by a fragment from a grenade, leaving the company temporarily without an officer.

Meanwhile the Second Platoon, losing contact with the Third, had dug in in a vineyard with part of the First. One squad of the First Platoon, under S/Sgt Harold Price, was engaging a pillbox by the railroad tracks which ran next to the river. This box was made up to look like a shack. It had a mortar in the top, and the embrasures through which the mortar fired were very rusty and screeched every time they opened up. It was well defended and Sergeant Price's platoon was unable to crack it. It fell eventually to Company A.

The other Companies in the battalion were crossing the river meanwhile, and were not having any easier a time than we had had. Many of the boats that followed us were strafed by machine gun fire and even destroyed by artillery. Some of the men were blown into the water and carried downstream to a wrecked bridge.

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Behind "C" the first boatloads of Company B had effected their landing. But the boat situation was getting critical. By the time two thirds of the Company had got across all available boats at the First Battalion's crossing site had been either destroyed by artillery or lost. The engineers who had been manning them were nowhere to be found. Word had been received that more boats were on the way, but in the meantime Company A and those of "B" who were still on the friendly side of the river were being mercilessly pounded by mortars and artillery.

The promised boats did not show up, and finally it was learned that the Second Battalion had completed its crossing of the river further downstream where the Third Battalion had crossed earlier. There were plenty of boats there since no artillery had been falling at that point, so Colonel Miner and Captain Dadisman quickly moved the remainder of the men up along the river to find them. There, just as the other two battalions had, the remainder of the First was able to cross with no opposition, but it was nearly dawn before physical contact was made with the rest of the battalion.

As soon as the whole battalion was together on the far shore, Colonel Miner placed Captain Frank Malinski in Command of Company C and preparations were hurriedly made for the resumption of the attack.

For the moment it was ominously quiet in the battalion zone. There was no sound except for the occasional whine of stray machine gun bullets and the thud of shells still landing across the river at the point where Company C had originally crossed. A heavy fog was settling in the waning darkness, shrouding the flat-topped hill which was the battalion objective.

At 0730 the eastward advance up the hill was resumed, this time with two companies, "B" on the left and "C" on the right. Company A remained in reserve on the reverse slope of the hill along the river. It was a strange feeling moving forward in the fog and not knowing how or when the enemy would be encountered. But the top of the hill was gained at last, and the advance continued across the long flat top. The Company had gone about 500 yards when it was halted by grazing fire from machine guns somewhere in the fog to the front, and forced to dig in. Patrols were immediately sent out to locate the source of the firing, but the fog soon lifted and revealed the answer.

The firing came from four huge, mutually supporting pillboxes about 400 yards in front of them to the east. Situated on the flat top of the hill these boxes were so located that their guns had grazing fire over the entire open space over which the advancing companies would have to move. To reduce them some form of heavy, flat trajectory fire would have to be brought to bear, and this kind of fire would not be available until the Engineers had completed their bridge and permitted the armor to get across.

And the engineers were having difficulties. Pillboxes along the river to the right and rear of the attacking companies were beginning to shower the bridge site with heavy machine gun fire. One of these guns was so close to the battalion's right rear that the armored artillery across the river refused to fire at it for safety reasons, and it was left for the 919th to knock it out with rounds that landed 100 yards to the rear of the battalion OP which was just at the crest of the hill. Because of this continuous fire on the proposed bridge site, the crossing plans had to be altered to the extent that the First Battalion, instead of continuing its battalion drive to the east to take its original objective, was to strike south along the river towards Beurig. Meanwhile, since fire was being received at the bridge site from the north as well, a company from the Armored Infantry was sent across the river with the purpose of striking at Schoden.

The new attack was initiated on the morning of the 24th by Company A while Companies B and C protected the left flank, still facing towards their original objective. Company A found themselves faced with a task of staggering proportions. There were pillboxes all along the railroad track down which they advanced, and many more on the higher ground to the east, the guns of which fired continually in the general direction of the attackers, whether they saw anybody or not. But the men of the Company had not forgotten what they had learned at La Gacilly in Brittany about assaulting pillboxes and by dark of that day their aggressive assaults, backed by flame-thrower teams, had silenced eight pillboxes and captured 100 supermen who seemed to have lost some of their assurance and fanaticism.

But eight pillboxes were a mere drop in an ominously large bucket. As fast as they had cleared one box there seemed to be two more in front of them and still they were constantly harassed by others to their flanks. Their casualties were not heavy at any one time, but over a long period of time under such fire as they were steadily receiving, they mounted up. It was obvious that for all its aggressiveness and determination, "A's" attack would soon be stalled without assistance. So Colonel Miner relieved Company B from its mission of protecting the eastward flank, leaving that job to "C" which had been badly shot up in the initial crossing. Thereupon Com-

pany B pulled out and swung south on the heels of "A", then struck out to the southeast to locate the pillboxes on the flat open ground northeast of Beurig that were giving so much trouble on the left flank of Company A. This action took place on the night of the 25th.

In spite of the darkness, which made locating the source of the firing that was coming in on them almost impossible, the platoons of Company B commanded by First Lieutenant Carl A. Crouse, First Lieutenant William G. Land, and Tech Sergeant Gerald T. Hayes, managed to locate a number of pillboxes and adjust 155 and 90mm artillery on several of them, capturing one after a bitter struggle. Even with two companies working side by side it was a heartbreaking and seemingly impossible task that lay before them. The battalion had established its bridgehead, but after three days of furious close-in fighting to wrest the enemy from his concrete strongholds, it still held only a narrow strip along the river and not more than half of its original objective. And still there was no bridge and no armor.

At 2300 on February 22nd, just as the First Battalion was hurrying towards the boats at its crossing site, the Third Battalion set out for one several hundred yards downstream. Company I, commanded by First Lieutenant William R. Jacques, had taken the lead position in place of "L" which had been so severely mauled during the crossing attempt that afternoon. The attack led over the same ground as the earlier attempt, but this time the attackers ran into no machine gun fire and, as far as anybody could tell, no artillery. Friendly artillery, laying down a preparation on the opposite bank of the river, and the muzzle blasts of the TD guns on the hill behind firing overhead, made so much noise it was impossible at times to tell which way the shells were going.

Company I reached the river safely and began to load on the boats which this time were waiting and undamaged by artillery. The boats were typical engineer assault boats, plywood, flat-bottomed dories about 20 feet long, which held a maximum of about 12 men. The average load for the Saar crossing was ten infantrymen and two engineers. Each man was supplied with a paddle, very like a canoe paddle. The boats were steered by one of the engineers from the stern.

Still under heavy smoke — there was too much moonlight to have crossed even in the darkness without it — Company I got across the river, still with no casualties and no opposition. Three-quarters of the Company went over in the first wave, and the remainder were picked up and taken over on the next trip.

The far shore of the river formed a steep bank that rose to a height of nearly 400 feet. Atop this bluff was the dense undergrowth of Irminer Wald, a finger of which ran down the bank at the point of crossing, almost to the water's edge. Still with no

opposition, Company I began to move single file up the steep slopes of the hill. Half way up the first German sentries were encountered, but they were taken by surprise and still no shots were fired. These sentries were the first prisoners taken by the 376th on the east bank of the Saar.

At the top of the bluff were artillery emplacements. Private First Class Leo F. Carignan, who, with a four man patrol was the lead-off man of the company, was the first to come upon them—a battery of 75mm mountain guns, manned by 12 men. Carignan motioned the column to halt and had his men cover him as he advanced. The surprise was complete, and it was not long before he had 12 very astonished prisoners. A messenger was also captured, bearing an order for the guns to lay a concentration on the Regiment's rear area. Thanks to Carignan the guns were in no condition to carry out any such order, and as a result many lives were undoubtedly saved.

Meanwhile First Lieutenant Cecil G. Dansby's First Platoon, which was bringing up the rear of Company I, ran into some spasmodic firing from by-passed pillboxes on the slopes of the hill. Companies K and L, following "I" across the river and up the hill, met with some resistance from the same pillboxes, but reached their objectives easily nonetheless. In the early hours of the morning all three companies, with their attached heavy weapons from Company M, were digging in on top of the hill.

For the Third Battalion its initial objective had been almost a dry run. Shots had been fired, but there had been few casualties and no resistance of a sort that held it up more than momentarily. The way seemed clear to move on to the Regimental objective. Accordingly, during the afternoon of the 23rd, the battalion set out along the knife-like crest of the ridge that ran back from the bluffs it was occupying almost to the hill designated as the Regimental objective. The crest was wooded and the men moved in single file most of the way, as there was hardly room on top of the ridge for a wider formation. The column was a long finger pointing into enemy territory with no way of knowing what it would run into from one moment to the next. The enemy dispositions on its left flank at least were a totally unknown quantity.

However, other than one lightly occupied pillbox, which was taken single handed by Private First Class Ralph W. Porche of Company I, the battalion encountered little opposition and reached its objective virtually unopposed. But its position on arrival was not very promising.

If the other two battalions had met with as little resistance as the Third and had been able to continue their advance to the Regimental objective, the Third's position would have been secure. But it had not worked out that way. The First had been able to advance only southward and the Second had been held up in the vici-

nity of Ockfen. This left the Third in sole possession of the final objective. It also left it virtually surrounded. The advance to the objective had been unopposed, not because there were no enemy in the vicinity, but because the enemy had not seen it and did not know it was there. Hence the Third's advance had amounted to an infiltration which had cut no swath through the enemy positions. The enemy, alerted behind the Battalion as it passed, closed in behind and effectively cut it off. The result was that though it had succeeded in taking both its battalion objective, and its sector of the final objective, doing so had placed it in a position where, for the moment, it was of little use to the rest of the Regiment.

Fortunately the Germans did not have the manpower to attack the Third while it was in such a vulnerable position. What they did succeed in doing, however, was infiltrating between Company K and I, setting up a machine gun which, until Captain Ralph T. Brown, commander of Company K, personally silenced it by knocking out the crew with his M1, had cut them off from the rest of the Regiment.

Aside from such incidents as this, and the light but constant artillery fire that harassed the men dug in on top of the hill, their position was not critical except from the standpoint of supply. Since it was extremely difficult to bring up food by land, it would be more advantageous to send it by air. For this job the Regiment borrowed 20 piper cubs from the artillery. The cubs flew low over the battalion's positions, dropping over a thousand pounds of rations, batteries and much needed clean socks. In spite of the two ME 109's that went after them, the cubs' "bombing" was extremely accurate, and more than 75 per cent of what they dropped fell where it could be found and used. No one in the Third Battalion likes to think of what the next three days of isolation would have been like if it had not been for the planes.

The Second Battalion, striking directly at Ockfen, crossed with little incident, except for prearranged enemy artillery which fell on "E" before they reached the river. After the inevitable reorganization, Company F led off in column in an effort to find the town in spite of the darkness, fog and smoke. Companies F and E were scheduled to do the actual taking of the town, while Company G took the reserve position on the side of the steep hill to the north of Ockfen which had been the Third Battalion's initial objective. The route to Ockfen led up the railroad track, through an under pass, then east across open ground towards the town which was situated on the flats between the Third Battalion's hill just to the north, and the hill to the south which was the objective of the First Battalion.

Outside of Ockfen Company F halted for some two hours in the early morning, and was joined by Company E and the two heavy machine gun platoons of Com-

pany H. Other than the capture of a few surprised Germans, nothing happened until dawn except for the two machine gun platoons taking the wrong road at the underpass. As one of the gunners put it later:

We weren't sure whether someone was shooting at us or if we were doing the shooting. It was so dark you couldn't see more than fifteen feet in front of your face, and you had to part the smoke with your hands to walk through it. All of a sudden the man in front of me stopped and everybody bumped into the guy in front of him. Before I could ask what was up it sounded like somebody was firing a half a dozen burp guns in my ear, and I fell on my face. Then a pillbox on our right opened up, but it was firing over our heads. Then silence... for an eternity it seemed. Nerves on edge because no one knew what was happening. Finally Lt. Stephen O'Connor told us to move back to the underpass, where we found out that Captain Smith, the Company Commander, had finally had a chance to use his tommy gun. The Captain was leading the column and it seems there were some Germans on the road that were foolish enough to challenge with the only German words the captain knew. He talked back with a whole clip of thirty. It did the work. "Das war alles."

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Just at daybreak the leading elements entered the town itself after a cautious approach over 400 yards of flat marshland flanked on both sides by the steep hills that loomed menacingly in the smoky darkness. The men knew that Captain Dodson had taken Company G up on the hill to the left front of the Third Battalion. They felt that flank was secure. They had heard however that the First Battalion was hard hit crossing the river and had not succeeded in completely taking the hill that was its objective. This left the right flank of the Second somewhat unprotected, but as it turned out trouble did not come from either flank.

By the time the leading platoon of Company E and the first two platoons of Company F were in possession of the first five buildings in Ockfen, enemy tanks and infantry were counterattacking from the east. The smoke was so heavy and there was so much noise it was hard to say how many tanks there were, but there must have been at least four. The bazookamen couldn't see and the tanks were firing point blank at the few houses into which Companies E and F were crowded, so there was nothing to do but withdraw.

The story is taken up from here by Captain Robert Q. Smith, Jr., Commander of Company H, who, as usual, was with Colonel Martin that day.

o o o

We were expecting the engineers to start building a bridge at any time to bring the armor across, and apparently the chemical boys were too. All night and all day they kept laying in heavy smoke screens. And every time the smoke would roll across the Saar and up the valley

around Ockfen. It kept us blinded all day and we cursed it plenty. But one time we were glad it was there. It saved us many casualties. I was up on that high bluff to the left of Ockfen overlooking the river when "E" and "F" Companies pulled back out of the town. I had just placed a heavy machine gun section above the dense cloud of smoke so they could fire on any movement in the far end of town. Imagine my surprise when I started down to see the whole battalion swarming up the side of this steep—and I do mean steep—hill. Later, in his report over the radio, Colonel Martin really hit the nail on the head when asked if his battalion was in any danger. "Nothing," he said, "but mountain goats or scared infantrymen could ever climb this hill, and my whole damned battalion is up here."

The Germans very obligingly had built some excellent trenches on this hill, and we reorganized the battalion right there without the loss of a man under cover of the same dense smoke. For a couple of hours the Colonel and I took turns adjusting artillery and Cannon fire on targets that were very clearly visible from our roost on top of the world. Finally, about 1300, Colonel Martin said "Well, Smith, I guess they'll want us to take that town, so I guess we'd better do it." Then he gave me a quick outline of his plan and sent me to contact Captain Standish while he went to orient Lieutenant Maness, commanding Company E.

The time of the attack was to be 1415. Well, at 1350 I was still frantically trying to find Standish. Every one I asked said "he just went that way" and always pointed uphill. But still no Standish. Finally I went back to tell Colonel Martin he'd have to delay the attack until I could find him. Imagine my chagrin when I found that the Colonel himself had seen both company commanders and had even arranged for a heavy artillery preparation while I was lost in the smoke. Well, at least my HMG's were in position and were doing a good job. But that TOT fire the colonel had called for!

Never in my life have I seen anything so exciting or as pretty as that! Imagine if you can the first rounds of eight artillery battalions plus our Cannon Company all exploding at exactly the same second on an objective the size of a very small town. It looked as if the town just blew up. And it was wonderful the way E and F companies crawled in under the barrage and were right there at the first houses when it lifted. They stormed into town, running, shouting and shooting, taking one house after another, just as if it had been rehearsed. Inside of an hour they had cleared the town, put up a defense with HMG's all around it, and Lt. Murphy had his Mine Platoon with about ten German prisoner "volunteers" putting in a minefield to prevent another tank counter-attack.

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By 1630 on the 23rd, Ockfen was completely in American hands. This time for keeps. But the troubles of the Second Battalion were far from over. In fact that very night a direct hit on the CP put three staff officers, including Major John R. Dossenbach, Battalion Executive Officer, into the evacuation mill.

During the afternoon of the next day, February 24th, Company F received orders to move north from Ockfen which was now secure. "F" was to move straight up the steep hill and continue on a line that would isolate the bend in the river to the north where the little town of Schoden was situated.

Company F set up a position in the woods overlooking the town, unable to move forward across the open ground because of the observation the Germans had from several pillboxes on the slopes of the hill to its front. About 2100 that evening Captain Standish received orders that because there were pillboxes near the river-bank which were holding up the bridging operations for the main force of the armor, he would send a force up the riverside railroad track that night and eliminate these boxes.

By midnight, after on-the-spot training of the new men in the use of satchel charges and beehives, Captain Standish and about half of his company moved out towards the track. They tried several times to get close to the boxes but failed because of heavy cross-fire from at least two other boxes. Fire was requested then from the artillery and soon came over; both white phosphorus and time fire. It was even suggested that eight inch howitzers be used, but the safety factor for our own troops was not sufficient. Tank destroyers were tried as well from the other side of the river, firing direct fire through the gaps in the artificial smoke. These at last softened up the boxes sufficiently so that by early afternoon on the 25th they were captured and outposted.

Early that evening an Armored Infantry Company attacked Schoden and the weary men around the pillboxes set up reliefs for outpost duty. Half of them slept in the largest of the boxes (the only one that the engineers did not blow up) while the other half stationed themselves in the surrounding communication trenches. About 2130 the water and ration detail arrived.

No sooner had this detail arrived when the Germans sent in a large counterattack, driving the outpost into the box. Captain Standish immediately tried to get as many men out of the box, as possible, but found that nothing could be done as the box was surrounded. He then set out to organize a counterattacking force from among the men who were outside, but they were so spread out that this plan too met with little success. Finally word was got back to the First and Second Platoons and the Weapons Platoon which, not having been called on for the riverside operation, were still back in the original positions further east. They came at once to the rescue, but it was the same story. They got as far as a communication trench within sight of the surrounded pillbox, but sniper and machine gun fire prohibited any further advance. Finally they were forced to sit there, almost within shouting distance of

their trapped comrades and watch, powerless to aid them, as the Germans worked to blast their way into the box. They waited desperately in the hope that some support would come to the rescue in time. But none came. Word had been sent back of the plight of the men in the box, but no support was available.

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The Krauts (as Staff Sergeant Glenn Luckridge of Company F tells it) were resorting to endless means to get in the box. Every time we would yell to our trapped comrades (who apparently did not know we were there) we would get a prolonged burst from the machine guns. We were so near and yet so far from them. We had no way to get at them, as showing our heads above the trench would have been certain death.

At about midnight the Krauts fired a bazooka round at the box in an effort to get our men out. After which they taunted them. We had no grenades as we had not been able to replenish our supply. And not knowing the true conditions before us, we were afraid to try anything desperate for fear of hurting our own men. Time crept by slowly, a minute seemed an hour, and our nerves were nearly cracked from being in such a helpless position... We just sat and prayed.

Finally at two in the morning there was a terrific explosion in front of the box. It didn't take much deduction to figure they had blown a hole in the box, and now our men had little choice. After about ten minutes we went through the most agonizing sensation in the world — hearing our buddies surrender. They had no choice. When we heard them go our hearts all sank. We had done our best but failed at our objective.

o o o

The night of the 25th was the darkest moment in the history of the bridgehead. Firing from the east bank both above and below Ockfen still kept the engineers from building their bridge, and hence no armor had as yet been able to cross to the 376th Bridgehead. Unsupported, the First Battalion was battling its way inch by inch towards Beurig. The Second was still in Ockfen and some of the pillboxes just to the north, which were being heavily counterattacked all during the night. There was gloom in Second Battalion Headquarters because of the tragedy of "F's" lost platoon. The Third Battalion, still surrounded to the east, was in no position to help the other two. The Germans were crumbling, but they had not yet lost their sting.

The Bridgehead

FROM CO 376 COMBAT TEAM 252125A
TO CG 94 INF DIV
GR NC BT
CONFIDENTIAL
REPORT FOLLOWS ON DISPOSITION AND CONDITION OF CT 376.
OUR LINES ARE SO EXTENDED THAT WE CANNOT PREVENT ENEMY INFILTRATION. ENEMY OCCUPIED PILLBOXES STILL EXIST INSIDE OUR BRIDGEHEAD. ALL TROOPS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED SINCE FIRST DAY OF OPERATION. I HAVE NO RESERVE. ONE COMPANY OF ARMORED INFANTRY HAS BEEN ATTACHED TEMPORARILY.
EXCEPT FOR TWO PLATOONS OF TANK DESTROYERS ON FRIENDLY SIDE OF RIVER WE HAVE NO SUPPORT OF DIRECT FIRE OF HEAVY WEAPONS. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THESE TWO PLATOONS WILL BE WITHDRAWN TOMORROW.
UNTIL 1900 THIS DATE ALL EVACUATION AND SUPPLY HAS BEEN HAND-CARRIED. ONE "WEASEL" AND SEVEN "JEEPS" MAY BE ABLE TO CROSS TONIGHT. AT PRESENT ALL FERRY SERVICE IS OUT OF ORDER. I EXPECT THAT ALL HEAVY TRUCKS, PRIME-MOVERS, CANNON AND ARTILLERY WEAPONS WILL HAVE TO CROSS SAAR AT YOUR BRIDGEHEAD. IF SO THIS WILL BE CRITICAL PERIOD FOR INFANTRY BATTALIONS, AND THEY MUST BE REINFORCED AND SUPPLIED BY ANOTHER UNIT.
IF WE CROSS ALL VEHICLES HERE, IT WILL TAKE TWO OR THREE DAYS AND PLACE VEHICLES IN AREA GETTING OBSERVED ARTILLERY FIRE.
IN OUR BEACHHEAD WE HAVE CAPTURED ABOUT 60 PERCENT OF THE PILLBOXES, ONE 88MM GUN, ONE BATTERY OF MOUNTAIN ARTILLERY, AND 452 PRISONERS. ESTIMATED KILLED 300.
SINCE 21 FEBRUARY I HAVE LOST 14 OFFICERS AND 161 EM. I AM UNDERSTRENGTH 47 OFFICERS AND 506 EM.
I RECOMMEND THAT THIS CT BE PASSED THRU IF 94TH DIVISION IS TO CONTINUE TO ATTACK TO NORTH.
IF 94TH DIVISION IS TO PROTECT SAARBURG, I RECOMMEND THAT THIS CT BE REINFORCED TO HOLD ITS PRESENT POSITION. SUCH REINFORCEMENT SHOULD INCLUDE TANK DESTROYERS AND INFANTRY.

ANDERSON
CO

Thus, by teletype to Division Headquarters, Colonel Anderson summed up the situation as it stood on the night of the 25th. The lack of a bridge at the 376th crossing site, and the resulting lack of heavy support was beginning to be severely felt. Supply continued to be extremely hazardous, and the bottleneck of getting rations and ammunition across the river had not yet been overcome. A forward aid station, which had been set up on the east bank of the river, and which had been operating under fire ever since, did much to solve the evacuation problem. But with

the number of casualties to be evacuated the medical situation was still critical. For the carrying of supplies the tireless crews of Service Company were aided by cooks and other headquarters personnel from the line companies. Many of these, like Technician Fifth Grade Gordon Allen of Company E, constantly braved heavy artillery fire to get them across the river. To these men, many of whom, like Allen, were seriously wounded carrying out this volunteer mission, goes no small share of the credit that the Bridgehead successfully weathered its crucial period.

On the night of February 25th the only ray of optimism was the fact word had been received that some of the armor was getting across the river via the bridge in the 301st's bridgehead at Saarburg, further to the south. Soon they would be ready to strike north and cut off the enemy positions along the river that were giving the 376th so much trouble.

On the morning of the 26th the first three tanks to arrive in the 376th's bridgehead appeared in the Second Battalion area. After the tragedy of the night before the remainder of Company F—some 48 men—still battled for the pillboxes they had taken south of Schoden and were still virtually cut off. That morning the Third Platoon of Company E, which had been outposting Ockfen along with the rest of "E" and Company G, was sent north to establish contact with them, and cover their withdrawal. The three tanks were to accompany them. Directing the attack from a forward trench, Lieutenant Colonel Martin, the battalion commander, was wounded and evacuated.

Two of the tanks were unable to reach the Line of Departure in time, so the 17 men—all that was left of "E's" Third Platoon—moved out with only one tank in support. Their first objective was three mutually supporting pillboxes. The first of these fell easily. The second surrendered only after pouring a heavy volume of small arms and mortar fire on the already depleted platoon. In this second one they found many American helmets, M1's and other equipment—also one wounded soldier from Company F. The rest had been killed or captured.

After this they attacked the third pillbox. But enemy fire increased, and the one tank became the target of every enemy weapon in the vicinity. When the tank commander was wounded and crawled from the hatch, the tank stopped firing. At the same time Second Lieutenant Ernest N. Dyrlund, the platoon leader, was mortally wounded, and there were many other casualties.

At this point Technician Fifth Grade Paul E. Ramsay, with enemy fire plowing the ground all around him, dashed to the tank, administered first aid to the tank commander and sent him back along a communications trench. After this he mounted the tank and literally took charge of the battle, directing the fire of the

tank's guns, and using the tank's radio to give the battalion command post a clear and concise picture of the situation.

Finally what was left of Company F and the 3rd Platoon of Company E managed to pull back to the vicinity of Ockfen where they continued their outposting duties and awaited the support that would be necessary before they could move north.

While this was happening the First Battalion was moving towards Beurig. Companies A and B, both of which had met stubborn resistance the night before, jumped off on the morning of the 26th with orders to get as far south towards Beurig as possible. During the hours of darkness Sergeant Robert J. Pailliotet and Privates Michael Jacobs and Harold W. Ebert of Company A had scouted the pillboxes to their front and knew just what to expect when they moved out in the morning. The pillboxes were well-defended and it looked like a rough morning ahead.

But the defenders of Beurig had apparently seen "the handwriting on the wall." The 301st was advancing towards the town from the south and, thus besieged from two directions, the defenders must have finally decided their position was untenable. The First Battalion attack met far less resistance than it had had any reason to expect on the basis of what it had been receiving, and the Germans surrendered in droves. By noon the town had fallen and shortly thereafter contact with the 301st was made. The right flank of the bridgehead was at last secure.

But to the north there were still active pillboxes around Schoden which the Second Battalion was too depleted to handle alone. In Schoden itself, Company B of the 61st Armored Infantry Battalion was cut off. Hence, immediately Beurig had fallen, orders came to the First Battalion to prepare to pass through the Second and attack north on the following day. Accordingly on the afternoon of the 26th, Colonel Miner's men retraced their steps to Ockfen and began their preparations.

The plan of attack was that Company A was to assault and clean out the pillboxes to the south and southeast of Schoden. "B" on its left, was to attack towards the town itself along the river. Company C, still critically short of officers and key noncoms as a result of the hammering it had received the first morning in the bridgehead, would again remain in reserve.

On the morning of February 27th the attack jumped off, and the advance at first proceeded rapidly with Cannon Company and the tank destroyers as well as the 919th supporting. Resistance increased with the advance, however, and Company A soon ran into difficulties. The pillboxes in its zone were so well camouflaged that two patrols had failed to locate any of them. It was Sergeant Leon D. Crutchfield of the Second Platoon who finally came up with the solution. Changing the direction of his advance, he struck towards the perimeter buildings of the town itself, the approaches

to which would undoubtedly be covered by fire from the unseen pillboxes. His assumption was correct, and the ensuing mortar and machine gun fire soon revealed their locations. Fire from the supporting tank destroyers across the river was then adjusted into the embrasures. The pillboxes after this began to fall in rapid succession under the aggressive assaults of both companies. By evening about 250 Germans had been captured and 38 killed or wounded. The cut-off armored infantry company had been relieved.

On the morning of the 28th Company C took the lead and advanced north along the ridge east of Schoden. Meeting stubborn resistance at first, it finally captured a wooded hill which looked down on the town of Wiltingen on the east bank of the river further north. In these positions Company B relieved them at 1500 and began to dig in on the forward slope of the hill about 1100 yards from the south edge of Wiltingen. Prior to this "B" had made contact with the armored infantry and completed the mopping up of Schoden and numerous pillboxes to the east. The left flank of the bridgehead was now secure, and the enemy was no longer in a position where he could fire on the west bank of the river at the crossing site.

The last operation carried out by the First Battalion in the bridgehead area was the taking of four pillboxes which still stood between Company B's positions and Wiltingen. The Second Battalion had received orders to pass through for an attack on Wiltingen the next day. The order came down to Company B on the evening of the 28th, and the pillboxes would have to be taken by the next morning. It looked like a big order.

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The chances for assaulting the pillboxes by daylight were fading rapidly, and finally disappeared altogether, for it soon became as dark as the inside of a hat. The TD's which were in position on the west bank of the Saar, waiting to support the assault had already radioed that it was too dark to see their targets and were signing off. It looked like rifles and grenades against concrete and MG 42's.

Knowing that the chances of taking the pillboxes by assault in time for the Second Battalion jump-off were slim indeed, Captain Brehio, the Battalion S-2, suggested that a PW who had just been brought in by a patrol be made to lead a small patrol to the key pillbox and attempt to take it by a trick. S/Sgt Vogel, of PW Team 98 spoke German fluently and had done some splendid work along this line only a few days before in Beurig, accounting for over 60 prisoners. Major Zimmerman, the Battalion Executive Officer, agreed, and Captain Bowden said that he'd try any-

thing once. Sgt Vogel persuaded the prisoner to take an active part in the plot, much against his wishes, and finally everything was ready.

T/Sgt Fred Peters reported with half a dozen men and the patrol was under way. The PW led off, followed by a .45 in the hand of Sgt Vogel. Behind them were Major Zimmerman, Captains Brehio and Bowden, Pfcs Davidson and Bennet of Dog Company as well as Sergeant Peters and his six riflemen. Just when everyone was hoping it would remain dark, the moon decided to appear; only a sliver was showing, but it wouldn't be long now before it would be full.

As rapidly as possible Vogel prodded the Kraut along and the others followed close on their heels. Down the trench they went, across the road, into an open field, across another trench and then a sudden halt. The patrol spread out into a skirmish line automatically. The PW called "Fritz!" No answer. "Fritz, hier ist Hans."

"Ja, was ist los?"

"Nichts. I am coming over." At this point the last man in the patrol started down the hill from the rear, silhouetted against the moon which by now had reached its full brightness. One of the Kraut sentries, sensing that something was wrong, started for the pillbox, Sgt Vogel hot on his heels. Sgt Peters and a couple of riflemen who had been crawling forward grabbed the other two sentries in the trench. Vogel walked into the pillbox and shouted in German "Hands up, it's all over." Captain Brehio, who was inside at the door, checked the 19 prisoners for arms as they moved out single file.

One PW was kept inside for questioning and said that the other pillboxes were unoccupied since all the crews had assembled for orders. A quick check confirmed this, and the other pillboxes were immediately occupied.... Vogel searched for a code for the telephone but could not find one, so it was decided to try one long and three short rings. However, the Kraut that answered could not be convinced that it would be a good idea to come over with all his friends and give up.

One PW, an NCO, was standing at rigid attention in front of Vogel and giving forth with what appeared to be pretty "hot" language. Vogel seemed to be getting a big kick out of it. When asked about it he said that the NCO had been in charge of the four pillboxes, and was very indignant, claiming that the patrol had played a dirty trick on him.

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With the fall of these pillboxes the stage was set for the attack on Wiltingen the next day. Meanwhile the Third Battalion had been relieved from its isolated position by the Third Battalion of the 301st which had followed Colonel Miner's

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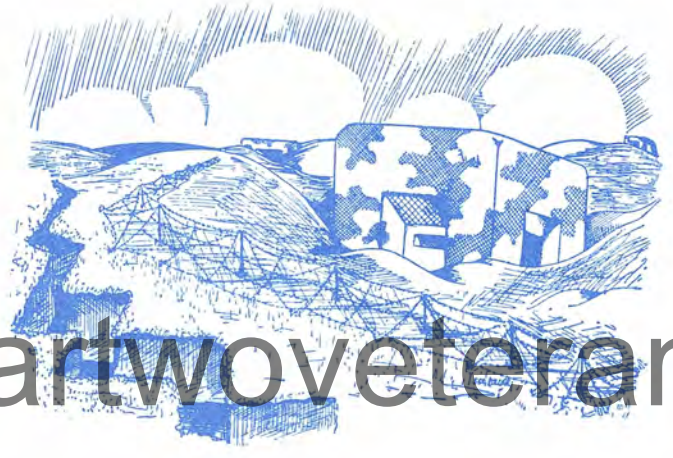
men northward, and had struck north itself on the First Battalion's right, gaining some 3000 yards against very light resistance, and finally reaching a point to the east of, and almost on level with Wiltingen. The battered Second Battalion remained in Ockfen which, with the fresh smell of cordite still clinging to its streets, had suddenly become the Regimental Reserve area.

At the same time the 10th Armored had started north, striking up to the east of the Regiment's positions and severing the supply lines of the Germans who had been so stubbornly resisting the crossing. Cut off from the main bulk of their forces further to the north and east, the Jerries with dramatic suddenness found themselves at the end of their already overtaxed resources and collapsed like a pricked balloon.



Out of the Bridgehead

It is March 1st and the smoke has gone from the site of the Saar crossing between Ayl and Ockfen. The sound of firing has ceased in Schoden, on the bluffs north of Ockfen, and on the heights below the town. Under the grey skies the river banks, still scarred here and there where war has passed, settle back to their customary quiet and peaceful look. Only sound is the occasional reverberating roar as another captured pillbox is blasted to rubble, under the expert administrations of Company A of the 160th Engineers and the First Platoon of Company C, 319th Engineers. The bunkers that have not yet been blasted look westward over the river as forbiddingly as ever but are silent now for all time. The first chunk of the great Westwall itself has fallen—not easily, but decisively and with unexpected quickness.

In the Saar Basin the Siegfried Line was, at first glance, a maze of pillboxes, dragon's teeth, anti-tank and communication trenches which seemed to have little system. The trenches ran at seemingly haphazard angles over the countryside, and pillboxes were grouped here and there with apparent disregard for even distribution. A closer glance proved that there was diabolically efficient planning behind their locations. The anti-tank ditches, for all their seeming irrelevancy of direction, neatly severed all passable roads and traversed any open space that could be used as an approach for tanks. In the openest ground these were supplemented by dragon's teeth, placed in front of the ditches. All commanding ground was laced with communication trenches that furnished perfect cover for defending skirmish lines. The pillboxes were so placed that the guns of one covered the blind spots of the other as well as all possible approaches from the west.

The pillboxes themselves were green and brown camouflaged hulks of reinforced concrete, often with walls as much as fifteen feet thick. The gunports were mere slits in the concrete, so that the only comparatively vulnerable point was the door. This was made of steel approximately half an inch thick, that opened into an outer chamber in which a shell that had penetrated the door could explode without harming the occupants of the inner chamber. This inner chamber, closed off by an inner steel door and wall of concrete, would be vulnerable to nothing less than a direct hit with a 500 pound bomb.

On the first day of March the First and Third Battalions were on line just at the point where the river turned north again above Schoden. The Second Battalion was in reserve. Regimental Command Post, Anti-Tank Company, Company A of the 245th Engineers and Service Company were still in Ayl where it was beginning to be a little quieter. The Regimental Aid Station also was still there, most of their

customers still going forth with "bean-shaves" in celebration of the successful crossing of the Saar. Ten miles north the first elements of the 10th Armored Division, which had finally crossed the Saar near Saarburg, had reached the great German communications center of Trier.

After the first confusion of the bridgehead, lines were beginning to form again, pointing the direction of future attacks. While the 301st and 302nd Regiments struck south and west from their crossing sites further south, the 376th was pointed north; First Battalion on the left of the zone along the river, and the Third on the right on the high ground south of the Wiltingen-Oberemmel road. To the right of the Regimental zone was the 90th Cavalry.

By nightfall on March 1st the First Battalion had, with the exception of Company A, fallen back into reserve in Schoden. The Second Battalion had replaced them, and Companies E and G had attacked the town of Wiltingen. Before the attack a member of the Psychological Warfare Service had set up a loud speaker across the river from the town and urged the defenders to surrender. His efforts had a telling effect, and if most of the Germans were not persuaded to give up, they at least were convinced there was no use putting up a fight for the town. When Company E reached Wiltingen the Wehrmacht had departed and the town was taken without a shot being fired. The Germans had withdrawn to the north, and the Second Battalion was able to move 1500 yards further beyond the town before it was finally halted by heavy machine gun fire from pillboxes and from the steep ground on the peninsula to the northwest. During this advance it took 25 more pillboxes. The Third Battalion, advancing simultaneously in its zone, gained a total of 2500 yards and captured three pillboxes.

On the day after the capture of Wiltingen the Second Battalion struck north again, this time towards Konz at the junction of the Saar and Moselle Rivers. It met only isolated resistance. If it took several days to clear the area it was because there were so many pillboxes that had to be searched whether they were occupied or not. There were also a few pillboxes like Number 111 that did not give in as easily as the others. This one was larger and more heavily armed and had already resisted one attack by a platoon of Company F when First Lieutenant Perry Heidelberger of the 376th Medical Detachment took some litter teams with him and went forth under the muzzles of its machine guns to pick up some wounded.

After first firing on his party, the Germans in the pillbox apparently changed their minds. Several of them appeared suddenly outside of the pillbox, and indicated to the medics that they wished to speak with them. It was not long before Lieutenant Heidelberger had persuaded them to surrender. After he had communicated hurriedly

with Major Dossenbach the surrender became official and 59 Germans walked out of the pillbox, including five officers: a major, two captains and two lieutenants.

Examination of 111 showed that it had been a formidable strongpoint. Main armament was a 50mm mortar which, automatically loaded from machine-fed clips of six rounds, was capable of placing 24 rounds in the air at one time. The machine guns, equipped with shoulder pieces, had grazing fire on any possible route of approach. The pillbox was three stories high, or rather, deep, as most of it was below ground, and had all the comforts of home including Diesel motors for heat and light, and showers with running water.

While the Second Battalion was operating in the Konz area, the Third, which had taken Oberemmel the day before, continued northwards and moved into Kommlingen, encountering no more resistance than the Second had in Wiltingen. The First Battalion was suddenly called north to help the 10th Armored take Trier.

The first Colonel Miner heard of this new mission for the First Battalion was that his battalion was detached from the rest of the Regiment and was to assist the 10th Armored. How and when it was to assist them was not made very clear.

The engineer officer who arrived in Schoden on the night of March 1st to guide the Battalion to its new location did not throw much additional light on the subject. The battalion was to help take Trier and was to start out as soon as the trucks arrived. As to this he was both clear and emphatic. As to how it was to get to Trier and what the situation was between there and Schoden he was far less definite.

Had he reconnoitered the route to be followed? Colonel Miner had asked him.

No, he hadn't but he was quite sure everything would work out all right.

This was hardly a promising beginning. The Battalion was to move by truck, taking everything with them, even the kitchen train. To get to Trier it would have to follow one of the narrow swaths that the armor had cut through ten miles of enemy occupied territory, and the prospective guide was apparently relying on sheer homing instinct to get the First through.

But by 0200 the column was ready to move. Having picked up Company A in Wiltingen, it moved out from there in a motorized column of companies; A, B, C and D, then Headquarters. Up front were Colonel Miner and his staff and the engineer guide. Bringing up the rear was Major Zimmerman, the Executive Officer, with Chaplain Buchanan and a number of medics. With them were the kitchen, baggage and ammunition trains. The night was pitch dark, and, to make matters worse, the roads were narrow and muddy and in places almost non-existent.

Everything seemed to be progressing as well as could be expected however until

the Battalion column halted in the vicinity of Pellingen and Colonel Miner discovered that not only was Major Zimmerman's entourage, complete with all the supply trains, missing from the column, but that no contact could be established with them by radio.

It soon became evident that the rear portion of the convoy had gone astray in the darkness and taken a parallel route towards Trier. The story of the lost portion of the convoy is told by Chaplain Buchanan:

Here we were 10 to 12 miles from Trier. The fighting elements of the convoy were off ahead somewhere following the engineer lieutenant. In our small group we had the radio section of Battalion Headquarters, the anti-tank platoon with their 57mm guns, the Battalion medics, the Battalion Surgeon, Executive Officer, Adjutant and Chaplain. To be utterly frank our fire power was rather negligible. Yet somehow we had to win through those hills and get to Trier for they would be needing us.

The situation was vague, but it was obvious and important that we find the main body of the Battalion before dawn. We very much wished to avoid the embarrassment of having the bright light of morning catch us wandering about with the enemy in position on either side of our path. With our meagre fire power and rather noticeable train of kitchen trucks, it might easily prove to be somewhat of a sad scramble.

So, cautiously, but with an undercurrent of urgent desire to get somewhere, we rolled on towards Trier. The shell bursts on the horizon became more frequent. Now and then we came upon a burning vehicle which barred our way and had to be by-passed. Quickly we rolled on, racing with the breaking dawn. Here and there along the highway stood muted pillboxes. Everybody was alert now.

Several miles up ahead tracers from 20mm and 40mm guns partially lighted the sky-line in front of the city. Sometimes they seemed to be travelling in our direction — so that we had a tendency to watch them a bit closely and with some misgivings. But always they fell below the horizon. Just then, as I looked to the left, I saw a group of tanks in position along a defile near the highway. Several of them were warming up.

For a moment the convoy moved more slowly. For that split second we all peered apprehensively into the darkness with but one common thought—whose tanks—friendly or enemy? Fortunately for us they turned out to be Shermans, so we rolled on. Later none of us was quite able to explain why we had not paused here and investigated the why and wherefore of the Shermans in the defile. We were still a bit anxious to get to Trier, so it seemed.

A few minutes later the rumble of howitzers and heavy guns became quite ominous. The flashes became very distinct. We were very definitely on the edge of the city now. We rolled past two huge pillboxes flanking the road, and then came to a sudden stop. To our right several civilians, seeing us, turned about and ran into their houses.

As several of us jumped from our vehicles, we saw a dark form running towards us, hands held high, and once again we heard that familiar greeting "kamerad!" Our interpreter, Sergeant Hans Vogel, questioned the Boche and concluded we were in Trier. The German was on his way to some other soldiers, supposedly in position to our rear—our presence in his path had definitely overwhelmed him. He told us the Americans were fighting to gain entrance on the north edge of the city. We, it seemed, were near the south edge.

It was now quite clear that the gun batteries no more than 100 yards to our right front were German. They were firing with great rapidity across the city, giving their all to stem the tide of the insistent Americans. We were very close, and on a hill, slightly above their position. We could see the gun crews at work and hear them as they snapped off their orders.

We had entered the wrong end of the city, and now found ourselves sitting on a slight grade to the rear of the enemy's artillery batteries. We had several 50 cal. machine guns and three 57's. Sergeant Andrew Brusgard suggested to the Major that we hurriedly set them on the high ground, send the kitchen train back, keeping just enough vehicles to make a getaway after we had given the howitzer and "ack ack" batteries everything we had in the way of fifties and 57's.

It might have worked—however, it was quite light now and any moment they would detect this motley crew at their rear. We weren't at all sure of their strength or their disposition. The mess sergeants and kitchen personnel were not spoiling for such an uncertain fracas, and our fire and manpower being what it was, the Major resisted the temptation to have a try at it and ordered the convoy to run down towards the partial roadblock, execute a sharp left turn, and hit the road out of the city towards Pellingen.

This was done quite rapidly and with a definite smoothness except for one kitchen driver who got stuck in the roadblock, and could not find his reverse in the excitement. As the two and a halves roared up the hill away from the city, the Germans apparently became aware of our presence and started to take potshots. But we were headed away from a strange, and what might have been a grim experience and there was no stopping us. German civilians peeked furtively from behind curtains as we rolled by, slightly confused perhaps at this strange assault on their ancient city. But they were not to be thus confused for long. Just two miles down the highway we met the Shermans roaring up for their first assault on this side of the town. Their reconnaissance captain stopped us and asked us where the devil we had been. We quickly told our story. Everybody laughed. Wishing him and his gang good shooting, we continued to the rear. It was a happy ending. We could laugh now and enjoy our luck. But it might have been rough had the Boche known they had unwanted and slightly confused visitors at their back door—and so early in the morning too!

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It was not until the Battalion reached Hockweiler that Colonel Miner learned specifically what the mission in Trier was to be. A task force from Combat Command "B" of the 10th Armored had struck northwest through Trier from Irsch to one of the

bridges across the Mesolle, by-passing all enemy resistance on the way in hopes of reaching the bridge before it was blown. It had reached the bridge but had become isolated as the task forces on either side had not been able to penetrate into the city and had left its flanks exposed.

The Battalion was to move into Trier over the same route the armor had taken as they sped for the bridge, mopping up any enemy it ran into along the way. Company A spearheaded the advance, led by Colonel Miner in a half-track. Although the mission was to move through and contact the armor, the battalion was not aware of the extent of the armor's isolation, nor of the number of enemy that had been by-passed, and it was not long before it ran into resistance at a heavily fortified railroad bridge. The company was stopped at this point by heavy machine gun fire and direct fire from an 88 to its left rear which inflicted several casualties and killed Private First Class Bernard Redner, the Company aid man.

But "A's" machine guns got into action almost immediately, enabling Second Lieutenant Aaron L. Colvin's Platoon to move laterally to the next bridge across the cut, where the Platoon attempted to cross. However this bridge was equally well defended, and the First Platoon was forced to move still further along the cut before it could get across. Once the crossing had been effected and the enemy positions thus flanked, the Third Platoon, aided by the Company machine guns, fought its way across at the first bridge and overran the enemy in time to save the bridge from being blown up.

This fight of Company A's was the only serious one the Battalion had in Trier. Contact was established with the armor, and soon after the companies were mopping up assigned sectors of the city. Company C was assigned the task of securing the all-important river-bridge which the armor had previously taken. On March 3rd the 376th Combat Team was released from 10th Armored and reverted to its own 94th Division. The First Battalion awaited orders to return to the Regimental zone.

On March 4th the Third Battalion had reverted to Division reserve and had taken up positions in the vicinity of Serrig. The Second had finished off the last of the pillboxes around Konz. Since crossing the Saar a total of 290 pillboxes had been taken and destroyed. 1056 prisoners had been taken, and 150 killed or wounded. The Regiment had suffered 103 battle and 130 non-battle casualties.

On March 5th nobody knew just what was next on the program. The 376th had advanced as far north from the bridgehead as it had been ordered to, and the 301st and 302nd had established their line running north and south well to the east of the river. The bridgehead now firmly established and consolidated, rumors as to what the next move would be were flying thick and fast. Prominent among them was the

story that the Division was going to be relieved, probably by the 26th Division, and that it would go back for ten days rest in Luxembourg. Actually the rest was more than a rumor. On the 5th everything was arranged and the Regiment was waiting only for the order to pull back. For the Third Battalion the order actually did come through and was carried out. But the other two battalions were not so lucky. For them orders also came through that evening, but they were not the ones they had been expecting.

To the east the 301st and 302nd were having trouble. They had been struck by several counterattacks east of Pellingen, and in the vicinity of Lampaden, and in the midst of these an unknown number of Germans had filtered through their lines and formed a pocket on top of an open hill south of Pellingen. The pocket was formed by 6th SS Mountain Troops, among the Wehrmacht's toughest and most determined. Rest or no rest, the 376th, standing by with its mission completed, was the only regiment in a position to liquidate such a threat as this without jeopardizing the main line.

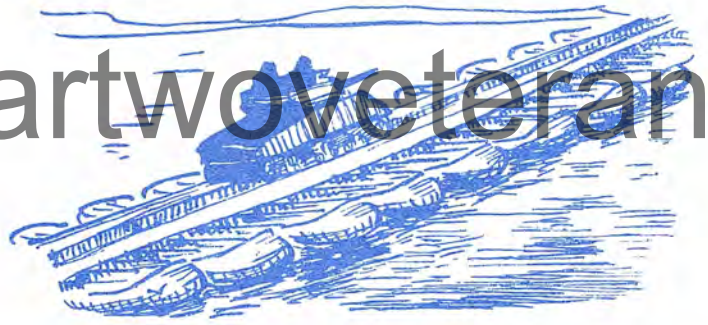
The First Battalion, just returned from Trier, was chosen for the job and moved to Pellingen while, on the evening of the 5th, the Second moved west as far as Oberemmel and spent the night outposting the town. On March 6th Company B made two attacks on the pocket, supported by tanks, but was thrown back both times. The difficulty was that there was no covered route of approach to the hill, visibility was poor and the pocket was far more heavily armed with panzerfausts and machine guns than had been expected. The tanks were completely stalled and many of them knocked out by the panzerfausts.

By this time the Second Battalion was moving from Oberemmel to the vicinity of Pellingen, and the Third had been called back from its very brief rest in Dudelange, Luxembourg. Plans were afoot for a coordinated battalion attack to be launched on the pocket the following morning. In preparation for this, artillery and Cannon Company pounded the hilltop positions intermittently all during the night of the 6th. In the morning, half an hour before the attack was to jump off, Colonel Miner was standing on top of the hill where the pocket had been. The only Germans in sight were dead ones, lying amidst the shell torn debris of their equipment. During the night the artillery and Cannon Company had apparently given more than even the SS could take, and the survivors of the Mountain Troops had slipped back into their own lines as quietly as they had come.

The hard fighting undergone by the Regiment in establishing the bridgehead and taking Trier had exacted its price. All echelons of the 376th had contributed to meet the demands of battle. Now with reorganization, the inevitable gaps in the

Regimental ranks were filled, and the team, getting ready to carry the fight to the Rhine, had an altered line-up. Lieutenant Colonel Anderson, now regimental CO, called in Lieutenant Colonel Miner to be his executive officer. Transferring from the Third to the First Battalion, Major Eskel Miller assumed command of that battalion. Replacing Lieutenant Colonel Martin who was wounded near Ockfen, Major John Dossenbach commanded the Second.

This had been the last attempt on the part of the Germans to contest the bridgehead with anything more than occasional light artillery and mortar fire. The remaining days before the Regiment burst out of its hard-won bridgehead and hurtled headlong towards the Rhine, were filled with reorganization, outposting, patrolling and reconnaissance of the country along the Ruwer east of Franzenheim and Pellingen. The die-hard rumor mongers still clung to the theory that since the SS pocket had been wiped out, the ten day rest was still in the offing. But the rumor had few supporters this time. Quiet as it was, the air was electric with big things impending. Somehow every one knew the curtain was about to rise on the last act.



CHAPTER VII Race to the Rhine

The Big Picture

With more than its traditional lionine ferocity, the month of March 1945 stirred the Western Front into frantic action. Following General Eisenhower's plan to destroy the Wehrmacht west of the Rhine, the full force of American, British and French arms was unleashed to sound the overture for the Götterdämmerung of Nazi might. No single Allied unit can claim to have played the outstanding role in the race to the Rhine. It was a coordinated effort of all ground and air forces; even the Navy followed along with its craft ready to navigate the Rhine. But the part played by the 376th Infantry Regiment in this drive is in itself like the story of an entire major campaign.

To realize the importance of the Third Army drive, of which the 376th Infantry was on several occasions the southern spearhead, we must look at the entire Western Front as it stood early in March. The First Canadian Army had begun the attack on February 8th; the American First and Ninth Armies had followed on February 23th. With the beginning of the second week in March they stood poised on the west bank of the Rhine for 135 miles from the Moselle north to Nijmegen and the First Army had a well-established bridgehead at Remagen. But on the south

facing the American Third and Seventh and the French First Armies stood the still-powerful German First and Seventh Armies, manning formidable defenses, including natural mountain fortresses.

Undoubtedly more of the forces in the north could at that time have jumped the Rhine and thrust an armored spearhead into the heart of the Reich. But such an action was not in line with General Eisenhower's strategy. A break-through would have been dangerous because of the strong German forces on its southern flank. So the spotlight fell on the American Third and Seventh Armies. It was their task to destroy the enemy within the Saar-Rhine-Moselle Triangle. To accomplish this a coordinated two-army attack was launched early in March.

At this time the 376th was comfortably ensconced in its enlarged bridgehead on the east bank of the Saar River just south of Trier. The troublesome infiltration into the bridgehead area by the 6th SS Mountain Division had been repulsed. There was nothing to do but improve the defensive positions along the Regimental line in case of counter-attack, send out a few patrols—and await the cue for the Regiment to take its part in the great offensive. The First and Second Battalions were along the Main Line of Resistance, with Command Posts at Franzenheim and Pellingen, respectively. The Third Battalion maintained the Regimental Reserve Line in the vicinity of Krettnach-Obermennig. The Regimental nerve center was in Oberemmel.

Every man in the Regiment had been briefed on the "big picture" of the two-army drive and on as much as was then known of the part the Regiment would play. The 94th Division would initiate the attack to the east with the 301st and 302nd Regiments on line. The left (north) flank of the division would be screened against counter-attacks by Third Army Cavalry units. To the right (south) of the division, the 26th and 80th Infantry Divisions would launch simultaneous attacks. At first the 376th would be in motorized reserve, ready to exploit a break-through anywhere on the Division front.

All the usual preparations for a large-scale operation were made. Ammunition, "K" rations, new equipment were all issued. The Regiment lacked nothing but the go-ahead signal. There was nothing to do but wait. However waiting proved not such an easy chore for the impatient fighting men of the 376th. They knew that the Rhine would have to be reached before they could hope for any real rest, so they were eager to start the big job and get it over as quickly as possible. The men of the Third Battalion spoke longingly of their scant 36 hours respite in the pleasant town of Dudelange, Luxembourg, and cursed the fates that had called them back to the line.

To make waiting easier, frequent movies were shown by the 376th Special Service Section and by the Third Army's 30th Special Service Company. Some men were sent to the Division Rest Camp for a few days. The others occupied themselves with writing letters, cleaning weapons, and talking about the days to come. In the reserve area, the Third Battalion conducted a training schedule. Quartermaster trucks arrived and were held ready to take off at any moment.

Not all the Regiment spent its time just waiting. For large-scale attacks to be successful, S-2 has to know where the enemy is, how strong he is, and what he's doing. The best way to find out this information is by patrols, small groups of experienced riflemen who know how to move quietly and keep their eyes open. Such a patrol was sent out from Company A a few days before the big drive was to begin. Its mission was to reconnoiter and, if possible, destroy any German defenses on the opposite bank of the tiny Ruwer River which bounded the Regiment's front lines.

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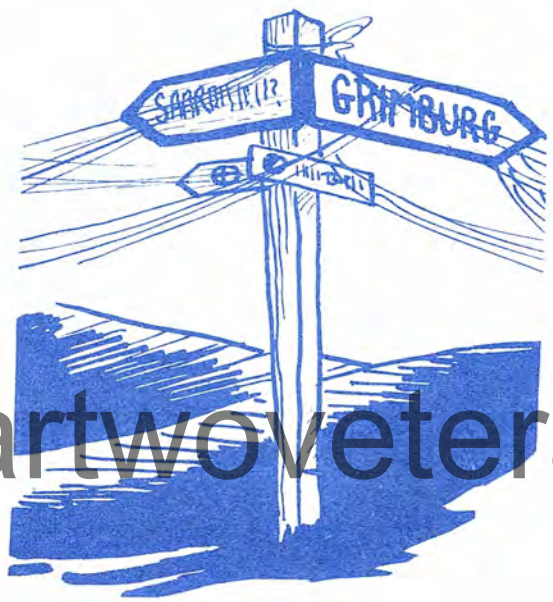
The patrol was divided into three groups. The main party under S/Sgt Macejak was to proceed down the draw on the other side of the river, probing for enemy positions. Two other groups under Sgt. Atz and Pfc Faber were to provide flank security.

After the first group had crossed and moved away from the river into the woods that separated it from the nearby railroad track, the first scout, Shorty Holton, saw a German wagon about 200 yards away. Investigation showed signs of recent activity. Further on, a house was sighted. Lee and Kligman moved cautiously forward to see what was inside. Suddenly a machine gun on the side of the hill burst out. Silence. Then the crack of an M-1. Machine gun bullets sprayed the trees and everyone dropped. Kligman appeared and reported that the MG on the hill had killed Lee. Faber immediately contacted Macejak, and a skirmish line was formed to move up the right side of the draw. Pvts McMahan and Ashe soon captured two German riflemen, and Pfc Cannon overcame a machine gun nest which held three men, one of whom had been wounded by Kligman's first shot. The thin line bravely moved forward, firing continuously. Several more Germans were killed or captured. The small patrol, fighting against considerable odds, was wreaking havoc on the German defenses. But not without cost. Allen, Rafferty and Lee were killed. Acker, badly wounded, was given first aid by Hickey, but died shortly after.

Depleted in numbers and out of radio contact with the company, the patrol began to withdraw. The prisoners were ordered to carry the wounded and dead. Despite constant sniper fire the group recrossed the river without mishap.

To the men who went along that night, the patrol was just another job—a rough one, because some of their buddies had been killed. But to the Regiment and higher headquarters the destruction of the MG nests, the report on the terrain, and the information obtained from the prisoners spelled the possible difference between success and failure in the opening minutes of the race to the Rhine.

On March 13th the 301st and 302nd Regiments jumped off. The first obstacle to be met was the Ruwer River, not far in front of the Line of Departure. This was crossed during the first day, and the engineers soon had a bridge across it. The attacking regiments moved erratically, sometimes swiftly, sometimes not at all, and with no communications with each other, so it was difficult for the 376th to keep informed as to the actual situation. But by the morning of March 14th it was obvious that although the attacking echelons were receiving heavy artillery and rocket fire, there was going to be little resistance by enemy infantry. Although the attack had not up to that time covered much ground it was building up a terrific momentum that soon would be unleashed. Like its traditional symbol the rattlesnake, the 376th lay coiled ready to spring at the order to attack.



The Race Begins

The first order came on the morning of March 15th. The first assignment for the Regiment, to clear the town of Hinzenburg which had been bypassed by forward elements of the division, was given to Company B. The town was taken without any trouble by 1100, at which time Company B went on to search the high ground around the town. The Second Battalion mounted the trucks which had been waiting for action during the preceding days and rode to an assembly area in the vicinity of Heddert. The Third Battalion motored to within a mile of Schillingen, detrucked and prepared to enter the town. But the little community was already too crowded with troops, so the Third assembled in a woods just west of the town and prepared to spearhead the Regiment's attack. Regiment established its forward Command Post in Schillingen.

At 2000 on the evening of March 15th, Third Battalion set out on foot to take the first objective, the town of Grimburg. It was a clear cool night. The faint starlight was supplemented by "artificial moonlight" from an Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Battalion somewhere off to the south. Although the Battalion's organic transportation and anti-tank guns were left behind in Schillingen, a platoon of light tanks from Company D of the 778th Tank Battalion was attached. Riding atop the tanks was the Second Platoon of Company I led by Second Lieutenant Roland H. Vogt. The infantry-carrying tanks spearheaded the column, followed by the rest of the Battalion, Company I leading. With Company M came the two mules which Colonel Thurston had acquired to carry mortar ammunition and extra radio batteries. For increased mobility, the heavy machine gun sections of Company M left their water-cooled guns behind and carried light machine guns.

Entering heavy woods a few miles before Grimburg, the column encountered a road block which caused the tanks to turn back. Taking to foot paths through the dense woods, the men and mules proceeded without armor support. The route meandered over hills and across streams. In places the dense foliage completely shut off all light, and men had to hold on to one another to maintain contact. A few hundred yards in front of Grimburg, the lead scouts of Company I were challenged by German outposts. Shifting the route slightly, the scouts bypassed the sentries. Mistaking the column for friendly troops, the Germans did not attempt to hinder their advance. Not until the last elements of Company I were passing did the Germans realize their mistake. Then one opened fire. The Third Platoon returned the fire. Sergeant Martin J. Sheehy wounded one of the sentries with his BAR. Meanwhile the other companies of the Battalion had lost contact. Company I

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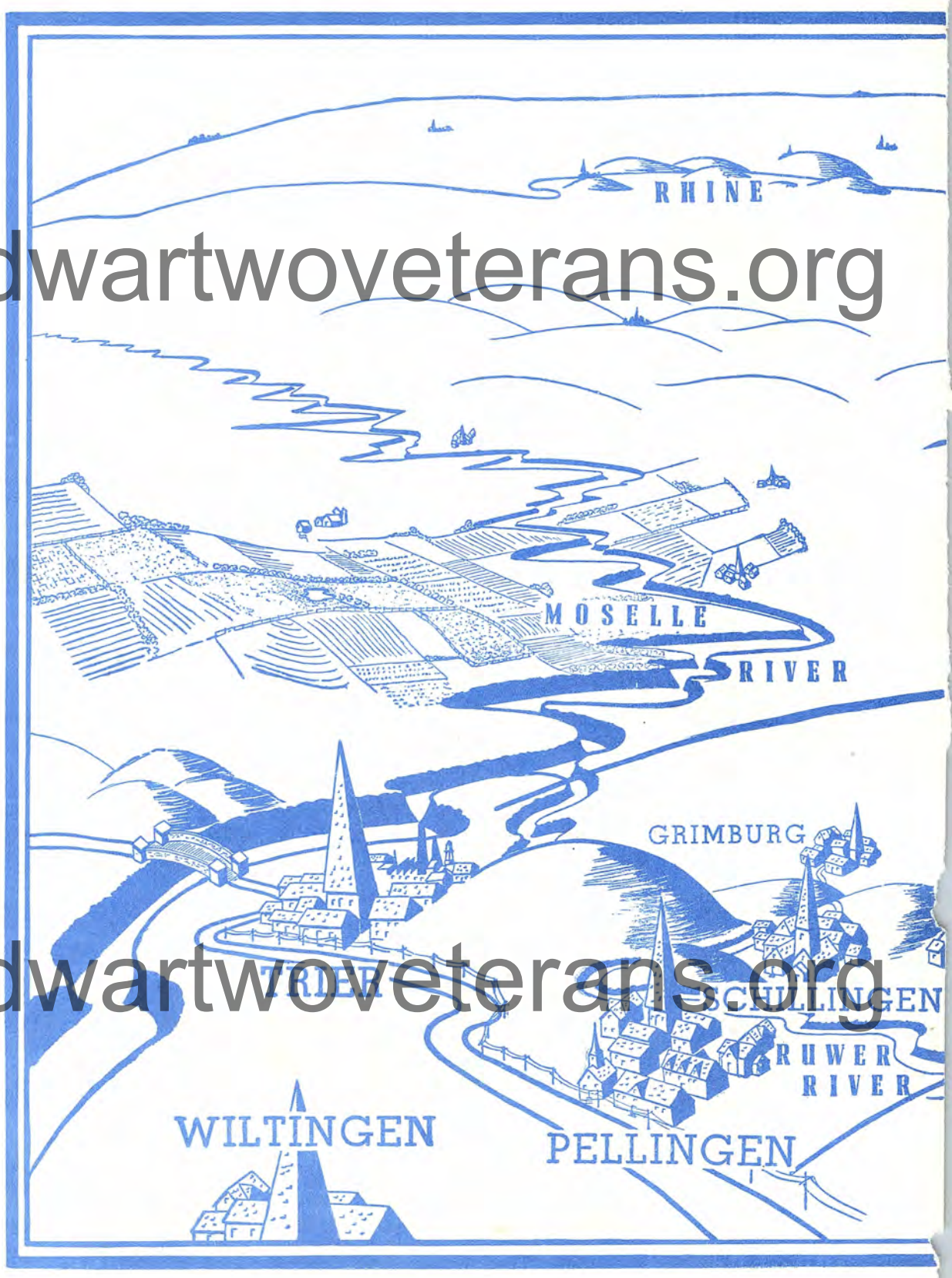

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went on to the edge of the town. Companies K and L soon drew abreast on the right. Scouts were sent into the town to probe its defenses. Apparently the firing had not alerted the other sentries. They were easily surprised. The "sneak" attack had taken the Germans completely off their guard. No alert orders had been given to the sentries because the local commanders hadn't the faintest idea that there were any American troops within miles. As the outposts were rounded up, their only apparent emotion was that of complete astonishment. Patrols were then sent to round up the rest of the town's garrison, all of whom were found in their beds, either sleeping or being entertained by the local fräuleins. Apparently more anxious than their soldier-protectors, the citizens of Grimburg were all awake, assembled in the most strongly-reinforced cellars.

By 0300 the town was completey cleared. A perimeter defense was set up, and those troops not actually manning the outposts found suitable houses and settled down for some much-needed sleep. Since the Battalion did not have its anti-tank guns, anti-tank mines were placed on all possible approaches, and bazookas were held in readiness at each outpost. But apparently neighboring enemy forces did not yet know that Grimburg had fallen. Company K outposts captured a motor-cycle messenger sent out just two hours previous by the Commanding General of a German division to contact the Grimburg garrison. A truck entering the town was also surprised and captured. At about 0700 a German column came into view from the southeast. Eyewitness accounts vary as to the extent of the German forces involved. Some of the more excitable men in the outposts claim to have seen as many as ten Tiger tanks followed by infantry. It is more generally agreed that the column consisted only of two or three self-propelled guns without support. Sighting American troops in Grimburg, the self-propelleds opened fire, hitting one house which Company I occupied, but causing no casualties. After a few rounds the guns withdrew. Shortly thereafter enemy troops were observed digging in the woods to the east of Grimburg. Contact was made with the 949th Field Artillery by radio, and fire was adjusted onto the enemy in the woods. Everyone was alerted for the counterattack that was expected at any minute.

Colonel Thurston was at one of the Company I outposts when Private First Class Harold Gorelick came running up to him with the information that another tank column was hitting the town from the north. Colonel Thurston took out his field glasses and looked in the direction that Gorelick indicated. "Just a minute, son," he said. "They look like ours."

Even though the tanks were still a long way off, it soon became obvious that Colonel Thurston's identification had been correct. The tanks were Shermans, the

leading elements of Task Force Richardson of the 10th Armored "Tiger" Division. Hastily all anti-tank mines were pulled in, and the infantrymen sat back to await their iron-clad comrades. Soon the first tank pulled over the hill and began blazing away with its 76mm gun at the Germans in the woods. The Third Battalion had been pulled out of another tight position.

But there was little time for rejoicing. There were more objectives to be taken that day. During the morning the supply jeeps and kitchen trucks began to arrive in Grimburg. Ammunition and "K" rations were passed out, and all was made ready to press on to Sitzerath. This time it was Company K's turn to take the lead. Sitzerath lies in a hollow, surrounded by steep hills to the north and west. Company K stormed the town from the hills, to clear a path for the supporting platoon of tanks. The infantrymen were pinned down by a German 77m gun, well camouflaged. Enemy Panzerfausts prevented the tanks from getting into positions where they could place fire on the 77. Captain Ralph T. Brown, Company K's Commander, crawled to a knoll 300 yards south of the Panzerfausts in an attempt to dislodge them with his rifle grenade. Just as he reached the knoll, the 77mm fired almost point-blank at him, shrapnel wounding him in the face. However, his presence caused the Panzerfaust men to fear that they were being outflanked, so they quickly withdrew. This enabled the tanks to direct their fire on the 77mm, silencing it, and permitting the capture of Sitzerath.

In Sitzerath the kitchens were given time enough to set up and were about to feed the men their first hot meal since the beginning of the attack, when the order came to press on to Bierfeld. But the Battalion didn't stop for breath in Bierfeld. They pressed on to the final objective for the day, Nonnweiler, which was considered the toughest item on the agenda. Here they prepared themselves for heavy fighting and another sleepness night. But as the column reached the outskirts of the town, the scouts reported that it was full of tanks — American tanks! The Third Battalion had once more crossed paths with the ubiquitous Task Force Richardson.

During this advance by the Third Battalion the other units of the Regiment kept closely behind, ready to assume the initiative on order. At 0915 on the morning of March 16th the Second Battalion marched from its area in the vicinity of Heddert to a forward assembly area, arriving there at 1200. After a brief halt they continued marching to Grimburg and thence to Sitzerath, where they spent the night and prepared to hop off in the attack on the morning of the 17th of March. Meanwhile the First Battalion had left Franzenheim at 1415, going by truck to a forward assembly area, from which they marched to Grimburg, arriving at 1916.

It seemed fairly certain at this time that the German forces facing the Regiment

were in almost complete rout. Little resistance was met in any of the towns taken. Reports indicated that the situation was similar on adjoining fronts, although Seventh Army troops to the south were having somewhat slower going through the difficult terrain. Now was the time to press the advantage. Everyone was tired and needed sleep, but knew that there could be no rest until the Rhine had been reached.

By daylight of March 17th, the Second Battalion had shoved off from Sitzerath and was passing through the Third Battalion in Nonnweiler. They went on to take Otzenhausen by 0810, then made a morning of it by taking Schwerzenbach before noon. In both towns the troops were greeted by white sheets, shirts and towels hung from every window to indicate the villagers' unwillingness to follow their Führer's injunction to resist the invaders unto death.

One group of about 60 German soldiers did attempt a counter-attack from the south and east of Otzenhausen. Although somewhat surprised at this audacious and fool-hardy tactic of the former "supermen," the Weapons Platoon of Company E had a field day. The light machine gun section brought the Germans under fire at approximately 400 yards and forced them to disperse and seek cover. With perfect timing the 60mm mortars poured their shells into the small crevices in the open field. Six of the attackers were killed, many wounded, and the remainder fled. During the mortar barrage, Sergeant Gerald W. Jende, section leader, witnessed one of the rare occasions of a direct hit on an enemy with a mortar shell. As he stated later, "He had a head, and then it disintegrated. Really beautiful!"

Company G under the command of Captain Arthur W. Dodson had just completed the organization of Schwerzenbach when the 300 radio crackled forth this message, "Enemy horse drawn column withdrawing toward you; remain in present location and be prepared to intercept same." The company was alerted, and Captain Dodson and Lieutenant Bob V. Smith, the Forward Observer from the 919th Field Artillery, set up an OP to spot the approaching Germans.

At 1515 the column was sighted approximately 3000 yards due east, too far for effective infantry action but an artilleryman's dream. Lieutenant Smith made a few mental calculations as to range, called battalion, and the shells began to land. Only one adjustment was needed. Then came the fire for effect. Perfect effect. The column was completely disorganized. Wagons overturned, the men that were not wounded immediately dashed for cover, horses stampeded. Nothing was left to continue the retreat.

Without much difficulty the Battalion went on to take Eisen and Achtelsbach during the afternoon. Attacking had become an endurance march. Troops could

continue to take towns as long as their feet could carry them.

At 1400 on March 17th the 376th Infantry Regiment with attachments became Combat Team 376 with the mission of pursuing the retreating foe as rapidly as possible, using the method of leap-frogging battalions. At 1545, hours before the Second Battalion had even entered Achtelsbach, the First Battalion was ordered to pass through the Second in that town. But it was not until 2130 that the leading elements of the First passed through the Second and went on to take Brucken. Throughout the night the First Battalion continued to advance, going into Birkenfeld where it contacted the Third Battalion, 302nd Infantry. From there it advanced on Elchweiler, where a few Volkssturm troops put up a show of resistance by firing on the column from positions concealed by the darkness of the night. But they were soon rounded up and the town was taken.

The First Battalion then retraced its steps to Birkenfeld where, at 0430 on the morning of the 18th, it was told to halt and await orders changing the axis of attack. The pause gave the men a chance to get a hot meal and a few hours rest. During the morning trucks arrived in the town. At 1130 the battalion took off along the new route, this time as a motorized attacking force.

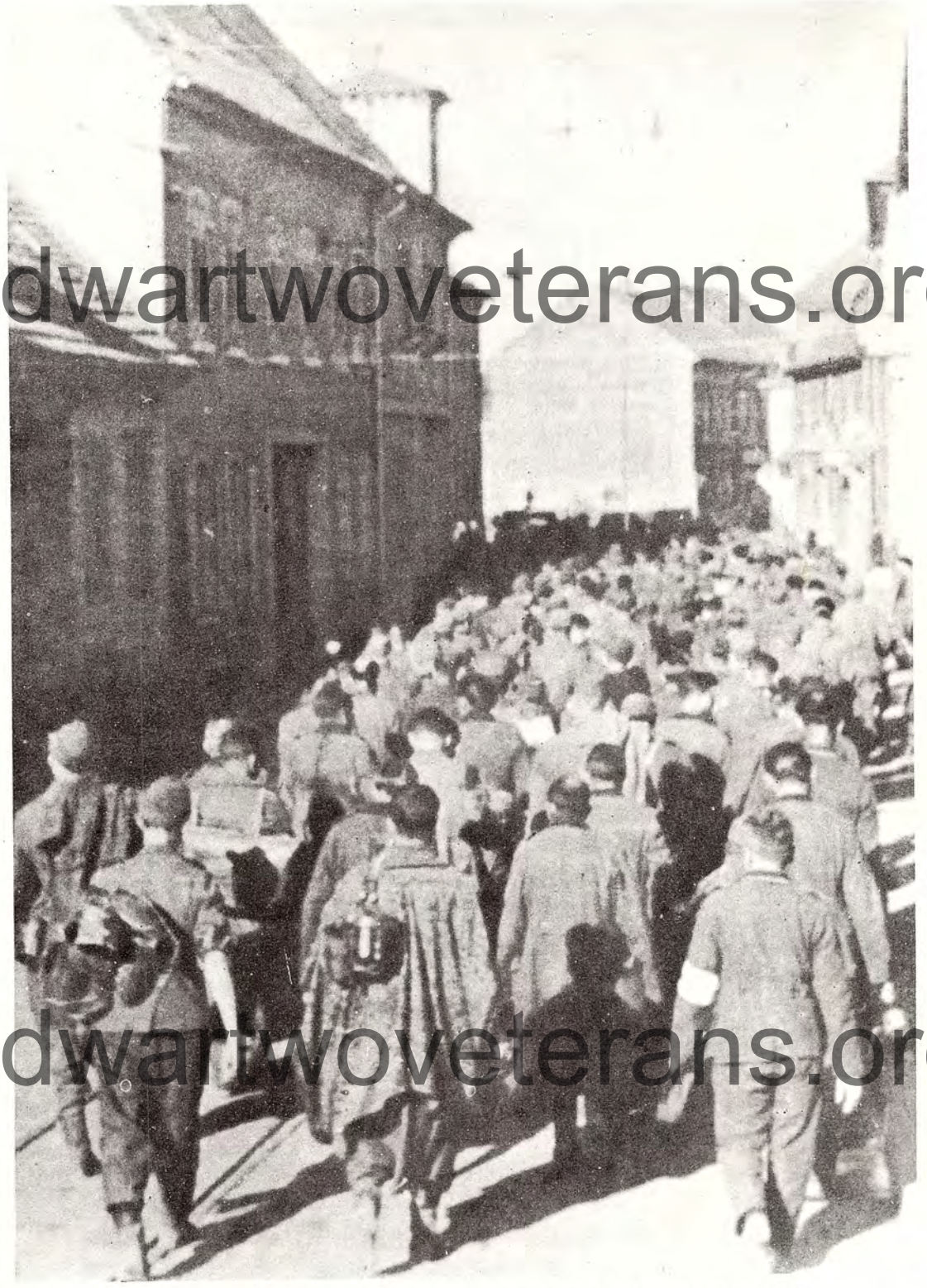
On reaching Heimbach the Battalion was held up by tanks of an Armored Division which had run into a hornets nest of fanatical resistance. Enemy anti-aircraft guns spotted in advantageous positions in the hills east of the town had knocked out a few tanks and held up the rest. Major Eskel N. Miller offered to flank the positions, but the commander of the armored unit refused the help. So the First Battalion remained in the immobile trucks for four hours awaiting developments.

The armor had put in a call for dive bombers, and soon a formation of P-47's arrived. For two hours they bombed and strafed the enemy positions and self propelled guns. The Germans vainly tried to keep the planes off with 20mm and 88mm flak, but the bombs found their targets.

Finally the road was cleared, and the First Battalion proceeded into the town. The armor deciding to by-pass the stretch between Heimbach and Mettweiler, moved off to the south. It was growing dark, and the Battalion's orders were to proceed on to Mettweiler.

The rifle companies dismounted and swept the woods along the road into the town, Company A on the left of the road, Company B on the right, with "C" following along the highway. Entering Mettweiler, the Battalion rounded up the final remnants of an old enemy, the 465th Volks Grenadier Division.

The Third Battalion mounted its trucks for the first time in Nonnweiler at 0900 on the 18th of March. After some delay the heterogeneous column got under way.



Germans marching westward: Prisoners moving back through the streets of a German town in the wake of the Regiment's Race to the Rhine River.

There were scout cars, tanks, tank destroyers, AAA half-tracks, troop-laden 6x6's, and a motley collection of captured Wehrmacht trucks, pressed into service to carry supplies. The Third reached Heimbach at 1530, and moved to billets at Berlangenbach. The Battalion prepared to pass through the First along the Regimental axis. The Second Battalion rode from Achtelsbach to Ellweiler and thence to Hoppstaedten to spend the night.

It was on March 18th that the drive became almost completely motorized, with troops detrucking only to rest and to eliminate the infrequent resistance. The trucks used were Quartermaster vehicles driven by Negro troops who had never before been up front with the Infantry. They approached their new job with anxiety and eagerness. They didn't know just what to expect, but they wanted very much to do all they could to make the campaign completely successful. Before long they were seasoned combat veterans. Their bubbling wit and humor was often a welcome lift to their weary passengers.

Came the morning of March 19th and again the motor columns were moving, now riding fast and hard in an attempt to catch the wildly retreating foe. Capturing a town consisted of riding through it at top speed, counting the white flags and keeping an eye open for snipers. The list of towns and villages taken by the Regiment that day reads like a time-table for the Palatinate Railroad. In the 16 mile advance the Regiment sped through Thallichtenberg, Korborn, Dennweiler, Oberalbon, Ulmet, Erdesbach, Patersbach, Bedesbach, Welchweiler, Elzweiler, Horschbach, Hinzweiler, Aschbach, Wolfstein, and was advancing on Morbach when it was held up by orders changing the route again. Meanwhile the First Battalion, now in Regimental reserve, shuttled to Bedesbach. The Second Battalion assembled in Olsbrucken, in readiness to pass through the Third.

The scenery throughout most of the advance was typical of the picturesque rural areas of southern Germany. The frequent hills were covered with aromatic pine forests so thick with trees that they were dark and cool despite the brightest sunshine. Clear bubbling streams ran down the hills into wide lovely valleys, all intensively cultivated. The quaint little towns looked like illustrations from Grimm's fairy tales.

But the sight-seeing infantrymen were more interested in the spectacle that actually lined the roads on which they travelled — the handiwork of their flying brothers-in-arms, the United States Army Air Forces. It was the wreckage of what had been only a few hours before long columns of German troops, equipment, and supplies, frantically trying to reach the comparative safety of the east bank of the Rhine. The weather had been clear. With perfect visibility, the fighter

planes and dive bombers had had a field day, strafing and bombing the closely packed convoys. Due to the acute shortage of gasoline in Germany, almost all of the Wehrmacht vehicles had been horse-drawn. Many of the horses had been killed, and their bloated corpses blocked the road. Many trucks and wagons were still burning. Others had overturned, spilling their contents along the roadside.

At first horses were the only living remnants of the retreat sighted. Then German soldiers began to appear from the woods. They came first by twos and threes. Then they began to come in greater numbers until the roads were lined with shuffling green-clad figures. No guards were assigned. The willing prisoners were merely ordered to continue marching to the west.

The Wehrmacht sergeant leading one group of motley ex-supermen carried a large cardboard sign given him by some G.I.'s along the route. He seemed to consider it some sort of safe-conduct pass, for he flashed it at every American truck that passed. It read, "I was captured by Ceramic."

So crowded were the roads with advancing columns that the Germans were never out of sight of some American vehicle. Eventually they were picked up by special PW teams and herded into already over-crowded enclosures.

The Regiment was now moving so fast that it was frequently out in front of the armor, and infantry units on both flanks had been completely outdistanced. The 94th Reconnaissance Troop had to be called upon to screen the now exposed southern flank of the 376th. The Third Cavalry Group, a highly mobile organization, which had originally been assigned the mission of protecting the exposed flank, was 40 miles behind the Regiment. Were it not for the many captured German vehicles which the Regiment had put into use, the kitchens and company supplies would never have been able to keep up with the rapidly-advancing troops.

For the 919th Field Artillery Battalion, which was as always faithfully supporting the 376th Infantry, this was a most hectic period. Batteries would move into a new area, set up their 105's, and begin the arduous task of digging in. But invariably, before the positions were completed, the targets would be out of range and the artillerymen would get their march orders. Without having fired a round, they would patiently reload all their equipment and move on. In all the long drive, from the time the 376th hopped off until it prepared to assault the city of Ludwigshafen, the 919th fired only one mission with an expenditure of 24 rounds. The Regiment's own Cannon Company, which in past operations had served almost exclusively as an auxiliary artillery battery, was attached to the leading motorized assault battalion, ready to give close support.

The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of Regimental Headquarters Com-

Germans display the latest thing in flags to 94th Doughs in Oggersheim.

pany often found itself deep in enemy territory while checking the roads in front of the motor columns. One dark night Private First Class John P. Downey was stationed at an intersection as a guide for troops headed that way. Sighting two trucks approaching, Downey stepped out into the intersection and indicated the correct road. Not until both had passed him did he realize that the trucks were German vehicles and that the last one was towing an 88.

The troops spent a cold, uncomfortable night on March 19th, huddled aboard their halted trucks. Once more the crowded roads had slowed the Regimental advance and caused a wait for orders to change direction. As dawn broke on March 20th the sleepy-eyed drivers finally received the order to "Turn 'em over!" and the Regiment was again on the move, speeding over hills and through villages. This time the destination was Neukirchen where the Third Battalion detrucked and awaited further orders.

It was on the road to Neukirchen that the 376th renewed its acquaintanceship with an old friend, the 12th Armored Division, with which the Regiment had maneuvered in Tennessee. The 12th had just met the 11th Armored at Merzweiler, trapping some 4,000 Germans between the two divisions. Now it was attempting to reach the super-highway that stretched from Kaiserslautern to the Rhine. The first tanks to approach the Reichsautobahn were knocked out by well-concealed

German anti-tanks guns. 15 tanks were left abandoned where they had been hit.

The German AT positions were too well hidden and protected to be probed out by the road-bound armor, so at 1700 on March 20th the Third Battalion took off on foot to clean up the woods on both sides of the Autobahn and to take the Regimental objective, Carlsberg.

Resistance was encountered 500 yards southeast of Enkenbach. Enemy troops were dug in through the woods. They had AA guns of various calibres which they were firing as anti-personnel weapons. In spite of their excellent positions these Germans had little fight left in them. After a few rounds were fired at them, they began to surrender en masse. For the rest of the night our troops encountered only civilians, all of whom were astonished when they discovered a large American column moving silently through the woods. The Germans still call American soldiers the "Katzen" because of their ability to move noiselessly.

The Third Battalion continued on over the hill south of Enkenbach and came out onto the Autobahn. Over rolling hills the broad twin ribbons of concrete gleamed almost endlessly in the moonlight. As the Third Battalion trudged in two silent columns along either side of the great highway, they were passed by an inspiring spectacle, tanks and half-tracks of the 12th Armored Division, throttles wide open, shooting sparks into the night, speeding east along the Autobahn which Hitler had built for his own tanks. Not long after midnight of the 19th, Second Battalion cleared Hinzweiler, and continued its motor march by bounds until it arrived in Neukirchen at 1600. The First Battalion moved by shuttling from Bedesbach to Ottenberg. The Regimental Command Post moved twice during the day and set up overnight at Neukirchen.

At dawn on the 21st of March Carlsberg was the deepest penetration of the 376th into German territory. But it was not to be for long. Waiting only long enough to get a good breakfast, First Battalion boarded its trucks and moved off to the east passing through the Third at Carlsberg by 1100.

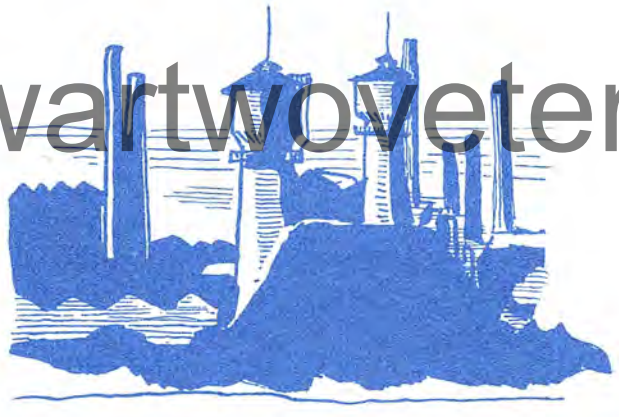
It was just beyond Carlsberg that the 376th had its first real encounter with enemy aircraft. As the First Battalion convoy moved through a rather narrow defile, it was attacked by several of the amazingly fast jet-propelled fighters. accompanied by two slower twin-engine planes. The faster planes bombed and strafed almost at will, but Battery D, 465th AAA AW Battalion managed to score hits on the twin-engine jobs and reported one of them brought down. Although the bombs failed to hit the convoy, the strafing killed three and wounded eight.

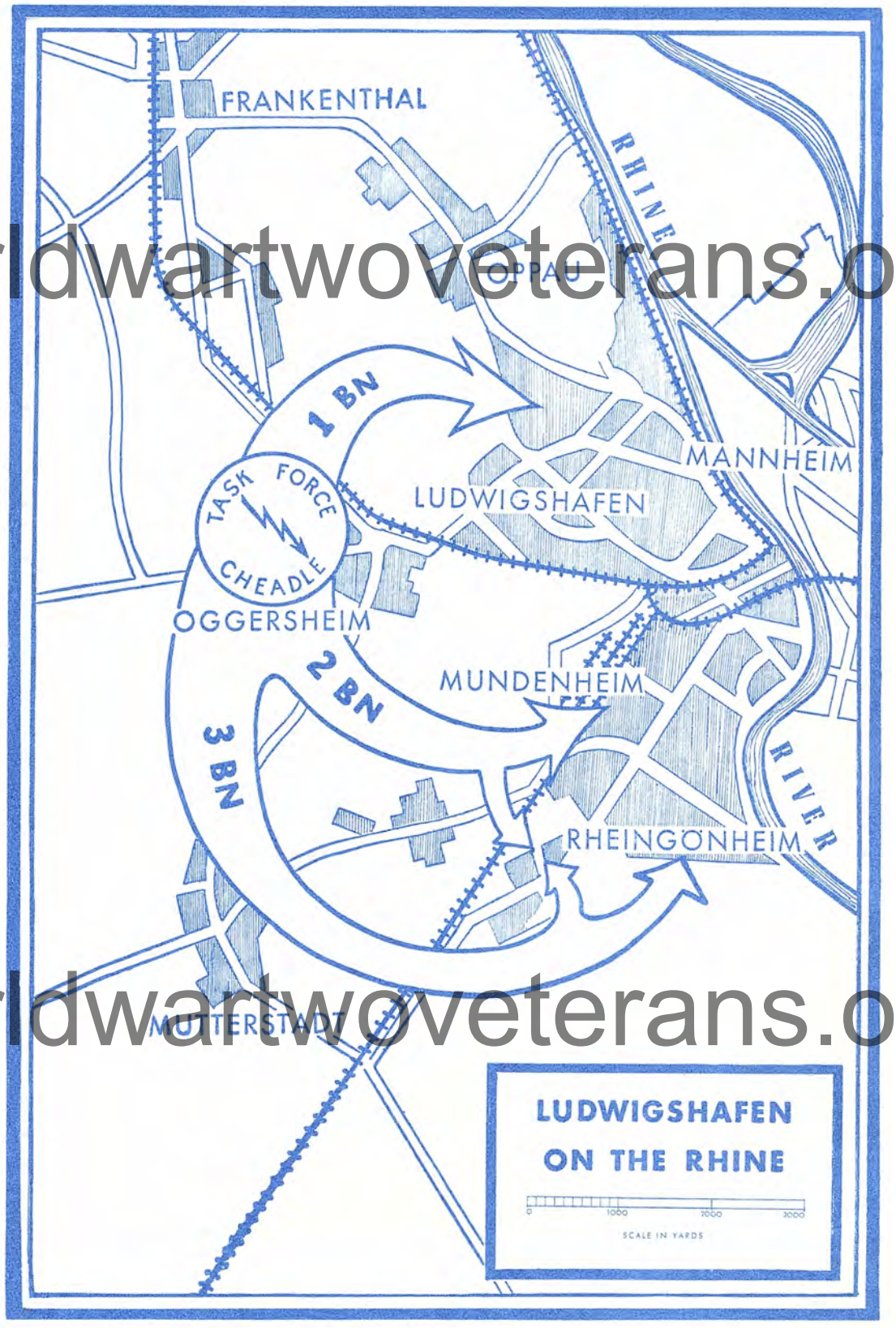
At Studenheim the First Battalion detrucked and continued the advance on foot to the objective. Once again the Regiment received orders to change its bound-

aries. So the First was halted until the limits of the new zone were determined. Then it moved south to the new area where it set up a defensive line facing the great chemical center of Ludwigshafen on the Rhine. The swift pursuit was over for a while. The Rhine had been reached, but the west bank had not been completely cleared. The German High Command had determined to defend Ludwigshafen as long as possible. For this purpose the 9th Flak Division, which had formerly provided anti-aircraft protection for the city, was left behind. With it were fanatical groups of SS men. Pausing only to take breath after its plunge from the Ruwer to the Rhine, the 376th prepared to breach the city's defenses. The First Battalion sent patrols into the outskirts to probe the emplacements there.

During the day the Second Battalion moved on foot from Neukirchen to Carlsberg, where it entrucked and rode on to Oggersheim to prepare for its role in the attack on Ludwigshafen. The Third Battalion remained in reserve in Carlsberg.

With the Regiment poised ready for the attack on Ludwigshafen, let us look back over the 376th's operations for the week of March 15th to 22nd and consider their importance. The Regiment had made a gain of approximately 100 miles, cleared over 30 towns, and jammed PW enclosures with over 5000 prisoners. Huge stores of enemy equipment had been captured or destroyed. But the greatest significance of the 376th's drive was the part it played in the link-up of the Third and Seventh Armies. By their junction these two powerful American armies completely destroyed the German Seventh Army and bottled up the German First Army. General Eisenhower's plans had been fulfilled; all German forces west of the Rhine had been neutralized.





Ludwigshafen

Throughout World War II the American Press has done a more than adequate job in reporting battlefront news. But on occasion it has made some flagrant errors in its combat coverage. These mistakes are usually overlooked by the average reader, but to the soldiers whom they concern, they provide considerable amusement. Thus the men of the 376th Infantry Regiment laughed ironically at the newspapers of March 22th which said that the important German industrial city of Ludwigshafen on the Rhine had been taken by the 12th Armored Division.

True, the 12th Armored had tanks in Ludwigshafen on the 22nd. But they weren't active tanks engaged in flushing snipers out of a captured city. They were blackened, driverless hulls, come to grief before the massed 88's of Ludwigshafen's fanatical defenders. The 12th had attempted to sweep onto the broad Rhine plain and breach the city's defenses by sheer force of the momentum of the drive from the Moselle. But the German High Command was not willing to give up this important city as easily as they had abandoned the territory in front of it. The 9th Flak Division, a veteran outfit which for years had made the skies over Ludwigshafen and other industrial cities a hell for RAF and USAAF bomber crews, had been deployed around the city as infantry troops. Their flak guns were depressed to zero elevation for use against attacking armor and personnel. As many as fifty were massed in a small area. Boxcars full of 88mm ammunition were on hand. Visibility from the gun positions was almost perfect. The attackers could not make a move on the open ground before the city without being spotted.

Taking over the initiative from the 12th Armored, the 376th Infantry set up in Oggersheim, a surburb of Ludwigshafen, on March 21st, in preparation for an attack on the following day. Lieutenant Colonel Raynor E. Anderson, Regimental Commander, established his Command Post in Oggersheim's largest brewery, a central location from which to direct the assault. The brewery, still in operation, provided a constant flow of cool beer for the members of the staff as they worked over plans.

Oggersheim was the first German town with a sizable civilian population that the 376th had occupied for any length of time. So, while the rest of the staff planned the attack, Major Frank Bayle, S-5, was busy organizing some kind of military government for the town. In this task, he received welcome and unexpected assistance from a 21 year old American girl from Brooklyn, Miss Hilda Theiss, one of the first American citizens to be liberated in Germany. She

aided Major Bayle considerably in setting up the military government by giving the names of people who would aid the Americans, translating orders to the bürgermeister, and posting regulations for the civilians.

Soldiers of the First Battalion were the first foot troops to penetrate the Ludwigshafen industrial area. Patrols entered the suburbs of the city late on March 21st and encountered heavy enemy resistance. The battalion set up in Oppau and patrolling continued throughout the following day. On the evening of March 22nd the battalion moved out against Friesenheim, one of the chief suburbs, with Company A in the lead. As the scouts of the leading Third Platoon rounded a large lake that fronted the town, an enemy machine gun opened up and was soon joined by others, maintaining a continuous stream of heavy fire. After reorganizing the battalion withdrew back to Oggersheim, sending small patrols from Companies A and C on into Friesenheim.

By the time the companies reorganized in Oggersheim and received their orders it was dawn and time to resume the attack. With only a quick cup of hot coffee to offset the lack of sleep the men set out once more for Friesenheim. This time there were two companies abreast, "A" on the left, "C" on the right. They found that the Germans had returned during the night to the open ground between Oggersheim and the LD, and were now occupying well dug-in positions. The defenders were closely supported by 88mm and 20mm anti-aircraft guns.

The only approach to the German positions was across open ground. There were no covered routes. It was a situation that called for marching fire. The leading platoons of Companies A and C used this effective technique with great success. It takes a rare brand of courage to move across an open field, shooting as you go, knowing all the time that the enemy has protection and you have none. But it works. As long as the bullets keep whizzing close overhead, Jerry stays down low in his hole until the G.I. gets close enough to rout him out. Company C's Second Platoon under First Lieutenant Raymond L. Graham plus Staff Sergeant Harold B. Price with one squad from the First Platoon over-ran the German positions, capturing numerous prisoners and two 88mm guns. Sergeant Domonick R. Di Stefano and Private John J. Key Jr. were wounded in this action after killing more than their share of Germans.

Meanwhile, Company B which was in Battalion reserve, sent a combat patrol under Lieutenant Carl A. Crouse to guard the right flank of the battalion. By skillful use of the bazooka and called artillery fire, the patrol drew the enemy from their holes and collected over 20 prisoners.

At 1330 the attack was resumed and was successful in penetrating Friesenheim.

Here the leading platoon was brought under the direct fire of two 88's and two 20mm AA guns just 200 yards away. Advance was held up until Sergeant Leslie R. Jewell's machine gun section from Company C's Fourth Platoon was able to open up on the gun crews and keep them from firing.

Although they arrived in Oggersheim only shortly before midnight of the 21st, the Second Battalion began its attack at 0130 of the 22nd. Company E and a heavy machine gun section of Company H led off with the mission of taking the town of Maudach. Only one enemy outpost was encountered. At 0430 the town was taken. Only two prisoners were found when Company F searched the town.

Company F was then assigned the mission of taking Rheingonheim and continuing the attack toward the north and taking Mundenheim. They crossed the Line of Departure at 1105 on March 22nd. The First Platoon on the east side of the road was held up by machine gun and rifle fire. The Second Platoon on the west side of the road used marching fire and the support of the right machine gun section to secure positions on the southwest edge of the town, and then by its fire enabled the First Platoon to sideslip resistance and enter the town to resume the attack. The assault continued with two platoons on the line until the center of town was reached, where the width of the zone required the support platoon to be committed. The Company continued the attack to the north edge of the town where heavy artillery, machine gun and sniper fire forced a halt.

Company G crossed the Line of Departure at 1100 and initiated an attack on the axis of the Hochfeld-Mundenheim Road against enemy known to hold well dug-in positions running generally north and south through the western outskirts of Hochfeld. At 1700 Company E moved to Rheingonheim and assisted in clearing the north side of the town, taking four prisoners. A combat patrol, sent out to destroy an anti-tank gun, met an enemy patrol, and killed and wounded several of them, taking four prisoners. Meanwhile the First Battalion was still advancing very slowly against stubborn opposition.

About noon of March 22nd, Brigadier General Henry Cheadle, Assistant Commanding General of the 94th Division, visited Colonel Anderson at his Command Post in the Oggersheim brewery to check on the progress of the attack. At this time Colonel Anderson told the General that it would be impossible to take Ludwigshafen in the required time with only one infantry regiment. Thereupon Task Force Cheadle was created, with the sole mission of clearing the west bank of the Rhine at Ludwigshafen. It consisted of Combat Team Anderson, which contained the Second and Third Battalions, and Combat Team Miner, which contained the

First Battalion and the First Battalion, 301st Infantry. In addition, elements of the 12th Armored Division were attached to each Combat Team.

The Third Battalion, still in Regimental Reserve, motored from Carlsberg to Oggersheim during the morning of the 22nd. Enemy spotters hidden in Oggersheim directed artillery fire from Mannheim across the river onto the billets used by the Battalion, scoring many direct hits and causing several casualties.

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He looked just like any other German civilian, so when the old man started talking to them in hesitant but idiomatic English, the G.I.'s ignored him. They didn't care to fraternize. But when he said. "I don't think the U. S. Army has really changed much since I served my hitch." That was too much for the scientific curiosity of Pfc. Truman R. Temple.

"When were you in the American Army?" he asked.

"Back in '98." was the answer. "I served with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders." This last with unmistakable pride.

By this time there was a small crowd of Item Company men around. They all wanted to hear the old fellow's story. What the hell, he might be a Jerry civilian, but he was an ex-G. I. There couldn't be anything wrong with talking to him. So they asked him more questions, and he told them how he went to America as a youth, wandered over most of the country for several years, went to Cuba in the Spanish-American War, then returned to Germany early in the century when poor health forced him to retire to his parents farm. He asked the boys what states they were from and told them which ones he had visited. With Red Clark, who hails from Delphos, Ohio, he pulled the old gag about "what's high in the middle and round on both ends?"

It was a pleasant interlude for the tired Joes, who were in Oggersheim waiting to join the assault on Ludwigshafen. They were sorry when the old Rough Rider had to leave. They talked about him for a while. Then the shells started coming in. Everybody ducked for cellars. The barrage was plenty accurate. Obviously the Heinies had a spotter with a radio in the town. One of those innocent-looking civilians. Like the friendly old guy.

o o o

In the early hours before dawn on March 23rd the Third Battalion moved into line on the right of the Second. The two battalions fought abreast clearing the outposts in Mundenheim from the south. The First continued its attack on Ludwigshafen from the east. The First Battalion, 301st was swung in from the north in a flanking movement late on the 23rd. From all sides Task Force Cheadle was closing in on the doomed city. There was no over-all artillery preparation, and the battalions attacked almost independently in their sectors. It was a typical infantry job, approaching the city through slime-filled sewers, biting the dirt as the 88's fell, flushing snipers from the many factories, and fighting street to street in Ludwigshafen itself. By nightfall all foot elements of the Regiment were within the city proper.

War ends for Ludwigshafen defenders as they line up for march to POW pen.

For the first time in their combat careers the doughboys of the 376th in Ludwigshafen found themselves performing for an audience. The inquisitive citizens of the industrial city gathered in doorways and even in the streets to watch the fighting. Apparently ignorant of the fact that artillery shells don't discriminate between combatant and spectator, they stood about in idle groups as if they were immune to all danger. They couldn't realize that the shells coming from the guns in Mannheim were German shells, German shells falling on a German city, killing German civilians.

Nor were the burghers the only oblivious ones in the battle of Ludwigshafen. On the second day of fighting, the sniper-hunting G.I.'s were surprised to see a jeep containing what appeared to be two rear-echelon captains, wearing garrison caps. But they weren't captains, they were lieutenants, senior grade, in the United States Navy. They inquired as to the route to the river bank, and were amazed when told they couldn't go up there.

"But we were informed that this city had been cleared."

"Yes sir, all but some snipers."

"Well, what are those explosions? Are you fellows blowing up mines?"

"Mines hell! That's incoming mail."

"You mean artillery? Migawd, where's my helmet? Let's get out of here, driver!"

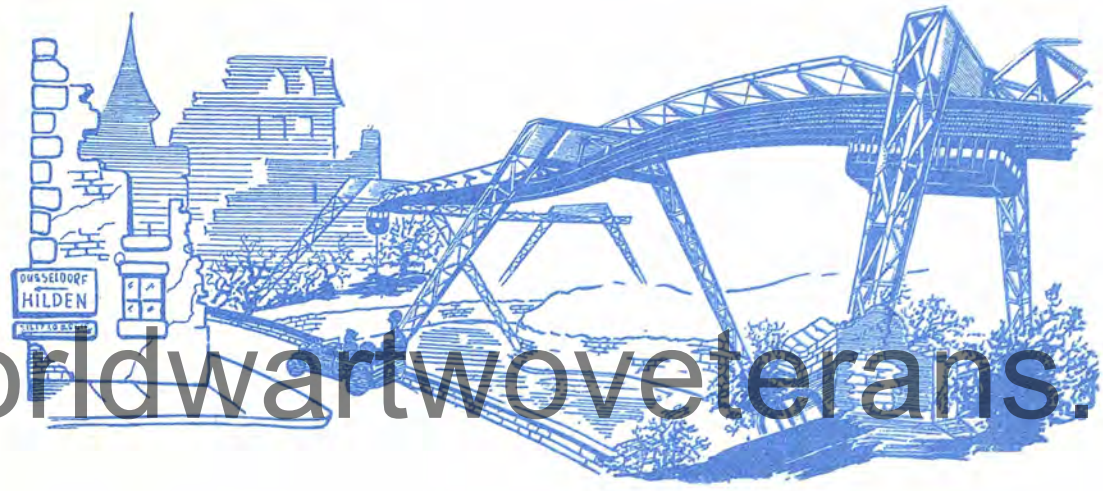
No matter what part of the city they entered, all the attacking battalions met the same fanatical resistance. The defenders of Ludwigshafen, realizing that they had no chance of escaping across the Rhine, were determined to fight to the death rather than surrender. A group of SS men would barricade themselves in a strategically-located building and fire at any American who ventured out into the street. To advance without being observed the men of the 376th had to "mouse-hole" from one house to the next, blasting holes with TNT or with a bazooka rocket. The First Battalion had learned this technique well in Tettingen.

With no tanks to blast the snipers out of the buildings, the infantrymen had to flush them out with rifles, grenades and bazookas. One mortar section used their new trigger mortar to fire almost flat trajectory into windows. By such dogged tactics the soldiers of Task Force Cheadle moved from phase line to phase line through the city to the railroad station where the various routes of attack converged. But even after Ludwigshafen had been declared officially taken, snipers kept popping up in disconcerting places.

Fanatical SS troups continued to hold out in various buildings during March 24th, but one by one they were eliminated. Although artillery and sniper fire still came from Mannheim across the Rhine, Ludwigshafen was taken. Task Force Cheadle having finished its job, was dissolved. The 376th Regiment was relieved by the 399th Infantry of the 100th Division, which was preparing to cross the Rhine.

Upon being relieved the 376th went back to Heimbach for its first real rest in two months. For an idea of the heroic task it had performed we quote from the commendation given the 94th Division by Major General Walton H. Walker, Commander of the XX Corps: ". . . . the 94th Infantry Division determinedly drove from its bridgehead over the Saar River to the Rhine. As the German forces on your front began to collapse you launched a pursuit which resulted in the capture of many towns, many prisoners of war and large amounts of enemy material and supplies. You and your division played an important part in driving the enemy from the area west of the Rhine. As a fitting climax the Division, with elements of the 12th Armored Division, took the important City of Ludwigshafen."

After a short rest, the 376th headed north, ready for a new task.



CHAPTER VIII New Missions

West of the Rhine

After Ludwigshafen the men of the 376th were all agreed on one thing: they had been through a tough fight and could all use a good rest. The battle for this great chemical center was the climax to seemingly endless days of combat since the Regiment first saw action in September on the Brittany Peninsula. These days of contact with the enemy, continuous except for the short time spent traveling from the besieged Atlantic ports to the Western Front, warranted a respite. The doughboys who had been through it all certainly thought so, and higher headquarters evidently concurred with the man in the forward foxhole. The 376th therefore went rearward into Third Army reserve. It was the first rest given the entire 94th Division in its long career of uninterrupted combat.

It was while the 376th was in this reserve that Twelfth Army Group decided to leaven the salt-water fresh Fifteenth Army with a veteran unit. General Omar Bradley called upon the 94th; and the 376th, along with the 301st, 302nd and supporting and attached units, found itself headed north for the Fifteenth Army. When the actual order to move finally filtered down to the 376th Command Post

in Heimbach, Germany on March 29th, it seemed to many that each of the higher echelons through which the message was transmitted had drained off a portion of the information. For the order merely said to proceed to Willich, Germany. There was not even enough meat in that to start a good rumor. But the rumor merchants tried their best anyway.

Once more the foot soldiers of the Regiment rode the 40 and 8's, and along a parallel route the motor convoy headed for Willich. The first vehicle of the motorized column crossed the Initial Point at 0730 on April 1st, Easter Sunday, and the organic transportation was well on its way by that afternoon when the two trains spotted for the Regiment at last puffed, chugged and jolted to a start. The route to Willich went through the countryside that von Rundstedt had overrun in December. The scenery here consisted of great tracts of desolate land that once were productive. As much of the Ardennes that the men could see from the trains and trucks was as ravaged as the country around Nennig. After three days of bumps and shakes; eating "K" rations; drinking hot coffee; watching the French, Luxembourgian, Belgian, Dutch and German scenery pass in review, the "horse-Pullmans" squeaked to a stop and the journey ended.

After detraining at Willich on April 3rd, the foot troops motored to Anrath, where billets had been provided for the night. The next day the battalions shuttled to their respective tactical reserve positions, the First Battalion in Depeskreuz, the Second in Willich, and the Third in Osterath. Shortly thereafter the Regimental Command Post also moved to Willich.

It was in these towns on the night of April 4th that the soldiers of the 376th Infantry Regiment were oriented on their new assignment. The great Ruhr industrial area had just been pocketed by the double enveloping movement of the First and Ninth Armies. The western limit of this pocket was the Rhine River. The 94th Division was to go into position along the west bank of the Rhine to prevent any part of the huge enemy force within thepocket from escaping across the river. Also the Division would be prepared to suppress rear area disorders and to enforce Military Government in its zone. Being in Divisional reserve, the 376th would be engaged chiefly in this latter portion of the mission. Further, the Division would be prepared to establish Military Government within the Ruhr behind the advancing armies. That phrase "behind the advancing armies" was a significant one. The 376th had been in the front lines for a long time; now it was to get an opportunity to do something different. There were few riflemen in the Regiment who did not breathe a sigh of relief. The foot soldier is proud of his primary mission, but he is never happy about it. No one who has been in combat wants to return to it. The men of

Remains of destroyed bridge over the Rhine River near Düsseldorf, Germany. Jeep is crossing on pontoon bridge built by the U. S. Army Engineers.

the 376th had proved their ability on the battlefield. Now they were not ashamed to accept a less glorious task.

But no one was foolish enough to believe that the new job would be easy. Within the Regiment's zone there were many uncaptured German soldiers, both in and out of uniform. There were Nazi civilians, ready every minute to sabotage the Allied drive. And there were thousands of "Displaced Persons," former slaves of the Germans, roaming the countryside, happy but confused by their newly-acquired freedom. They had to be collected in camps, fed, deloused and made ready for repatriation.

To enforce security the Regiment set up 30 stationary guard posts and operated frequent motorized patrols throughout the countryside. One rifle company reinforced was motorized and remained on continuous alert in case of riots or other disorders. Camps were set up for the DP's. Those soldiers who were not fully engaged in these activities participated in a regular drill schedule. After so many months in combat it was difficult to return to close-order drill, but soon the men were marching like garrison troops. On April 7th the First Battalion held the first parade by American troops in Germany since the end of the occupation after World War I. An enlarged Division band played the Division song and the Stars

and Stripes waved overhead as the Battalion passed in review for General Malony. The curious German civilians grouped around the parade ground could not help but be impressed. They had thought the Americans too undisciplined to march properly. Now they saw that American soldiers could parade inspiringly, not like automatons, but as free men banded together for a single purpose.

On April 12th the Regiment's zone was changed slightly, and the First Battalion moved by foot and motor to Anrath to occupy new areas and conduct motorized patrols in Anrath, Vennheidt, Neersen, Viersen and surrounding territories.

Most of the companies discontinued drill schedule at this time so that all available men could participate in the searching of German houses. The object was to find hidden stores of ammunition, rifles, pistols, cameras or any Wehrmacht equipment that the so innocent-looking civilians might be saving for future Werewolf activity. A check was also made of food supplies to aid the Military Government detachment in distribution. The search had many interesting sidelights. One old farmer nervously told the searching party that he had a "gun" in his garden. He took great pains to explain that the weapon was not his, the German Army had left it behind. Upon investigation, the "gun" turned out to be an 88mm anti-tank gun, with carriage and ammunition.

The Regimental Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Raynor E. Anderson, upon receipt of orders, reported for duty with XXII Corps Headquarters on the 13th. Lieutenant Colonel John W. Gaddis, former Executive Officer of the 302nd Infantry, assumed command of the Regiment on the 14th. On the 15th the entire Regiment moved to the enlarged area. The Regimental Command Post was set up in Kempen. The Second and Third Battalions were in Grefrath and Nieukerk, respectively. Here the mission remained unchanged.

But on April 17th the Battle of the Ruhr pocket was so near its final phases that the chances of the enemy attempting a crossing of the Rhine was quite good. Therefore the Third Battalion was relieved of responsibility of its area and was reassembled in Nieukerk and motorized with 24 trucks, prepared to repel any penetrations. A "dry run" alert during the hours of darkness assured the Regimental Commander that the Third Battalion was prepared to cope with any appropriate mission they might receive.

Soon the Ruhr pocket was completely eliminated, and on April 23rd reconnaissance elements of the Regiment went to the new area east of the Rhine.

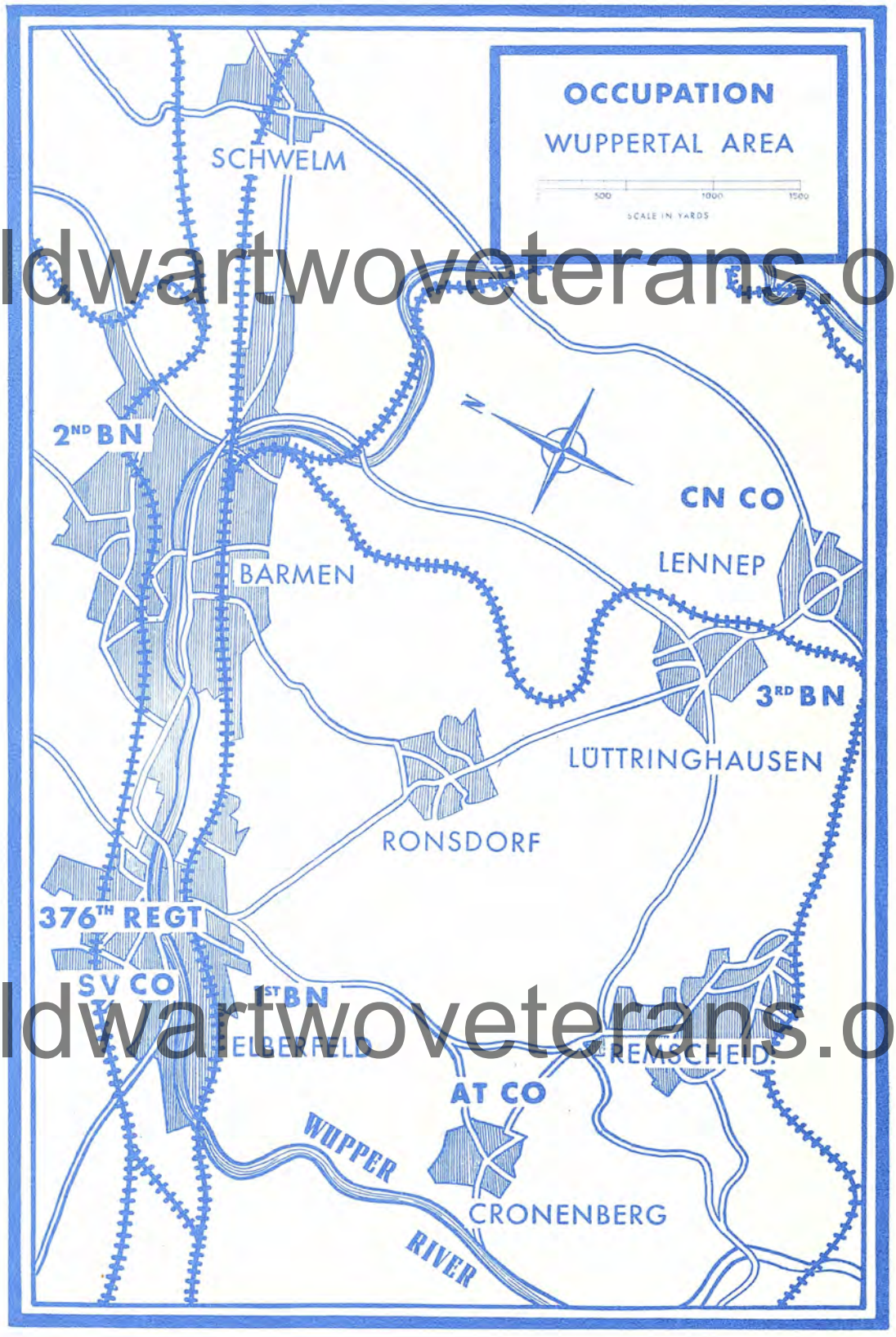
Wuppertal

The story of the 376th Infantry Regiment in the last few weeks before V-E Day is inextricably bound up with the tale of a city, Wuppertal. In its short history as a city—it was incorporated in 1929—Wuppertal has been many things to many people. The ambitious businessmen of the Handelskammer (Chamber of Commerce) considered it one of the chief centers of the German textile industry. The cultural elements of the population liked to think of their city as the Athens of the Bergischland, the musical center of the "singing, resounding hills." In the chaotic last days of the Weimar Republic, Wuppertal had been the scene of much Communistic activity. But after the succession of the Nazis to power, the city slipped readily into the pattern of all German cities of that time, the meek kowtowing to the arrogant party leaders, the suppression of all that was liberal. To the bomber crews of the Allied air forces the city was only one of a long list of secondary targets. To the soldiers of the 8th Infantry Division, the first American soldiers to enter Wuppertal, it was just another German city, like all the others sullen and dazed by its sudden capture. But when the 376th arrived on the scene few days later, Wuppertal was prepared to present yet another face. Resigned to the fact of defeat, the citizens, like true German opportunists, tried to show the American soldiers that they welcomed them as liberators from the vile Nazis. Although the G.I.'s could not help being pleased at the warm welcome, they were not taken in by the Germans' quick-about-face.

Geographically Wuppertal is somewhat of a freak. To fit into its narrow valley the city had stretched itself into snake-like proportions. From the tip of Oberbarmen to the western end of Vohwinkèl it is over 15 kilometers long, but nowhere is it very wide. Connecting the extremities of the city is the Schwebebahn, a unique elevated railway. Instead of riding on rails, the cars of this upside-down "El" are suspended from a trolley, with nothing below them but the dirty waters of the Wupper River. The graceful curves of the Schwebebahn as it follows the twists of the river have been the subject of thousands of pictures.

Not all of the 376th was located in Wuppertal. The Third Battalion's area included the neighboring cities of Remscheid, Lennep and Lüttringhausen. Remscheid's chief claim to fame is its many small machine shops which have turned out most of Germany's finest precision tools. Both Remscheid and Wuppertal are in a broad economic sense a part of the Ruhr industrial area. But the inhabitants of both cities prefer to think of themselves as Rhinelanders.

This then was the area which the 376th Infantry Regiment entered on April 25th. The days that followed were comparatively pleasant as days go in the Infantry,



Schoth Photo

Cars running under the track characterize the Schwebebahn, Wuppertal's unique railway which sretches ten miles connecting both ends of the city.

but they were not easy. The work was similar to what the Regiment had been doing on the other side of the Rhine but on a far greater scale. The problem of the Displaced Persons was a staggering one. A hasty reconnaissance of the zone revealed 198 camps or single barracks for foreign workers, in which were housed some 30,000 Russians, Poles, Italians, Yugoslavians, French, Czechs, Belgians and Dutch. The living conditions in these camps were unbelievably bad. Families were crowded together with dozens of single individuals in small, filthy, unventilated, unlighted rooms, creeping with lice. It was the job of the Regiment not only to feed and clothe these people and improve their quarters, but also to organize them for eventual repatriation. Considering the fact that infantrymen are not trained in the techniques of relief work, the dispatch with which the task was accomplished is a credit to the energy and cheerful helpfulness of every man in the Regiment.

The many small groups of Displaced Persons were consolidated into larger camps, with a single language group in each camp. This greatly facilitated administration. Freed from their long hours of drudgery in the German factories, the foreign workers had time to clean their own quarters. The Regiment provided soap and whatever other cleansing materials were available. The medics kept a close check on sanitation

and health. The sick were sent to Army hospitals or to supervised German hospitals. Since the Regiment had no rations for these people, the city was required to provide their food.

In each camp two or three soldiers were stationed permanently to assist in any troubles that the Displaced Persons might have. These troubles proved to be frequent and varied. The G.I. camp directors had to become proficient in everything from equitable food distribution to delivering babies. But, despite all these difficulties plus the language barrier, the soldiers and their charges soon became close friends.

Nor was the "boy meets girl" angle overlooked in the relationships between the men of the 376th and the DP's. Since the pretty and promiscuous German fräuleins were strictly "off limits," the G.I.'s confined their public attentions to the DP girls, who, despite a long absence from beauty parlors, were often quite attractive. Dances were held at the various camps with music provided either by the DP's own orchestras or by units of the 94th Division Band. The Americans soon learned to dance in the European manner, and a few of the girls became fairly adept at jitterbugging. When it came time for some of the DP's to be repatriated, there were many reluctant farewells.

However, dealings with the DP's were not always so amicable. The Russians and French and all the other former prisoners of the Germans were bitter about their years of slavery. They felt that they deserved not only liberation but also revenge. So, taking law into their own hands, they proceeded to terrorize the German civilians, looting and murdering as they pleased. Although the American soldiers sympathized with their oppressed allies, they could not condone such conduct. So it was often necessary to arrest some of the more violent DP's.

A number of Germans had to be arrested also, but usually for such minor infractions as curfew violation or failure to carry an identity card. There was little of the "Werewolf" sabotage which Hitler claimed would be carried out by his fanatical followers unto death. The chief illegal activity was the Black Market, which was almost impossible to control despite frequent arrests. In collaboration with the Counter-Intelligence Corps the Regiment participated in several raids on suspicious houses and uncovered many Party leaders and other persons subject to automatic arrest.

Another big job was the checking of all factories for stores on hand and potential capabilities. Most of these plants were not operating, but one small machine shop in the Remscheid area was found still blithely turing out parts for German 88mm shells. No one had told them to stop work.

Despite all that had to be done, there was time for recreation. In the sports line

Regiment was able to do much that it had not done since leaving Camp McCain. Softball, swimming and track teams were organized, with regular competition between companies and platoons. The Regiment also joined in the Division track and turf meets held at Truman Park in Düsseldorf. For those who preferred more sedentary diversion there were frequent movies and an occasional USO show. Clubs for officers, non-commissioned officers and privates were set up in most battalion areas. The beer in these places was always adequate in quantity if not in quality.

Under the direction of Special Services Officer, First Lieutenant George Buck and Private First Class George A. O. Hagerty, the troupe of the local Stadthalle presented a variety show, "Wuppertal Follies," which was received enthusiastically by audiences from the Regiment.

Although V-E Day came to the 376th as somewhat of an anti-climax, the men of the Regiment took time to celebrate the news that meant that no more of their comrades would die on European battlefields. There were no wild outbreaks such as were seen in the larger cities of the United States. The soldiers celebrated quietly, knowing that only part of the job was completed. Further cause for cheer came on May 16th when Colonel Harold H. McClune resumed his duties as Regimental Commander. The entire Regiment had sorely missed the inspiring personality of their leader since the day he had been severely wounded during the crossing of the Saar River.

Amidst the joy of war's end the men of the Regiment paused on Memorial Day to remember with prayer their unfortunate fellows who had fallen on the battlefields. Special ceremonies were attended by each company.

Czechoslovakia

With June came the news that the Regiment was leaving Wuppertal. Everyone had expected this; the area was part of the British zone of occupation. The big question was, "Where to, now?" Some rumors said Southern Germany. Most people thought the Division was headed for the Pacific. The hopefuls claimed that it would be by way of the States; the pessimists held out for the direct route. All were surprised to learn that next stop for the 376th would be Czechoslovakia.

Advance detachments from the British 53rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers Division and the 71st Highland Light Infantry Brigade arrived in Wuppertal on June 8th to prepare for the arrival of the remainder of their troops. Meanwhile the 376th continued to maintain its security guards and went on with the important work of repatriating the Displaced Persons. Over 3400 Russians and Czechs were started on the journey home between the 1st and 12th of June. At noon on June 12th the Regiment was officially relieved by the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Although the British had already assumed responsibility for the area, First Lieutenant John F. Narewski took it upon himself early on the morning of the 13th to investigate a disturbance in a nearby DP camp. He was shot and killed by an unidentified displaced person. He will be long remembered for his outstanding accomplishments while a member of the Regiment.

Movement began at 0655 on June 13th as the motor elements began to cross the selected starting points. The trip was to be accomplished in three days. An advance billeting party had preceded the main motor column by four hours to locate and establish overnight bivouac areas in the vicinity of Guisen, Germany the first night, and Jena, Germany the second night. During the afternoon of the 14th the foot troops arrived at the Wuppertal-Unterbarmen railroad station by streetcar, bus and every other possible substitute for the missing Quartermaster trucks. Here the men boarded the 40 and 8's for their third long trip across Europe.

The Regimental Command Post opened in Strakonice, Czechoslovakia at 1300 on the 14th. All commanders were prepared to receive the motor elements as they arrived at 1830 on the 16th, and the foot troops when they detrained at Passau, Austria on the 18th and 19th. All available Division transportation was pooled to transport troops from the detraining point to the vicinity of Strakonice. By 1200 on the 19th the Regiment had completed relieving all road blocks, guard posts and patrols formerly operated by the 187 Field Artillery Group.

Most of these guard posts were along the border that separated the American from the Russian zone in Czechoslovakia. The chief purpose of these road blocks

was to prevent anyone but Czech citizens from crossing the border. Being soldiers rather than politicians, the men of the 376th didn't pretend to understand the reasons for the restraint of intercourse with their Russian allies, but carried out their mission effectively as always. No American or Russian soldier could cross the line without special permission. Despite this hindrance there was a good bit of social and commercial intercourse between the neighboring armies.

Wearied by the sight of war-torn cities, the men of the 376th found the beautiful, undisturbed landscapes of Czechoslovakia a pleasant change. The companies were billeted in quaint little villages of clean, thick-walled white houses and cobble-stone streets. The Americans found the Czech people quiet, and industrious. Life was peaceful and monotonous.

The operational requirements of the Regiment in the new area were limited, so a schedule was instituted which consisted of military training, education and organized recreation.

In accordance with the greatly expanded Information and Education program, battalion schools were set up in which men could study anything from elementary arithmetic to college subjects.

Unlike the end of the European war, V-J Day came with overwhelming suddenness. The men of the 376th could scarcely believe the good news. Already resigned to the inevitability of their participation in the Pacific war, the men were stunned to realize that they could now think about going home permanently.

There was nothing for the Regiment to do now but "sweat out" the trip back to the United States. Meanwhile training was curtailed, and the schedule emphasized sports and education. The Regiment made a good showing in all the division leagues, from volleyball to baseball.

The same men who had won track honors at the Division Track Meet in Düsseldorf competed against the stars of the 101st Airborne Division in the stadium at Berchtesgaden. Private First Class Howard W. Ladwig of Company D was the star of the meet, winning three events. Ladwig went on to win the Third Army 400 meter championship. In the Regimental softball league, Company C came out on top.

The 376th Infantry Regiment had finished its task. Soon it will probably return to reserve status. No one who has been with the 376th throughout its history will be likely to be disappointed about this. The Regiment has seen its share of combat. It has no need to seek further laurels. Although it came into World War II without any previous battle honors, it has, during its one year in Europe, proved itself worthy to stand beside the greatest of American Infantry regiments.

During its over six months of almost uninterrupted combat, the 376th has successfully engaged in every major type of Infantry operation except a beach-head landing. At St. Nazaire it laid siege to numerically superior forces. Along the Siegfried Switch Line it attacked and reduced strongly fortified positions, both with and without the aid of armor. During January and February of 1945 the Regiment withstood the worst that war has to offer in the way of fierce counter-attacks and miserable weather. Joining the the 10th Armored Division, the 376th forced a break in the Switch Line for the tanks to slip through, then followed the armor, mopping up in the Saar-Moselle Triangle. Coming to the fore again, the Regiment seized a bridgehead across the Saar River. From the Saar to the Rhine the 376th showed the Germans what a real blitzkrieg is. Combat ended with the fierce street fighting in Ludwigshafen. Then the Regiment topped off its versatile performance with a period of Military Government. No matter what the mission, it was done well. Every man who has served with this noble organization can be proud to have been a member of the 376th Infantry Regiment.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Distinguished Service Cross

Silver Star Medal

Soldiers Medal

Bronze Star Medal

Combat Medical Badge

Service Company Plaque

worldwartwoveterans.org

U. S. Army Signal Corps

Major General Harry J. Malony, Commanding General, 94th Infantry Division, presents the Bronze Star Medal to a soldier of the 376th Infantry Regiment at Willich, Germany, where he reviewed units of the Division.

FOR VALOR AND MERIT IN OUR COUNTRY'S SERVICE

Distinguished Service Cross
Army award for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy. It is second only to the Medal of Honor, and was created in 1918.

Silver Star Medal
This medal supersedes the miniature silver star formerly worn on the service ribbon of a medal, and is given to all services for gallantry in action. Established in 1935.

Soldier's Medal
Awarded to Army personnel and to members of the Navy, Marine Corps and foreign military personnel serving with the Army who have distinguished themselves by heroism not involving actual conflict. Instituted in 1926.

Bronze Star Medal
Awarded to all U. S. services for heroic or meritorious achievement or service in military or naval operations not involving aerial flight, but against the enemy. Established in 1944.

Purple Heart
Established by Washington in 1782, this award lapsed until its revival in 1932. Originally given for "military merit," it is now given only to those who have been killed or wounded in action against the enemy.

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Distinguished Service Cross

CAPTAIN
RALPH T. BROWN

SECOND LIEUTENANT
DALE E. BOWYER

SERGEANT
PAUL E. RAMSEY

Silver Star Medal

COLONEL
HAROLD H. McCLUNE
LIUETENANT COLONELS
RUSSELL M. MINER
BENJAMIN E. THURSTON
CAPTAINS
CARL J. SHETLER
FREDRICK D. STANDISH II
WILLIAM R. STEINMEIER
JULIAN M. WAY
FIRST LIEUTENANTS
THOMAS A. DALY
PERRY HEIDELBERGER JR.
BERNARD F. SIMURO
SECOND LIEUTENANT
STANLEY C. MASON
TECHNICAL SERGEANTS
LEON D. CRUTCHFIELD
HERBERT E. FOGLEMAN
NATHANIEL ISAACMAN
ROBERT H. JOHNSON
VINCENT J. MAISTO
JOHN L. McINTYRE
MARION SCOPOLI
STAFF SERGEANTS
JOSEPH L. BUGLER
CHARLES V. DEEMS
FRED GROSSI
WILLMER HALCOMB
FRED HARDING
RAY KETNER
EDWARD J. MACEJAK
LEROY McPHERSON
ADRIAN A. SIMPKINS
JAMES L. SPARLING
ESTLE E. TEMPLETON
EARL H. TRIPLETT
THOMAS C. WILSON
SERGEANTS
MICHEAL P. BAJZIK
DEWEY F. MICK
JOHN C. MITCHELL
ANTHONY S. ROA
WALTER L. SEIGENTHALER
TECHNICIANS 4TH GRADE
ERNEST J. HILL
HAROLD H. TANNER
CORPORAL
BERNIE H. HECK
TECHNICIANS 5TH GRADE
WILLIAM L. CLEARY
WILLIAM R. ITTNER
FURMAN B. McCOY
ROBERT A. MONROE
LEE J. SANBORN
EARL N. VULGAMORE
PRIVATES FIRST CLASS
JOHN B. ALBERTSON
BURNETT BENNETT
HAROLD K. BYRNE
JAMES I. BELLISTON JR.
THEO A. ELBERT
JOHN L. EISENMANN
CHARLES N. FRANKLIN
GEORGE R. GIBSON
WILLIAM L. GILFILLAN
VIRGIL E. HAMILTON
CLAIR HUNEYCUTT
RICHARD J. KAMINS
WERNER G. KRONCKE
EDSON A. LAKIN
WALTER P. MARKUS
EARLE T. MOUSAW
LEONARD L. NEFF
JOSEPH M. NICHOLAS
JOHN F. PIETRZAK
RALPH W. PORCHE
RUSSELL C. SANODEN
PAUL G. SCARBOUGH
JACK B. WEAKLEY
PRIVATES
ANTHONY J. KAPELLA
GERARD J. MALSTEDT
JAMES T. MANOS
DONN R. MAUCK
HAROLD E. McDANIEL
STANTON H. NULL
RICHARD G. TRUMBLAY
JACK ZEBIN

Soldiers Medal

STAFF SERGEANT
JOSEPH R. MENDRICK

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS
CHARLES P. SEAMAN

LIST OF AWARDS COMPLETE AS OF JUNE 1945

Bronze Star Medal

COLONEL
HAROLD H. McCLUNE
LIEUTENANT COLONELS
RAYNOR E. ANDERSON
JOHN R. DOSSENBACH
JOHN W. GADDIS
OLIVIUS C. MARTIN JR.
RUSSELL N. MINER
BENJAMIN E. THURSTON
MAJORS
SAMUEL W. CALDWELL
ALKIE C. KAUFMAN
FRANK MALINSKY JR.
ESKEL N. MILLER JR.
IRA C. REDFERN
LAWRENCE B. SANDOZ
LAWRENCE S. SIMCOX
ROBERT K. ZIMMERMAN
CAPTAINS
CLAUDE W. BAKER
WILLIAM H. BEHRENS JR.
HENRY C. BOWDEN
EDWIN W. BREHIO
WILLIAM A. BRIGHTMAN
JOSEPH W. BROWN
RALPH T. BROWN
ALBERT B. BUCHANAN
WILLIAM H. BUEHRLE
FREDERICK W. BUCKY JR.
CHESTER E. DADISMAN
ARTHUR J. DeLOACH JR.
ANTHONY J. DiLORENZO
ARTHUR W. DODSON
EDWIN E. DUCKWORTH
RICHARD E. EMEIS
WILLARD H. FISHER
WILLIAM R. JACQUES
CECIL J. KING
ROBERT W. KING
JOSEPH T. KOSHOFFER
HAROLD M. MANESS
THOMAS J. McINTYRE
FRANK L. MITTLE
ROBERT T. PARSONS
GEORGE S. REA
JOHN J. RYAN
PAUL E. SAYWELL
ROBERT Q. SMITH JR.
WILLIAM P. SPRINGER
ROBERT C. STANLEY
WILLIAM R. STEINMEIER
WARD F. TIBBITTS
HARRY G. WALLING
RALPH E. WATKINS JR.
GEORGE P. WHITMAN
FIRST LIEUTENANTS
THOMAS F. BATELL
HARRY C. BLACKBURN
HARRY M. BRUBAKER
WALDO C. BURNS
ANTHONY J. CATALLO
ARTHUR P. CEBULL
BEN R. CHALKLEY
JAMES W. CORNELIUS
THOMAS A. DALY
CECIL G. DANSBY
ELMER E. DECKER
RALPH P. EITNER
ROY C. ERWIN
CARL D. FORD
ROBERT E. FOSTER
RAMON G. FOX
WILLIAM M. GOLDENZWEIG
HAROLD W. GRIFFIN
PERRY M. HEIDELBERGER JR.
JESSE W. HODGES
TOM HODGES
JOSEPH L. JESMER
ELMER A. KAUFMAN
JAMES F. KELLY
SAMUEL R. KESSELMAN
RAYMOND J. KING
JOSEPH L. KNOUS
WILLIAM G. LAND
JESS L. LONG
CHARLES P. MACKE
EUGENE MacMANUS
INMAN E. MALLARD
WILLIAM B. MALLOY
JAMES C. McCULLOUGH JR.
ROBERT D. McFARLAND
DWIGHT M. MORSE
JOHN F. MURPHY
JOHN F. NAREWSKI
HJALMER W. NEILSEN
THOMAS J. ROSS
THOMAS L. SCHMIDT
DAVID F. STAFFORD
WILLIAM F. STEMBEL
NILS F. UGLAND
JOSEPH K. WILLIAMS JR.
SECOND LIEUTENANTS
PHILIP A. ALLA
DALE E. BOWYER
BERNARD B. COHEN
DAVID J. GILLESPIE
DANIEL C. HERBINE
MARVIN J. HERTWECK
JAMES B. HOWARD
CHARLES E. HEUBERT
WARREN L. HUNLEY
TOM D. HUTHNANCE
FRANK F. KRAHL JR.
STANLEY C. MASON
JOSEPH R. MENDRICK
JACK A. MISSILDINE
STEPHEN A. O'CONNOR
CARL J. RICH
CHARLES E. TOWLE
EARL S. TUCK
AMBROSE H. VANDENBERG
ROLAND H. VOGT
GORDON J. WESTON
CAMPBELL WILLINGHAM
WILFORD P. WILSON JR.
W O J G
FRANCIS C. BATES
MORRIS SEDLETZKY
RAYMOND H. SHACKELFORD
MASTER SERGEANTS
HECTOR E. BARRIERE
ANDREW E. BRUSGARD
ROBERT C. CURRY
CLAUDE H. DAIL
FIRST SERGEANTS
WILLIAM M. ANDERSON
JACK P. BLACK
RICHARD E. BORCHERS
FRITZ H. GIBSON
WILLIAM S. HAGUE
HORACE R. HAMBY
LOUIS F. MORSE
PATRICK NAPLES
JOHN J. PELLE
MELVIN A. SILBER
JOSEPH C. ZIEGLER
TECHNICAL SERGEANTS
PAUL W. ADAMS
ANDREW ROTHENBACH
JOHN A. BACCELLO
JAMES A. BEATTIE
ARNOLD B. CONWAY
CHARLES H. COWAN JR.
SCIPIONE L. D'ELIA
JOSEPH C. DIETLMEIER
MALCOM L. DUNN
PERCY A. DUNN
FRANCIS M. FIELDS JR.
HOWARD M. HENDERSON
MARVIN J. HERTWECK
GERALD W. JENDE
FORREST M. KEE
ROBERT J. KINCAID
HERMAN F. KLEMZ
FREDERICK C. KLINE
CHARLES W. KRATOCHVIL
PAUL F. KREITZBERG
GARNET R. LEE
CHARLES W. MADDOCK JR.
BUN E. McKEE
WALTER F. MIKOLIN
STANLEY S. MONTOWSKI
CHARLES F. MYERS
JOHN F. NAGY
LOUIS S. NEMETH
FRANKLIN H. NEUMANN
FRANK W. NOLL JR.
ARTHUR E. OLSON
HAROLD B. PRICE
ANTHONY S. RAO
ANDREW ROTHENBACH
WENDALIN F. SCHOMMER
MARIANO SCOPOLI
WALTER F. SKOWRONSKI
ANDREW F. VOJTECKY
JACK C. WALLACE
CHARLES E. WINTER JR.
STAFF SERGEANTS
ROBERT K. ADAIR
MERRILL J. ADERMAN
JOHN T. ANDERSON
WILLIAM H. ANDERSON
ALTON E. ANTHONY
WILEY G. BANKS
JOSEPH S. BARBUS
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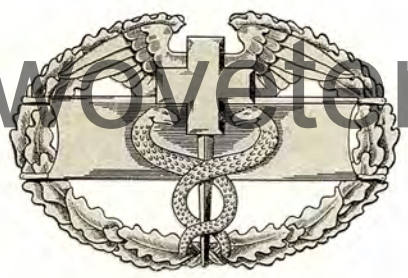

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CO C, 319TH MEDICAL BN

One of the most dramatic examples of American military efficiency in this war is the humanitarian dispatch with which wounded soldiers were evacuated from the battlefield. So thorough and so swift was the process whereby the Medical Department treated and transported the wounded that the number of men who died during or after evacuation was practically negligible.

The first step in the process was immediate treatment by the Company Aid Men. Mention has been made in this History of some of the achievements of these unarmed heroes of the battlefield. But the Aid Man could not remain with his patient very long. There were always too many others to look after. The next step, the removal of the wounded man to the battalion aid station, was the responsibility of the litter bearers. Only some one who has actually had the experience of carrying a fullgrown man several miles through dense woods and up steep hills, with ice making the footing treacherous and fierce cold numbing the hands, and with artillery shells falling indiscriminately along the route, can really know how terrible and how completely fatiguing this can be. During some attacks, the litter teams had to go out again and again without rest.

At the battalion aid station the wounded were given further care, tagged, and sent by ambulance to the clearing station. There they were further examined, and sent on to rear area hospitals.

All the work of litter bearing, ambulance driving and management of the clearing station was in the hands of a group of less than 100 men and officers, the Collecting Company. For the 376th this was Company C of the 319th Medical Battalion. Wherever the Regiment went, Company C was always on hand, always ready for their great life-saving task. During the Regiment's period in combat, the Clearing Station evacuated over 6000 casualties, only three of whom died enroute.

For its fine work, Company C, 319th Medical Battalion received the Meritorious Service Plaque and the gratitude of all the infantrymen who owe their lives to the swift, able care of the "Medics".

SERVICE COMPANY PLAQUE

SERVICE COMPANY very seldom gets to do any fighting. Fighting is not its job. It is one of the specialized organizations in the Regiment that is easily forgotten in the accounts of actions where the front line battalions are the pins that move on the map. Service Company is often forgotten because its work is so vitally important in so many different ways it is almost invariably taken for granted. Supplies and ammunition get to the front line companies; the trucks are ready to roll when they are needed; rations arrive regularly at the company kitchens; mail gets to the men in the forward foxholes. All these things are SOP. Without them the pins could not move on the map. But none of these things just happen. They are the result of unfaltering teamwork on the part of the many branches of Service Company, working in all weather and under the most adverse conditions, to see that they do happen.

Before the end of the war, the War Department realized the need for some official recognition of the splendid achievements of the Army's service troops. For this purpose the above plaque was authorized. For its constant record of meritorious and faithful endeavor, Service Company, 376th Infantry, was among the units to be awarded this distinction. In addition each man of the company received a small cloth replica of the plaque to be worn on the right sleeve, an emblem that he can wear as proudly as his Combat Infantry Badge. But no decoration can fully indicate the eternal gratitude of the men of the front line companies who remember that those whose job it was to supply them never let them down.

919TH FIELD ARTILLERY BN

Throughout this history there are accounts of soldiers of the 376th saving themselves from overwhelming counter-attacks by calling for artillery fire. From the matter-of-fact way in which the story speaks of the man in the foxhole "placing" artillery fire on the enemy, it would appear to the uninitiated that this is a kind of automatic process, caused by pressing a button. Indeed the action is so efficient as to seem almost automatic: The observer picks up his phone or radio, gives a few figures, and in a few minutes the shells begin to land, accurate and deadly.

The battalions of the 94th Division Artillery have on several occasions been called "the best Artillery in the United States Army." Not the least of these four excellent organizations is the 919th Field Artillery Battalion. This 105mm howitzer outfit was a regular part of Combat Team 376 throughout the war. The infantrymen of the 376th Regiment are proud of the fine record of their "very own" artillery battalion. But they are also grateful for the frequent support given by other units of Division and Corps Artillery, especially the larger calibre guns which so effectively silenced the harassing enemy batteries.

One of the most difficult assignments for the 919th was the St. Nazaire sector where, with the help of one attached battalion, they had to cover an area large enough for an entire Corps and counter enemy guns that outnumbered them five to one. With the brilliant leadership of Colonel Caveness, the 919th organized this extended front so effectively that not a single yard was uncovered nor a patrol unsupported.

The 376th Infantry remembers especially the work of the 919th's Forward Observers. These brave officers and their hard-working radio operators were in and forward of the front lines during every action from the first patrol at St. Nazaire to the final conquest of Ludwigshafen. The FO's and the Artillery's Liaison Officers also served as instructors, teaching the riflemen the technique of adjusting fire.

Never has the 919th failed to give support which the 376th required.

CO C, 319TH ENGINEER C BN

The combat infantryman usually thinks of himself as a lone warrior. The other arms and services work hard to prepare him for his job, but when he gets into that front line foxhole, he feels very much alone. However he has one companion who is usually by his side, if not out in front of him. That faithful comrade is the Combat Engineer. When the doughboy is stopped by mines, the engineer clears a path for him. When a pillbox halts the advance, the engineer blows it up. When there is a river in the way, the engineer ferries the riflemen across in assault boats and then builds a bridge.

Ever since training days at Camp Phillips, Company C of the 319th Engineer Combat Battalion has been an integral part of Combat Team 376. In training the engineers learned how to use an M-1 as well as their more specialized tools. They acted as demonstration crews to teach the infantrymen the technique of assaulting fortified areas.

In the St. Nazaire sector, the men of Company C went out in front of the lines to lay mines, booby-traps and barbed wire for the protection of the static positions. From the middle of October almost until the freezing weather of winter had set in, incessant rains kept the roads in the Regimental sector in a muddy and bog-like state. Constant road work kept the engineers busy throughout this period.

When the 376th began its assaults on the Siegfried Switch Line, the work of the engineers became even more complicated. First the vehicles had to be given a coat of snow-camouflage paint. Then with the attack on Tettingen-Butzdorf came Company C's real battle proving. Engineers with mine detectors accompanied the forward scouts into the towns. On January 17th the company worked feverishly on two jobs, constructing a road to supply the First Battalion in Tettingen, and assisting Company B, 376th in assaulting two pillboxes. Both boxes were completely demolished in less than three hours.

To supply the Third Battalion in Nennig, the engineers crossed the Moselle River in assault boats at Besch. Captain Grover D. Rose, then

commanding Company C was wounded on the morning of January 19th near Wochern. On the evening of the 19th the Company was relieved and went back into France for a "rest," which consisted of several days spent repairing the plumbing and lighting fixtures for the Division Rest Camp. On January 25th Company C returned to the line to continue its work breaching the many mine fields and destroying pill boxes.

After a brief period with the Company, Captain Rose returned to the hospital on February 13th for further treatment, and command of the Company was assumed by Captain Lawrence T. Brighton.

During the crossing of the Saar, the First Platoon of Company C went across with the first wave of boats, equipped with pole charges for the destruction of the many concrete emplacements. The remainder of the Company worked at the 94th Division bridgehead ferrying vehicles and building a bridge, under constant enemy artillery and small arms fire. Almost 70% of the engineers' equipment was destroyed by artillery during this operation.

Throughout the drive to the Rhine and the attack on Ludwigshafen the engineers did route reconnaissance and cleared road blocks.

Versatile and faithful, the soldiers of Company C, 319th Engineer Combat Battalion played an important role in the accomplishments of the 376th.

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