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**IN COMBAT**

*with*

**HEADQUARTERS COMPANY**

Third Battalion, 232nd Infantry

*of*

**RAINBOW DIVISION**

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To one of the  
sweetest persons in  
the world - back of Luck  
to you Lou - Ed. S. L. -  
Ed. Bertinucci for  
He will always love you.  
Buen

worldwartwoveterans.org



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THIRD BATTALION, 232d  
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DEDICATION

The men of the Headquarters Company, Third Battalion, 232d  
Infantry, dedicate this History to their families.

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## PREFACE

We write this history two months after the death of Nazism. The experiences and adventures of our company are still fresh in our minds.

This book is not written as an official study of army tactics in modern warfare, but rather to preserve the personal anecdotes and incidents that are so treasured but often unwillingly lost by a faulty memory. In writing this, we hope to satisfy the desires of every GI and officer in the company who in future years might care to reminisce through the days that earned him the privilege of enjoying the comforts and prosperity of a peaceful world.

It is for this reason that we have written this from the stories as told by the individual men. We have often used their exact words. This is the company's history as lived by the men of the company.



## MARSEILLES, FRANCE

It was the 8th day of December, 1944, and after listening to the continuous drone of the ship's motors for 14 days, they were suddenly cut off and the unusual silence was annoying as we drifted between the steep clay banks of the Delta Base into the port of Marseilles, France.

We were all tense with anticipation and anxious to debark into our unknown future that this strange, new land held for us. Our wait was not a long one. The next morning many of us, for the first time, set foot on foreign soil. We trudged down the gang-plank, along the docks, and through the town to waiting trucks. Even though we were carrying heavy packs, bitching ran a poor second to our gawking at the first sights of war such as the scuttled ships that blocked the harbor and the ragged people who had lived through it. Fifteen minutes off the boat, we learned our first French words from the wooden shoed kids—"Chocolat?" Cigarette for Papa?"

A hectic ride through the narrow winding streets—our first with the hurrying Transportation Corps—brought us into open country on the outskirts of the city. We stretched our necks and strained our eyes in search of barracks or at least some pyramidal tents somewhere on the broad landscape, but none were to be seen. Then the trucks stopped. This was *IT*.

By dark we were huddled about our meager struggling fires in front of our pup-tents pitched in neat rows on top of that bald, rocky, cold, windy hill—CP # 2. We immediately had our troubles to gripe about. There was little wood to be had to make fires, the small pup-tents were bulging with equipment alone, and one 'K' ration proved quite insufficient, in fact, some of the boys went on to eat the next day's breakfast. Many of us were suffering from a strange emptiness, for instance Zeke Edmunds and R. O. Bennett who had their trouble on the trip over. They claim the championship of all "cookie shooters." To these two the boat ride over was a terrible nightmare. "Between running from their bunks to the rail and visa versa, there wasn't much time left for enjoying the cruise on that seagoing "rocking chair" that someone had the nerve to call a luxury liner" says Zeke. Bennett added, "The entire two weeks spent on the Atlantic was a continual routine of trying to fight off the inevitable and getting nowhere with the struggle and even the calm waters of the Straits of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea didn't help that feeling of having drunk a gallon or so of crude oil." They both added and agreed, "When we finally docked at Marseilles we were as happy as if we were at home, God be thanked for that good old *Terra Firma*." To them it was the more firma, the less



tera. They were just two of the many who agreed to that statement.

By a simple method of testing we all knew that even with our four blankets apiece we were going to be cold on all those dam rocks and many of us dreaded the thought of crawling into that small tent to start shivering, but one bright spot that first night interrupted our dreaming and reminiscing about home and that was Suhajda yelling, "MAIL CALL!!!"

It rained during that first night and the men who had not dug drainage trenches around their tents were hurtin'. As Cpl. Fink says, "This hill was the rockiest in all France. It was high enough to catch the wind from any direction and when the wind would let up, then the rains would come. You just couldn't win. There was a stacked deck against you at all times. Each night as you walked down the row of tents, you could plainly hear someone cussing out the rock that had popped up in the middle of his back. By comparison, the language used to pay recognition to the rain that was starting to drip through was often only indifferent."

No orders were necessary the next morning to promote the work going on all up and down the rows of tents. Extra suits of woollens were rummaged from the bottom of the pack. It was fun to watch any number of men like Daniels struggling to get into their second pair of "drawers" and, at the same time, do the "highland fling" to keep warm in the ever blowing and chilling wind.

The wood searching parties were sent out and GI's dotted the hillsides in a wide perimeter around the camp. Fires could be seen at nearly every tent and small groups gathered rehashing the trip over and as 'Napy' Napychank describes seasickness, "Absolutely contrary to th laws of nature—what went down usually came up"—added that he did not think he could ever look at another hard-boiled egg. The landscape around the CP # 2 area was certainly being cleared fast by all those wood searching parties, but of course, if an isolated farmer could be found with a canteen full of wine left in his cellar, wood finding was a secondary mission. Cigarettes were as good as gold, but as is always the case with GIs around, the demand soon created inflationary prices up to three packs a canteen full.

Also included at the top of the list of those first day's activities were the jobs of insulating the tents with cardboard, digging better drainage ditches, building fire places, constructing wind breaks, and heating a canteen full of water for the required daily shave. The men had to find a good gripe as an outlet for

their sickness, nervous anticipation, and discomfort and they didn't have to look far. The food, the old standby gripe of the men in the Army, was a good gripe once more. Joe Kurz, Frank Mirisciotti, Frank Moffitt and others can be remembered in the hash slinging deal. In defense of the cooks we must explain that it was the first time our kitchen had been set-up on the field, and the rations were sparing allotments of the much bitched about 'C rations' and Spam. Of course the 'K' rations were a novelty to most of the men at the time and some were willing to say that they preferred them instead of what they were eating. The ingredients found in the different ration units were received many times later and all the numerous recipes for cooking them were exhausted before the Corn Pork Loaf with Chopped Carrots and Apple Flakes were ever prepared into a tempting, palatable dish.

It was some life, this CP # 2 with rain, rocks, fires, tents, mud, home-sickness and 'C' rations. It was here that Jack La Fond (medics) acquired the habit of sleeping until 10 o'clock in the morning. We often wondered how he did it and amid the rain and mud and with his feet projecting from the pup tent, rain or no rain. "Hoosier" Knight ran him a close second, however. Seems our esteemed comrade "Hoosier" Knight would move at a snail's pace for everything except chow—would eat, retire and be the first in line for dinner. By the same token of measurement with La Fond and his protruding feet from the pup-tent, we wonder how our 6' 2" "Pappy" Hines got any sleep at all. He did not look as if he did when he arose in the mornings; we understand "Luney" Lund didn't help any by stealing all the blankets. The big job to be accomplished while we were here at CP # 2 was to unpack, issue, and prepare for immediate combat use, all the various items of equipment that the trucks were hauling in from the ships being unloaded at the docks in Marseilles day and night. It kept everybody busy at times but Sgt. Mills (of S-4) and Sgt. Myers (Company Supply Sgt.) and the long and the short of it, were busy all the time. And then there were other company duties for the majority, such as standing in the water line a quarter mile long with 11 five gallon water cans or keeping one of the drafty holes in the well ventilated latrine warm. Anyone can catch the GI's, and most everybody did.

After a day of two at CP # 2, all the drivers were sent down to Marseilles to get the Battalion's vehicles. Robert Barrett, Bob Sarembe, Bob Fenno and Zeke Edmunds were put to driving 2½ ton trucks with trailers. Up to this time their experience with this size truck was sadly lacking. Convoy organized and set out back to CP # 2 but as usual, a French cyclist managed to split the convoy, leaving a dozen trucks to wander all over the



countryside. Zeke says, "We finally made it back but whew, what an experience, didn't know the roads and made lots of new ones." They were about 5 hours late. Then there were all the rumors about the hi-way holdups and hijacking going on in that area.

Each day and night brought forth more and better improvements to the living conditions on the 'old rock pile, CP # 2.' Some men even stripped down to their woolen underwear, but it was past the limit when Larry Daley got in bed with no pants or undies at all on. We heard a helluva racket in their tent and "Roundy" Myers came up through the top of their tent yelling, "Dammit Daley you put some pants on or I'm not sleeping with you." Then "Bed-Check Charlie" paid us an unannounced visit one night. He caused a grand upheaval of the whole camp.

"Bed-Check Charlie's" visit was the most talked of happening during our entire stay at CP # 2. It was also our first experience in an emergency and our first taste of war. As one man, the Company snapped into realization that we were now where they were playing this game for keeps and not on another problem back in Area 4 or on Sand Road or Weber Falls at Camp Gruber. Needless to say, we were scared. As Earl Winkel of the Commo Platoon describes it, "We were sitting around the fires one night singing and trying to keep warm when suddenly we heard the slight drone of an airplane and someone shouted the warning, "Put out those fires!" A wild flurry of excitement followed. The AA guns opened up and the dark sky was soon filled with bursting shells. It looked as if the 4th of July had come early. Men who were already asleep stood straight up in their tent and then buttons flew every which way; some ran aimlessly knocking over the tents standing in their way. I remember Jim Johnson (Oklahoma Broken Bow) saying, "The only night I really got to sleep, here came someone lumbering over my tent breaking poles and piling tent and soldier all over me." Many started the laborious job of digging a fox hole in the hard frozen ground. The fires were put out. The hills which a few minutes before had been studded with many fires of all proportions were now in total darkness." Frank Shorney tells it this way, "Graham and I had gone to bed early and I was suddenly awakened by AA firing and people yelling 'put those dam fires out,' Graham did not move so I gently but firmly jabbed him in the ribs and said, 'Hey! Herb! I believe we are being attacked by airplanes!—Should we take off for the gulley,' Herb in his slow manner replied, "Hell, go back to sleep maybe they'll go away!" (We learned in the morning that the rest of the Radio Section had made a hasty withdrawal to the gulley.) Then as suddenly as it all started, it was all over. The AA guns ceased firing and the airplane could no longer be heard. Then, we all breathed a sigh of

relief and listened for more planes to return until one by one we fell asleep. There is nothing in the world that makes a person feel more helpless than planes overhead and expecting bombs to fall.

The next morning there was again a beehive of activity. Everyone was digging a hole and all that could be heard was the clinking of the shovels against the hard rocky ground. No one wanted to repeat the experience of the night before, especially those who took off in their bare feet down the hill for shelter in the cold muddy ditch.

Further precautions were ordered and the neat row of tents were staggered and spread out to give an interval of safety. Fifty caliber machine guns were mounted and manned 24 hours a day. The ammunition supply was very small but we would add what welcome we could to that of the AA boys if "Mr. Bed-Check" paid another visit.

The days passed quickly. Some of the boys received passes to visit Marseilles and the stories they had to tell upon returning held their listeners breathless. We all found the Red Cross Club with its doughnuts and coffee. PX Rations came in and we had our money exchanged for Francs. We also spent good bit of our time writing letters, exercising particular care not to violate the censorship rules. Our equipment was now approaching tip-top shape and we were about finished with the work that had to be accomplished at a staging area.

Then, Captain McCollum called us together one night and gave us the latest plans for the Division as he knew them at that time. We were to join the 7th Army which was located in the mountains north of Strassburg. The shoepacs and heavy ski socks we had been issued and puzzled us and now the reason was obvious. We might leave anytime.

After nine days at C # 2 the Battalion was alerted to move out. In a cold steady rain that had all of our tents on the verge of housing little rivers, we worked one at a time trying to pack our equipment so the most important items would wind up on top. At noon time on the 18th day of December 1st Sgt. Carlson issued us our first ammunition for our individual weapons and at the last minute, we tore down our wet, muddy tents. We were already a cold, wet, muddy lot, as we slipped and slid down the hill to the waiting two-and-a-half ton trucks and quit CP # 2.

It was a short ride by truck to the railroad siding. There the whole area was a pool of soupy, yellow mud. Bert McNeil, to this day, has not learned who the man was that, for some reason, he happened to see navigating the 100 yards of sloppy mire from the truck to one of the 40 & 8's. Maybe it was the way



the man had his duffle bag resting on the back of his neck and the top of his pack, or the way he very carefully picked his way along that attracted Mc's attention. Anyway, everything was about licked and the unknown 'hombre' was just ready to take that last step when something happened and face down that GI fell in the ankle deep slosh. Mc swears it was the funniest and yet the most pathetic sight he has ever seen. After the usual amount of waiting that the army always manages to include in the program, especially when the packs are heavy and there is no place to rest them, we were finally assigned to the particular car that we were to call home for the next few days. From stories that everyone has heard of the infamous "40 & 8's," we were all expecting the worse. We were not disappointed. They were every bit as bad as our imaginations had allowed us to imagine.

However, every cloud has its silver lining and this trying situation had its, for immediately the fine spirit of "Help the other Guy" was born and the men began to work as a team for the first time.

With 25 wet, muddy men and all their wet, muddy equipment the cars were so congested that it was hard to move and the big question of how we were going to sleep was still to be solved. Before the last man was pulled aboard, another unwritten rule that was to stick with us all through the campaign was born—make the place livable. The first men in the car were already driving nails in the walls to hang equipment on and others were searching for suitable hooks to hang hammocks from, in an effort to increase the sleeping space on the floor. It was a small space for 25 men to eat, sleep and live in, but the door was closed and we busied ourselves at preparing our supper from the ten-in-one rations.

## THE TRIP NORTH

It was dark when the train finally pulled out and we were on our way, to where, no one knew. Final plans for sleeping called for the use of all raincoats as the first layer of insulation against the wind whipping through the wide cracks in the floor boards. On top of the raincoats, blankets were pooled to allow each man two for cover and the rest to serve as padding to make a hard floor a little softer bed. All the remaining equipment was placed strategically about the corners in an effort to cut down, as much as possible all superfluous ventilation. Two men in each end of the car slept in the hammocks that were swung from dubious hooks and not a square inch of space was wasted. Some men were stepped on by men making trips to the car door during the night, but we managed even in our cramped quarters to get sufficient rest (to do us). I might add here that we also got plenty fresh air.

Eating was another problem on this never-to-be-forgotten ride. We had a one-pot gasoline cooking stove and two small pots. The rations were split and each half of the car had its meals prepared together in a pool by a democratically elected cook. The helpers were drafted. From daylight to dark, something was cooking, with the front half of the car starting dinner as soon as the rear half finished breakfast, and so on. Those delicious meals of half-warm Old English Stew will linger in our memories a long time after many things are forgotten.

The train moved slowly and stopped often. Most of the day we jammed against one of the four windows or leaned against the bar across the door to take in all the sights of a country ruined and poverty stricken by war. At every stop the boys would hurry to barter cigarettes for wine, walk up and down the track to stretch their legs, visit their buddies in another car, or search out some likely bushes to serve as a mother nature latrine. Everybody rooted for "Pappy" or "Gramps" Brenden the day he was still behind the bush he had so carefully selected when the train started to pull out with, as usual—no notice. Poor "Gramps" Brenden had a hard time of it but the train moved slowly and with the moral support of all, he ran a good race, pants down to his knees. All were cheering him on and he grabbed one of the many extended hands and was pulled into the car with his shorts still waving in the breeze. Asked for a statement, all "Gramps" could do was to sigh—with relief.

During the trip we were told that we had been reassigned to the Third Army and that we should sew on our Rainbow patches. Until this time, we had been without insignias in compliance



with security regulations. The rumors as to where we were going and what we would do once we were there, flew thick and fast. After 3 days of riding and stopping, we pulled on to a siding and were told that we would sleep on the train and pull out on trucks in the morning. We could hear the big guns booming in the distance and for the first time we felt that we were getting close to the real "McCoy." This was the 21st of December and the great "bulge" offensive of the Germans had already jumped off. We knew nothing of it until the next day, but the alert of possible paratroopers in the area was received and each car posted a two man guard on either side of the car. Boy, did we sweat out that guard with all these new thoughts passing through our minds.

In the morning we unloaded and policed (up) the cars. After the usual waiting, we were loaded into trucks and drove to a small farming village by the name of Bermering. The sun came out about noon and the ground thawed enough to give us the mud that seemed to welcome us every where we went. Dirty troops of some Artillery outfit came racing through our convoy several times, and although they said nothing, you could tell by the expressions on their faces, that we had their sympathy, and that some day, our equipment would be dirty, rattling, and heaped full of stuff like theirs was. Their half-tracks were pulling big guns that had been pounding away on some concentrations during the night.

In this small town of Bermering, where most of the children spoke German, we were placed in our first billets and thankful that we did not have to pitch tents again like we had done at CP # 2. Some men slept in the convent. Everyone found the townspeople anxious to do what they could to make us more comfortable, especially a couple of nuns there who talked continuously about the treatment the Germans gave them and the townspeople. Again the rumors were many, but the only thing official was that we were with the 7th Army again and the Rainbows would be removed.

It was after dark before elements of the motor convoy began to arrive in Bermering and a sorry sight they were. It had been a cold trip in rain, over bumpy roads, in crowded vehicles, and with long hours of driving every day. And, of course, the usual number of happenings and mishaps had to be related. They had left CP # 2 the day after the train had pulled out and had traveled over the same general route of the train, Lyons, Dijon, Nancy, and then to Bermering. All in all, the trip was really uneventful, except for the individuals whose GI's acquired at CP # 2, caused them to insert numerous unscheduled stops between the regular ten minute break every 2 hours, that is so

looked forward to on all convoys. Captain McCollum, Company CO, Lt. Salem, Anti-tank Officer and Lt. Puhn, A & P Officer started in to finding billets for themselves and the other Officers. Major Galloway (Lt. Colonel later) Lt. Gonsoulin, S-3, Lt. Bryant, S-2, Lt. Burke, S-4 and Lt. Taylor, Commo Officer were all billeted together near the church. Pfc. Joe Lang puts it this way, "Our arrival in Bermering was nothing sensational, just another move similar to many since leaving the States. We were assigned billets, at least that's what the officer in charge called them, and proceeded to board up the windows and prepare for the night. A guard roster was set up and the men busied themselves writing, cleaning rifles, etc. In fact, just passing time while waiting their turn on guard. Stan Chism and I were sitting by the stove absorbing whatever warmth that wasn't leaving the room via the million and one cracks in the doors, windows and walls, when the heavily bearded "Stew" Helthall rustled up a small box of powdered chocolat from a 10 in 1. We quickly procured an empty can and brewed up the chocolat. "Stew" poured up the brown beauty and we all took a quick gulp and after the shock and paralysis passed, the comments were passed. "What in hell is that peculiar tangy taste?" shouted Chism. "Stew" shrugged his shoulders and replied, "Guess I didn't get all the gas washed out of the can." Well Chism and I (Joe) decided our friend John Harles should have a drink to calm his war torn nerves while on guard. Up went the cup and a huge spray of chocolat sprayed the surrounding snow as well as profanity that would assure him a seat in Hades. John clinked his bolt and that was all for Chism and I, brother."

Loran Grantham traveled by truck from CP # 2 to Bermering and he always remembers the one scare they had on the way, when the convoy had a Frenchman pull out on the road in the middle of the convoy dragging another vehicle behind him. Grantham says, "Before the towed vehicle made the corner, a jeep was already sandwiched between them and there was a screeching of brakes. It reminded me of a row of books falling over on one another after the end one has been taken out, or like the cars closing up on each other when the engine of a freight train stops suddenly. We were lucky though to come out of it with only a broken breech on one of the 57's, a busted radiator on one of the ton-and-a-halves, and another gray hair or two for Aimar."

Along with their experiences, the men who made the trip by convoy also contributed their share of rumors as to our future and, as usual, they all added up to exactly nothing. No one knew the next move. Most of the men tried to wash as best they could with the facilities available and another delicious meal



of 10 to 1 rations was cooked in community fashion. Then without adieu, the boys hit the floor early to catch lots of sleep, that is, everybody except the men we had to post as guards at every corner. This was combat and the guards spent a tense, cold night challenging their buddies.

At noontime, the next day, we were all loaded in trucks again along with beaucoup equipment and were off on our longest and coldest ride of the winter. It was a miserable ride, and when the convoy stopped for a break, it was hard to jump to the ground with our legs feeling like blocks of wood from being so cold and cramped.

About seven in the evening, the trucks were ordered to drive blackout, and shortly afterwards, we moved into the dark empty streets of Strassburg. There was not a light to be seen and the streets had no signs of life, except for an occasional jeep and French soldiers hurrying around. All seemed very tense and we could see an occasional flare in the distance toward the Rhine. Into a large paved court yard we drove after passing two French guards at the archway entrance. Although we were all tired and cold and sleepy, warmth and something to eat were the more important. In the dark, blackout was arranged for all the windows before candles were lit and the gasoline squad cooking stove was set up to heat some coffee. It was about this time that an Artillery piece, we never did find out whether it was ours or Krauts, cut loose with a few rounds of something around the 88 or 105 class. So, this is *IT* and what do we do from here, was the thought running through our minds.

By eleven o'clock, most of the cooking and coffee brewing was done and the unrecognizable humps on the floor were the boys catching as much sleep as possible before the morning and whatever it held in store for them.

The night was one of those short ones that we were to have many more of later on. At 3 o'clock a. m., everybody was told to get the hell up by Lt. Christopher, keep what you would need on the line, and put the rest of the stuff in the duffle bag. We were to relieve some outfit somewhere, and that was all we knew. It was hard to decide what to keep. This being "On the Line" was all new to us, but after everyone exchanged their opinion, the most needed items were decided upon and the other equipment was rammed into the duffle bag and piled with the others. We were all thinking the same thing again as we put our duffle bags in the pile, "When will I see that bag again??" The Battalion was ready and waiting at 6 o'clock, when the 'ducks' that were to help transport us arrived, but another Army, "Hurry Up and Wait" program was scheduled and it was near noon before the convoy got underway.

The dark empty streets of the night before were now lively with people, young and old, they stopped to look and wave to us as we passed by. As the convoy made several stops enroute across town, some boys received that best of all greetings, a bottle of "Schnapps" or a pitcher of wine. The outstretched hand of a smiling civilian, reaching up the high side of the 'duck,' received everyone's utmost attention. Schnapps was about the only thing that would keep a GI's radiator from freezing on those cold, long drawn-out convoys in freezing weather.

By late afternoon the whole company was billeted in Fort Ney, and every man was as busy as a bee doing one of two things—either building a stove, or exploring some remote corner of our new home for souvenirs. The Fort, one of the Forts of the Maginot Line, had been inhabited by the Germans for a long time and in their hurried surrender, they had left much of their equipment behind. Every Joe in the company soon had a bayonet, rifle, belt buckle, or something that was once issued by the Wehrmacht. A stove pipe of some description was sticking from every window and what smoke didn't find its way up the pipe was allowed to stay for its heat value. It was here on this first day at the Fort that we had our first two casualties. Frank Moffit cut a finger off moving one of the kitchen ovens out of the truck and Pfc. Bill Yoakum turned a jeep over and cut his leg. The Germans had destroyed most everything of any value and therefore left the Fort with none of the utilities that had been so carefully built into it. Our light was candlelight and our water was hauled from Strassburg daily by truck. Leo Carney became known as "Sergeant of the Water Cans."

In our excitement and hurry to make our conditions more comfortable, most of us had forgotten what day it was, but Chaplain Potter came around about 2000 and reminded us that it was the 24th day of December and Christmas Eve. He announced that he would conduct a short Worship Service and we would all sing some Christmas Carols, if we would gather in the room he had set up as a Chapel in one of the dark damp rooms of the underground Fort. We were a grimy tired bunch that the Chaplain had for that Service, but they sang loud and the Chaplain even said it was good. Anyway, as we stood with bowed heads, it seemed more like Christmas Eve, even though we were surrounded by the thick, cold, concrete walls of the Fort. We all joined the Chaplain's Prayer, that we would soon be able to return home again and that world peace would once more reign and Good Will toward all men. Many times we forced laughter, but as Napychank said, "when in a corner to ourselves many hid an unshed tear."

One of the things the Army does, when ever it is at all pos-



sible, is to see that the boys have a turkey dinner on Christmas, and that is exactly what we had. On top of that, we had a MAIL CALL and that was our "Christmas of '44."

In the next few days, our company moved back and forth between the Fort and a hospital, in one section of Strasburg, and an apartment on Colmar Strasse. The hospital had not been damaged and afforded a good CP for the Staff although it was for only one night. It was the St. Anne's Hospital. The line companies of the Battalion stayed on the same line along the dyke that ran parallel with the Rhine River. Our Anti-Tank Platoon maintained a Pill Box on the Rhine and the squads alternated time on the line for the first assignment of the war. There was some trying times there the first day or so and especially at night with rumors flying fast that the Germans nightly got patrols across the river. Many objects miraged into creeping Heinies by night and only to revert back to some innocent bush or tree by day. The boys were very nervous and alert at first but finally the nervousness subsided and many became brave enough to venture out for wood, etc. Seems the story as told by Pfc. Bob Hade went like this, "When Nature calls and calls vigorously, she must be obeyed! T-5 Fricke, armed with a GI shovel and a roll of paper sought a selected spot among the trees and eased into position when suddenly the bark started flying from the tree above his head as a result of some unannounced hot lead from across the river in Krautland which was definitely unfriendly. Yow! the Arkansas boy took off in a streak. Puffing, he arrived in the Pill Box, pants clasped in one hand and shovel in the other, saying to hell with the paper."

On the 29th of December, H3B moved into La Wantzenau, France, which was about 3 miles north of Strassburg and about a half mile west of the dyke. The Battalion CP was first established in a Beer Tavern and then the following day moved to a private home in the center of town. The village was small but there were a few places for the boys to drink beer. We celebrated New Year's Eve here. Some of the Medics went out and describe their celebrating thusly, "We celebrated New Year's Eve in a small cafe, drinking Schnapps and warmed up wine. At this cafe our esteemed 'jeep driver' Charlie Martel, found the 'girl of his dream'—'Dancing Matilda' she was knowed as. Seems Charlie's first love was sweet, innocent and blooming love and fanned by Schnapps and wine, flamed into a burning ember. Some day maybe 'old Myrt' will forget that gal, but we are not sure. We don't know whether it was the drink or the gal but he seemed to have decorated a Heinie truck with his 'cookies' before the evening was over. Some fun!"

In the Commo Platoon Oleksyn and Kurtz and Shorney have

this to add, "Our section stayed with an old couple who had a nice daughter and an occasional bar of chocolate kept everyone in good standing with the old folks. We were all surprised on New Year's morning when the old lady brought out a chocolate cake made from the bars and a potent drink that put all in a cheery mood. We did not know when we told her we would be back later that we really did have to come back, due to orders being changed and although she told us that many other soldiers had asked her for the billet, she was saving it for her boys." Sounds like a real 'snow job' they gave that old gal.

Later this placed proved to be the scene of the worst days for the company and the tales that can be told of our stay at La Wantzenau are many.

One of the first combat missions to be assigned to any of the company was a combat and reconnaissance partol to be made into a section along the river, where we had positions. The boys in the I & R section were told the night we moved into the Tavern that they would leave in the morning and be gone most of the day. "Tangle-foot" Watson was one of the section that went on the patrol and in his words, it went something like this, "Task Force Linden had been on the line now for five days and we had just pulled into La Wantzenau. We bedded down late that night and by 0600 hours, Pfc. Broyles came and awoke the I & R Section and broke the news that we were going on a Patrol. While Broyles was down in the CP getting the order, we all got together and shined up our weapons, assigned positions in the patrol, and waited. Broyles came up with 'Hot Poop for the Group' and the mission was to reconoiter the area between the Rhine and a canal running into it. Broyles gave us the 5 Par. Field Order from start to finish. The members of the Patrol and their positions were—Heitzman at the point, Daniels supporting him. Cook on the right flank, Watson on the left. Broyles, the Patrol Leader in the middle and Kemerer in the rear.

"We took off at about 0700, and after a half hour's walk along the dyke, we passed thru our lines and proceeded on. Our first experience was when "Tangle Foot" Watson, as they called me, came thru the bushes and stumbled on a trip wire. We didn't know what the hell hit us, so we all hit the ground. We thought at first it was a "Bouncing Betty," but it turned out to be a trip flare. Sighs of relief were then heard from the six scattered members of the partol.

"We proceeded on the alert of course, because now we were all scared as rabbits on the first day of hunting season. Not ten minutes later, we heard rifle shots and a hand grenade going off. We crept towards the sounds and found about 5 GI's pitchin hand grenades and shooting fish in the canal. After that, we



sighted some buildings, we came up to them very cautiously, but learned that they were made of cloth and wood frames so as to look like factories. At this spot, we paused for lunch. About 30 minutes later we ran into some fun, when Heitzman and Broyles went forward to look over some terrain and some alert Kraut opened up his machine gun from a pill-box across the Rhine River. The rest of the patrol stayed put, listening for orders from Broyles, but he was too far forward, so Daniels and Cook crept forward to aid them. Heitzman made another move and 'Jerry' let him have it again, so he got back down. When Daniels reached them, he put a few rounds into the pill-box with his 'Grease Gun' and then we took off. We covered the entire area we had to patrol and reported back to the CP. It was the first patrol we had been on and not the last."

The one misleading result of the patrol was to confirm the general impression that we were definitely in a quiet sector and that the Germans were satisfied with their side of the river. However, after a few more uneventful days that saw the company settled to its assigned duties, the telephone rang in the CP at 0815 on the 5th of January, 1945, and Major Galloway was informed that the enemy had crossed the Rhine River and was launching an attack on Gamsheim and were on the way to Kilstett.

#### KILSTETT AND GAMBSHEIM

The battles of Kilstett and Gamsheim represent only three days of our time in combat, but in the minds of all the men in the company, these three days deserve more than usual attention for they represent our first days of real combat, our "Baptism of Fire."

As we learned later, the Germans attack at Kilstett was named the Battle of the Rhine River and was part of their big offensive planned by Von Runstedt, that resulted in the Battle of the Bulge further north. It was not the main German effort, but it was definitely intended to go places and meet elements of the German Army coming south from the Bulge and coming North from the Colmar Pocket. At the same time Strassburg was the immediate big objective and therefore, some of the best divisions in the German Wehrmach were in the attack launched across the Rhine at Gamsheim and Kilstett. They hit the Third Battalion as we were stretched out over a twelve mile front from Port Strassburg North to Gamsheim and they had the advantage of complete surprise.

The news of the German attack was soon disseminated by phone and word of mouth until most of the troops were notified throughout the long thinly held front. The news was electrifying and shockin. Every man was tense and afraid because no one knew better than the men the distance there was between their positions up and down the line. To the last man, each one was anxiously awaiting an order so that he might be of some help to the boys already in action.

Major Galloway, the Third Battalion Commander, first made a reconnaissance of the situation at Kilstett, but when he tried to make his way to Gamsheim, he was fired upon. He then returned to Kilstett and ordered a patrol to investigate the wooded area to the right flank of Kilstett. After that, he went to the Battalion CP at La Wantzenau, to acquaint the Regimental Commander with the situation. At 1000, Major Galloway made another trip to Kilstett and set up a forward Battalion CP there. Shortly afterwards at the rear Battalion CP at La Wantzenau, the Battalion learned, by radio that all of the Battalion's Units, that were in the defense of Gamsheim, including the first squad of the Anti-Tank Platoon, of H3B, under Sgt. Gunderson were surrendering. All we heard over the radio was, "We are surrendering." The situation was serious.

Losses were heavy for our Battalion by now and by afternoon the Battalion Commander had scraped together all the men of



the Battalion that could be taken from their positions without endangering the defense of the Battalion Sector and with a company of Free French, ordered an attack on Gambsheim for 1440. Among the men accumulated, H3H had contributed eighteen, including the kitchen personnel, A & P Platoon, and the Supply personnel. Pfc. Joe Lang remembers Lt. Puhn of the A & P Platoon walking down the street saying, "You and you and You, lets go and it was 14 men from the A & P, the top kick (Carlson) "Roundy" Myers the Supply Sergeants, "Skinny" Workman from the kitchen (a better rifleman than a cook anyway) and Fink and another or two. We left La Wantzenau and headed in the direction of Kilstett with our mission to contact the enemy and set up a line of resistance at any suitable place. The last news we heard as we pulled out was, 'heavy fighting at Gambsheim.' Half way to Kilstett we were dam near run down by tanks and spent a bad five minutes before they were identified as ours, Lang continued. If you ever laid in an open field without a fox-hole, not even a blade of grass for shelter, you will know how we felt. 'Stew' Helthall and Jim Parker got the bazooka ready for action and 'Stew' was heard to say, 'Christ I'm scared, wonder if I can hit anything with this dam stove pipe.' Then the tanks were identified as ours. They had no infantry support so we fell in behind them and made it to Kilstett. That was as far as we got. We drew fire from small arms and artillery. Lt. Puhn set up a defense supposedly of the town, what it really amounted to was a *bluff* of the town as we were far too few to defend it. Twas a good bluff, we were doing a lot of firing and moving about except when the 88's started coming in and pinned us down. After laying out there for about 5 or 6 hours, a company of French came up and we thought they were the advanced elements of a couple of French Regiments who were suppose to relieve us. These French strung out across the field and a couple got bumped off by the 88's and the whole dam bunch took out and ran behind a couple of houses. Night came and we learned that several units were in the town and the Combat partol was no longer needed so at 0200 next morning we all returned. The kitchen had hot chow all night long and were we thankful to them for that."

The attack was met with heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire on our attacking elements. After an advance of some four hundred yards, the troops were pinned down and the French retired immediately upon receiving casualties among their forward echelon. McKee, and the Barrett twins say, "The shells were coming thick and fast around the forward CP at Kilstett and everyone was in ditches and foxholes and snipers were in the town when we all noticed a hell of a commotion and here came Sgt. Ladlee, the wire chief, and Fenno of message center, right on the tail of a "red hen" and one of them carrying an axe and

the chase ended in a barn. Needless to say, the boys had fried chicken in the basement of the CP while the 88's were knocking the doors and roof off up above."

Defense of the town for the night was ordered and the lads of the Commo Section recall that night. Three jeeps were used to patrol the Regimental communication line. Many brave lads volunteered to make many necessary trips to splice the lines they were constantly under artillery and mortar fire and communication was a very vital thing at this time. Sergeants Quesnel, Samp, Shorney and Pfc. Edmunds and Pfc. Fenno and Cpl. McKee and the Barrett twins were immediate volunteers. The way they put it was, "A hell of a bright flash, and all hell tore loose." Later investigation showed a huge hole at the side of the road caused by the blast. The frozen earth became suddenly soft to our bellies."

Back at La Wantzenau, there was a feeling of tense anticipation and alertness. Cpl. Fink recalls, "Lt. Puhn was the first one to announce that a "Jerry" patrol is headed this way." "They have gotten through, so Lt. Salem instructed me to set up a Battalion Security of the town and to use as many men as I needed to do it, or rather, as many men as I could find not already assigned to other duties."

"I posted men at every vantage point and covering all approaches. All the men moved and moved fast as did everyone else. My duty was to continuously make the rounds patrolling from post to post. The men stood their guard for sixteen to twenty-four hours without relief or without a gripe in that freezing weather. All through the night I kept making the rounds carrying a canteen of hot coffee with me each time to give them a swallow of something warn. My greatest fear was being mistaken for a "Squarehead," walking up on one of the posts so suddenly in the dark. I would listen for the sharp, soft command 'Halt.' The boys remained alert and careful even though they were tired, sleepy, nervous and about frozen. I was sorry that I could only satisfy a little of their anxious desire for more news of what the situation was, on each of my trips around, but what I could tell them they were surely glad to hear."

"They stuck it out all night and at noon the second day I was able to find a few men to relieve them for an hour at a time to get warm. We kept sweating out the boys in Kilstett," Fink added.

Bob Simon of the Messenger Center says, "The morning we received word that the Krauts had attacked 'L' Company, at Gamsheim, Zeke Edmunds, motor messenger was just ready to leave for there. Telephone communications had gone out and



there was no other way to contact them, but due to a slight delay we did not have to go at all because word was received that 'L' Company had been overrun and captured. It was certainly a stroke of luck that someone delayed him or he might have been with the rest of 'L' Company."

All this time, the I & R Section was busy maintaining an OP on the bank of the Rhine River for 24 hours a day. Besides spending from 8 to 14 hours on top of their cold perch keeping vigilance against the Germans that might attempt another crossing. They ran a second OP during the attack of Gamsheim from a house in Kilstett, and made patrols at night.

There were terrific fights all around the area of Kilstett and on the outskirts of Gamsheim and for two nights steady the mortars and artillery kept the roads from Kilstett to La Wantzenau under constant pounding. La Wantzenau was kept under constant harrasing artillery fire and the town of Kilstett was taking a terrific artillery pounding. The Krauts found the Battalion Forward CP and put three rounds through the front door. One of the guards that was standing guard on the front door had a leg taken completely off. It was just plain hell for two nights straight without a let up.

Carter Broyles of the I & R Section describes the three man patrol, of which he was 1/3, on the night of the first day of the German attack as follows: "Kemerer and I had been down at the OP on the Rhine during the day while the Germans attacked in the morning and while we counter-attacked in the afternoon. Now at 2300 we were getting ready to go down when S/Sgt. Art called us over to the CP. Lt. Bryant, our S-2, explained to us that the German's attack had left a gap between our Battalion's left flank on the South of the attack and Second Battalion's right flank to the North. We were to proceed some 3000 yards towards the Second Battalion and meet a patrol they were to send towards us at the junction of three large canals.

"About 2330 we left passing through the outpost on our left flank. Those that were there can remember the ice and snow and cold getting colder. We moved out, staying in the shadows of the trees as much as possible, but it seemed almost like day with the moon out from behind scattered clouds, and the land was mostly open though it seemed like anyone within a mile could see us. We crossed a canal, over a bridge, and then started moving up, guiding on the canal. We were dodging from shadow to shadow of the trees. The ground here was covered with a thin crust of ice. Although we moved very quietly, to us we sounded like a herd of elephants. We continued along in this manner, occasionally hitting and hugging the ground when we could feel the breath of an 88 as they whizzed over our heads. As we were

nearing our objectives, from our left came what we thought was a large group of men, marching or digging into the hard ground. After five minutes of almost breathless waiting, the sound continued and we decided that it was just ice cracking from the cold. Moving on, we finally reached the junction of the three canals, where we were to meet the other patrols. We looked high and low, but no patrol could be found. This was a heck of a time to get stood up. By the time we were sure no patrol was coming to meet us, we had gone about three hours. Three hours of cold and sweat. Getting out our map and huddling over it, we could see that one of these canals ran due North and crossed the main road that the Second Battalion had been advancing astraddle of. We had been informed that the Second Battalion had crossed this canal in their attack during the afternoon and had continued to advance. But, we had been seeing a Heinie Machine Gun firing from somewhere on up along this canal. This didn't jive. Was it just an isolated nest that hadn't been cleared?

"We had to contact the Second Battalion. So, we moved up the left side of this canal until we reached the road. But we were in front of the Second Battalion and not in the rear of it. They had been forced to withdraw and had established an OPL about one hundred yards behind the canal.

"It was really cold by now and the few 'good' Germans lying around, were frozen stiff as boards. After finding their (2d Bn) CP and getting the situation from them, we started back. I can say we were three tired boys when we arrived back at La Wantzenau at 0620. We had not seen the enemy but it was a long cold, sweat, covering those four or five thousand yards of open ground that lay between the two Battalions. Lady Luck was with us that night. Many were the times we hit the frozen ground and I mean it was cold. We got where we would hit the grit every time we heard a whistle or a whine. It's just automatic, you do it without thinking."

By now the Medics were doing a wonderful piece of work in their Aid Station that had been set up in the town of Kilstett since the first minute of action in that sector. They carried on through severe attacks of 88's and mortars through out the day. "Napy" Napychank says, "We were in the thick of things—and I do mean thick! This was our first time under direct fire and only too well did we realize that we were still 'green.' Things were getting very rough with explosions everywhere, buildings being blown up all around us. There was no way to turn, no place to go—what to do was the question. It was that unforgettable first day that made us veterans and buddies in every sense of the word. When the first few shells came in, we unwillingly retreated slowly. We did not realize what havoc and destruction



that an artillery shell could cause. I will never forget those moments with Ed Wulf in which we shared the same gravel pile. We hugged the gravel as the 88's zoomed overhead. We raised up just in time to see "Texas" James long legs disappearing into a cellar of a house just as an 88 hit the barn. He wasn't a coward, just loved life. One will never know the deep feeling of satisfaction that comes from within the hearts of we Medics when we rescue a wounded man and get him back in time. This was our job and the feeling of a job well done is our one goal and aim in this war. We know only too well that to the Litter Bearers the most credit should go. They toiled untiringly through many nights and often under direct machine-gun fire. Our first two casualties were Duval and Ishee, Aidman—captured. Onnie Johnson, 'K' Co Aidman, was wounded by shrapnel and was kidding and cheerful as they carried him away. He was missed and we well remembered him witty and cheerful even in pain as they carried him away. This was war, stark naked and savage war. "Doc" Gillespie, Aidman for Love Company distinguished himself for his bravery by lying in an open field under direct artillery barrages with a wounded man for nearly four hours.

During the first night of the attack, we received word that units of the 222d Infantry and of the Second Battalion of the 232d Infantry would be attached to us in preparation for a stronger counterattack the following day. Under harrasing mortar and artillery fire all night long, these units were led into place and contacted by patrols, one of them led by Captain McCollum. Other patrols found the enemy digging in South and East of Gamsheim. Lt. Christopher and any number of men working with him ducked the artillery all night long bringing rations and ammunition up to the front line troops, who were really hurtin'.

By morning we were in a much better position than when the Germans had suddenly struck the morning before, and at 0930, Major General Wyche, Commanding General of the Seventy-ninth Division and Brigadier General Linden, Commanding 'TFL,' arrived at Kilstett and planned a coordinated attack with the Battalions attacking from the West. Again the attack was met immediately with a heavy concentration of enemy artillery and mortar fire. It was learned that the Battalions attacking from the Northwest were not as far forward as it was believed and the second coordinated attack had to be called off because they would not be able to reach the desired positions before darkness.

In describing some of the action of the day, Winkle, who was in the Commo Wire Section, and who had helped with the endless job of repairing the lines that were being constantly torn

to bits by artillery fire, has this to relate: "Early in the afternoon, when the first barrage came in, I took my place behind a fence, feeling very safe. However, when the next barrage came in, there was no longer a fence. One of the first rounds had completely demolished it. After that, there just was no wall thick enough or no hole or ditch deep enough for me in a barrage. Even though the book said the Jerry 88's were knocked out, I took my place with the many others who said, 'We respect the 88's, to Hell with the book.'"

For the second night, the Third Battalion was ordered to organize its forces in defense of Kilstett. Numerous patrols were sent out and it was learned that the enemy was improving and strengthening his positions. Several times during the night rumors spread rapidly throughout the company that the Germans were attempting another landing further South on the Northern outskirts of Strassburg. Although the men by this time were becoming very tired and weary, they again strained their senses, that they might intercept any enemy movements and warn the Battalion. It was a dark night, with no moon, and again the OP team, at their lonely outpost on the Rhine River strained their eyes trying to listen for the sound of boats in the river and trying to locate any possible movement of the Germans across the river. It was another one of those long cold nights that everyone was glad to see end. The Heinies kept harrasing fire coming into La Wantzenau for two straight nights and did a good job of keeping all of us awake. They certainly accomplished their mission of harrasing artillery fire. During the night we received word that the Third French Armored Division (Algerian) was to pass through our lines and attack Gamsheim. At 1100 on 7 January 1945, elements of the Armored units passed through La Wantzenau and at 1430, they 'jumped of' on their attack. At first they were successful but after reaching the outskirts of Gamsheim, they were forced to withdraw. Our Battalion gave support fire to this attack from the positions we continued to hold on the outskirts of Kilstett.

A Battalion Observation Post was set up in the attic of one of the houses on the outskirts of Kilstett and from their vantage point, they observed the entire action through a hole in the roof, where a previous round had landed. Although Cook, of the I & R. Section had to dodge shell fragments and small arms fire, he was on the go most of the afternoon and saw enough to enable him to talk about the attack for hours at a time. He describes some of the actions thusly, "It was the third day of the German's Bridgehead at Gamsheim. They were attempting to enlarge their Bridgehead and our previous counter attacks, employing small forces, were thrown back. There was to be another counter



attack on the ever increasing number of Germans, but this time a French Force was to pass through our lines to make the attack. Our orders were to defend the town of Kilstett. So to make it a proper defense, the Intelligence Section was ordered to establish an OP. At 1030 this OP was established in a Kilstett church steeple but an hour later, they were forced to move to a safer location as the 'Krauts' were zeroing in on it. We went into a lone house in the edge of town.

"The attack by elements of a French Armored Division was scheduled for 1200, but was held off so that it would be coordinated with an attack to be made by the Second Battalion.

"During the delay, Item Company was fired upon by Jerry machine gun fire from a dyke on our right flank. From our position in the OP, we could observe everything that was happening. The Jerries could be seen digging in positions on the edge of Gamsheim and there was a lot of activity to the right of town between Gamsheim and the dyke.

"As yet no communication had been established, so messages were being run to the forward CP, which was two blocks to the rear, by foot. Because of this lack of communications, mortar fire could not be directed upon the enemy. As a result, the Germans were well dug in when the French attack 'jumped off.'

"Up until the time the attack started, our Battalion OP had been comparatively quiet. But now as the French pushed forward, the Germans threw everything they had at us. Our OP seemed to be the center of the whole affair. Machine guns, anti-tank guns, and artillery was falling all around us. The French Infantry had been stopped by the machine guns on the right, but eight tanks had managed to close in upon the enemy. The tanks inflicted considerable damage to the enemy but without support of the Infantry, they were stopped. Five of the eight tanks were destroyed by 88's and the other three withdrew to Kilstett.

"Meanwhile, as the battle became intensified, the OP was far from quiet. The house had been hit several times by mortar and artillery. The French Infantry, after being stopped by machine gun fire, swarmed in and around our OP. Some of them had crowded into the basement, where a few of our own men were seeking shelter from the heavy shelling but most of them were outside and exposed. It was several of these, who were exposed, that were wounded when an 88 MM shell dropped in on us with no warning of any kind. All the injured were of a slight nature except the one Algerian who lost his left leg at the knee and as soon as the shock of explosion had passed, the Algerian was half dragged and half carried into the basement of the OP. None of the Frenchmen seemed to know what to do, so we took

it upon ourselves to give the boy first-aid. We applied a tourniquet, gave him some morphine, and managed to make the Frenchman understand that we needed a stretcher for him. He was suffering a great deal from shock and pain, and was also losing too much blood. He remained conscious during the entire ordeal but not once did he utter a sound. As quickly as possible he was taken back to the aid station for further treatment and evacuation.

"As all of this went on, the battle between Gamsheim and Kilstett continued. The three remaining tanks that withdrew to Kilstett were followed by five German Mark IV's. These German tanks were camouflaged for suitable maneuvering in snow and looked to us as if nothing could stop them. But, we were going to make a good try just the same. Again we made ourselves understood to the French and soon obtained a Bazooka. One fellow from the OP dashed out into the open field with the Rocket Launcher and took up a position in a fox hole. However, he did not have to resort to using it for two tanks had been stopped by our Anti-Tank guns and the other three turned back.

"Later we were instructed to withdraw from our OP, which to us was a great relief. We had observed one of our first major battles and came out of it with new and greater experience for the future."

As a field expedient, Cook had used his belt for a tourniquet and was forced to keep his pants where they belonged by other means, until he went on pass to Nancy a month later.

During all the excitement of our first action in this Sector and while Co. L was getting a pounding in Gamsheim, Captain McCollum, S-1, was off on a quartering party in the Camp De Oberhofen area. It was on his return back to La Wantzenau that he and driver Doty and the rest of the QP had quite an experience. They had just started through a small village back close to Kilstett when they met a GI running toward them and trying to stop them. They stopped and he said, "Hell man you can't go into that town, the Krauts are coming in on the other side," and pointing to the numerous flares he continued, "They are rolling and it looks like a major break through shaping up." Captain McCollum and party turned around and took out. It was when he finally got back to the CP in La Wantzenau and reported to Colonel McNamee that he was sent forward to help Major Galloway set up a forward CP in Kilstett.

The French drive was stopped when five of their tanks were knocked out but not until they had captured beaucoup prisoners. As Lt. Jennings F. Bryant, S-2, described it, "Those Heinies came out of their foxholes like rats with their hands up and it



took most of our men to help to bring them back in. The tanks would roll out on the field and the PW's incoming line was almost continuous. It was a sight to see those Frenchmen huddled about the buildings in Kilstett and as the prisoners came marching in four abreast, these French would just cock their rifles and fire right into them. They must have gotten a dozen before the troops could stop them. A live PW can give a lot of valuable information. Well we are all at a loss to know just what happened to all the PW's. There must have been 250 prisoners when they came in with them that evening and by next morning we found a couple of disinterested French guards with about 50 PW's and a 'no Compri' for all questions as to what happened to all of them. Well we have our own ideas."

For the third night the French and our Battalion went into the coordinated defense of the town of Kilstett which was now showing those definite signs of being a town on the edge of Norman's Land. It was cold and snowing that night and the roads were clogged with the tanks of the French Armored unit and our jeeps trying to hurry through under blackout driving and with visibility zero. Now the boys driving the jeeps would like to hurry, for they had all run the gauntlet many times by now and with their fingers crossed and a prayer they would be where the shell coming in was not.

To walk from one building to another in Kilstett, with all of them looking the same was a problem for runners who had to hunt for anyone. The Runners did a masterful job in finding the various OP's and CP's of the various outfits that came in to Kilstett and set up. The glass from the windows was laying on the ground, the shutters were broken and slamming in the cold wind and the chickens and livestock no longer confined by neat fences, wandered aimlessly about the town in search of food and water. No one paid any more attention to the straying animals and staring civilians than they did to the dead animals laying here or there about the streets.

At night as you walked cautiously along in the shadows of a fence or building carefully avoiding tripping over the downed electric wires, you would suddenly be stopped with a terse, "Halt." After you gave the password, you would exchange a few words about the weather or something and move on constantly on the alert for snipers.

At the Battalion CP, now set up in the coal cellar of the ruined beer tavern, originally selected, Major Galloway now looking very tired and haggard was having a Company Commander's Meeting and was telling them that we were to withdraw during the cover of darkness and leave the French to deal with the Ger-

man Bridgehead which was now no larger than it was that first day and well under control.

During the night with the Germans ever harrasing artillery fire an elment to be considered, the Battalion withdrew to La Wantzenau and relaxed to a good night's sleep in this little town two miles away, South of Kilstett. With only a harrasing shell now and then to contend with, it was a comparative rest haven.

It was here in La Wantzenau that the French had set up their "rear CP." Their CP was situated across the street from the quarters of the Headquarters Company 1st Sergeant and most of the A-P Platoon, I & R Section and Supply. The guard on the door was T/5 Rose of the Supply Room. As McNeil walked out the door on the way to the Battalion, Rose warned, "Mac be careful when you return, there is a French Guard standing in the shadow of that gatepost over there. Mac says, "Does he know how to speak English?" "I don't think he does, but if you will say you are an American Soldier he will let you by," Rose answered. Mac, at that time said, "Rose look at that light in that house over there, do you think that you can get that Frenchman to have his CP personnel either put the light out or close the shutters." When Mac returned from the BN, he found T/5 Rose laughing to beat hell and when he inquired about it Rose told him what had happened. Rose said he asked the Frenchman to go put that light out and the Frenchman grunted a little and reached down and picked up a big rock and slammed it through the window and picked up another just in case. Result, the light went out but fast.

The next morning, after a good hot breakfast, the most important thing was to heat some water and remove the three day's accumulation of dirt and beard from the unrecognizable mugs so that all that had pulled through OK could be recognized. We were a happy lot to know that we had made out so well in our first battle against an experienced foe. We could hardly realize ourselves, that we had really stopped one of the enemy's last major efforts to turn the tide in his favor once more. The tales to be told and compared were many and the rumor that we were to go into reserve for a while left us all so elated that the bitter cold and snow was never noticed. Some of the men stood in their undershirts as they washed their faces and shaved over their helmets, delicately balanced on a fence pole and talked leisurely to a buddy that they hadn't seen for the past three days. It was a more confident, almost cocky, gang that loaded on to the trucks that had arrived to move us to our next unknown destination.

Losses in KIA, WIA and MIA amounted to approximately



seven officers and one hundred thirty-nine enlisted men, this was as of about the 12 of January, 1945. Company 'L' took the heaviest losses as they had their CP surrounded and lost all CP personnel and Supply personnel and equipment as well.

Our Chaplain, Clarence J. Potter, was a familiar person to be seen on the battle line or in the front areas. Duty always seemed to call him up there with the boys. Here is the story he has to tell on his experiences. "On the afternoon of our 4th day at Kilstett we were being relieved by a French-Algerian Division. About six men and myself stood on the porch of a house next to the Medical Aid Station. These six men, all medics, and myself were watching the Algerians move up to relieve our weary men. There seemed to be a lull at the moment so we were enjoying the sight of relief at hand. Some of the men had placed some potatoes on the stove inside to fry, then joined us outside, in discussing the situation.

Over our heads was a porch canopy made of wrought iron and glass. At the height of our discussion a very heavy AP shell hit the canopy just above our heads, proceeding through the house and making a larger hole at each succeeding wall it hit. Glass and brick dust showered down all around and over us. We hit the cellar in no time flat though it was filled with cabbages and didn't offer much in comfort.

After some time we ventured forth and seated ourselves around the table while the chefs served us the now well fried potatoes. As we waited around the table, Catholics, Protestants and Jews, someone said, "Chaplain ask the blessing." This he did and a more thankful group of fellows never ate a better meal in all their lives. It was good to be alive.

Another incident that stands out in the Chaptain's mind was during the heavy fighting around Kilstett. "I talked to a number of fellows in their foxholes, leaving with them a few testaments and having a few words with them. One lad was asked if anything ever came down that way, and the lad gave forth with a slow Texas drawl, "Well about every five minutes they cut loose with a burp gun through here." Chaplain replied, "Man, why don't you tell me those things?" The lad replied very slowly. "You know, Chaplain, I was just getting ready to tell you about that."

## CAMP DEOBERHOFFEN TO HAGENAU

After a short ride over narrow, slippery, winding roads, we were in an old German camp, Camp DeOberhoffen. With an artillery piece implaced in the woods beyond the camp, it didn't seem to meet the expectations we had for a rest area. But, after being assigned to the barracks we were to occupy, we went about the routine business of finding stove pipe and stove parts to fit together in some fashion so they would generate heat. That was all that was expected of the stoves we made all winter long. Fuel economy, beautiful features, and home atmosphere were willingly sacrificed.

After an uneventful evening of catching up on our letter writing, followed by a comfortable night's sleep, we were told shortly after breakfast that we would be moving again. By this time, no one thought the second time about packing his things on a minute's notice and taking off. But when they added later, that we would walk and carry only what we would need in combat, the whole situation took a more serious turn.

In short order we were walking at ten pace intervals, in single file, along both sides of the road, slipping in the snow and munching on a "K" ration as we watched our P-47's strafing something off to our right. After walking through several war-torn villages, we came to Shirrhofen, where the Battalion CP was set up in a sturdy brick house on the corner of the road running to Sessenheim and Drusenheim. The companies went on the line seven miles apart as support to the Battalions already on the line.

A week went by with all the platoons of the company doing what the book said they should. The Commo was busy laying wire and repairing what they laid from breaks by shell fragments over a ten mile front again. The A & P. repaired some of the bridges we were using a lot and were set to blow a bridge that the Germans might use to cross the river dividing no man's land. The Anti-Tank platoon had their gun implaced in strategic spots with good fields of fire and so on. Sgt. Grantham, the Platoon Sgt. of AT had this to say about it. "Black dreary night. Your position is 50 yards from the enemy. What the hell? Are they crazy? Buddy, that is just what they were, too. First and second squads sweated it out that night, moving the gun up, by handling them down the trail. And the 3rd Squad perched themselves comfortable on the hill back in town. But not for long. Action was confined to patrolling and we had received a few casualties and had captured a few prisoners on several of the patrols. A good deal of activity was noticed on the part of the



Germans all up and down the front and on the eighth day—17 January, 1945, they did attack at Sessenheim. Things were really getting hot. The Jerry artillery fire was the worst we had received and the veterans of the 36th Division that came to relieve us said they had never seen as much since they were at Anzio. For two days the Jerries success was measured in yards and the town of Sessenheim exchanged hands several times. So on the 19th of January, "K" Company was moved about seven miles north but just south of "I" Company's area. "L" Company at the time was greatly understrength from their losses received at Kilstett and were functioning only as a combat team of about platoon strength. But they went on a 72 hour task force on 2 tanks. This area was the tip of a finger that we were still holding with the Germans in good force on three sides of us. The Battalion CP and all of our company was billeted in the basement of a German Military School Building. It was a precarious position with the Germans still attacking the units now holding the line at Sessenheim and Drusenheim, in an effort to cut the finger off from the south.

Shirrhoften was a bit unpleasant. A large shell landed out in the field nearby and a large piece of shrapnel tore our number three GI can to smithereens, (we still do not know the size of that shell). At this town our Lt. in charge of the Section treated some Mademoiselle (rather cute) for appendicitis. His magic touch was really something to behold. Just by massaging her abdominal region for a few moments was a positive cure. It was here that Tommy Hurst, "Okie" Green, and Al Schmidt were wounded. "Okie" was hit just enough for the five points and a Purple Heart. We then moved into Soufflenheim; it was a bit unpleasant and is a day to be remembered. This was the day that the Germans threw all at us including the proverbial kitchen stove. At the house which we were staying the door to the cellar kept getting in the way each and every time we hastened down to the cellar. The door came off the hinge and all on the second trip down stairs, without the help of the screw driver (one bottleneck removed by the medics.) Our stay at Soufflenheim was one of the one-day and one-night type, with orders to pull every man out and withdraw to Hagenau during the night. However, the tenseness of the situation, hoping that the enemy would hold off until we could pull, made it seem like years. The way Corporal Fink (Madison, Wisconsin) remembers those two days are as follows: "Cpl. McNeil and I were at a good vantage point. Watching our Artillery lay phosphorus on Sessenheim, we would hear the big guns let go and then watch the shell hit and blossom out. Fires started in a dozen places, really making it hot for Jerry. Then came the order to move up. Lt. Christopher, Pfc. Bernard and myself took off for forward guides. We left

Bernard at a lonely crossroad, right in the middle of a big forest, lonely as hell. The Lt. and I moved only a few yards, but received mental assurance and moved on. My duties were to disperse the rifle companies that were coming up. The companies came up and were dispersed the best I could, when Jerry decides to do a little aggravating. Shells came in from what seemed every direction; there was a little stream nearby, and without a second thought, I dove for it, snow and ice all around. The barrage only lasted for ten or more minutes, but it seemed like hours. When I did venture out, I first realized that I was soaked and nearly drowned and frozen. Yet I was sweating like hell. So this is Soufflenheim.

"That night was just an exchange of artillery, then our I & R boys discovered that Jerry was massing troops and it started to look like another "Hades the second." We were ordered to withdraw, blow bridges and roadblocks, do anything to hold Jerry up long enough to let us get the hell out of the place. We had to wait for the cover of darkness first. So we lay low all day. It snowed like mad and was really deep. At nine o'clock that night we started off. The roads were slick with ice and with deep snow. Carrying our blankets, a few personal things, and weapons, we trudged along. Hour after hour. As we marched along, the thumping of artillery just spurred us on. The boys were really hurting, but no one said a word. A grunt and a moan, someone had fallen on the slick ice. Another would help him up. Others fell and still others helped them up. Hour after hour. Sometimes it seemed that we were heading into the fight instead of getting ourselves out of it."

Sgt. Napychank of the Medics puts it this way, "What started out to be a ten-minute walk to the trucks on the night of January 20th, turned out to be a fifteen-mile hike to Hagenau. It was not an uncommon sight to see the boys, with red crosses on their helmets carrying BAR's packs and M-1's. Despite the continual snow and intense cold, it was really wonderful to see the boys taking all of this with a smile on their weather-beaten faces. Their ability to laugh at all obstacles and elements is really a welcome and winning trait."

"The farther we went, the more we hurt," Cpl. Fink had his way of telling this trip. "We came to small villages. All the boys Hour after hour, slipping, sliding, falling, and bitching had felt sure this was the place we would stay, instead, on we went. started miles before. Finally we came to Hagenau. Surely this was it. It had to be!! Instead we went right on thru the town. Our rifles felt like a field piece. Everyone had a large blister. All you could do was grit your teeth and keep going. Walk until you covered distances you could not even remember.



Asleep on our feet, but we kept going. At last we went into a large building on the outskirts of Hagenau. It was nearly six o'clock in the morning. Most men were so tired they just laid on the floor without cover and were sound asleep before the last ones were in the room. Cold, tired, sleep came easily even on the hard floor of this building with no windows. What a dreadful, trying night! It took all the endurance of well trained men."

The building that Corporal Fink mentions was an old missionary school and for the last five years, a German hospital. We had successfully made our retreat without casualties and from here, we were taken by trucks on further back to the small farming village of Bosendorf, where the Division was in Corps reserve to lick the wounds, receiving replacements, and reorganizing. It was a long cold ride in a crowded open truck but it was good to be going back to where the trucks drove with their headlights on once again. The facilities for billeting were scarce and many of the boys had to make themselves comfortable in a smelly, noisy hayloft, but no one seemed to mind minor inconveniences like these anymore. It was here that Papy Hines, slightly "under the weather," lost his mail order molars. In the course of events, "drinks," he also wadded up his letters from his beloved wife and threw them in the fire. The following morning a perplexed and headache-ridden Hines was walking around in a lonely fashion inquiring if he had any mail last night.

During our three-day stay at Bosendorf, we replaced lost equipment, cleaned our dirty equipment, wrote letters, enjoyed a PX ration, radiantly enjoyed the "Stars and Stripes" to get caught up on the world news, and sat around the fire to tell the stories of our recent experiences to the new men, while we kept warm.

#### OHLUNGHEN TO GREMECY

On the 25th of January, we moved out on foot in heavy snow. After marching at intervals of ten paces, along the side of the road a couple of miles, we began to run into civilians coming the opposite direction pushing baby carriages, carrying huge packs of all their earthly possessions, and dragging the walking children along by the hand. Snow was waist deep, they were tired and scared and some would speak and some would look at us with hate in their eyes. We knew then that we were going into the fight again, and after eight miles of slipping and sliding in the snow, we came to the crest of the hill that overlooked the farming village of Ohlunghen. The official German greeting of a few mortar shells came in shortly after our arrival and we wasted no time in hitting the comfortable and assuring snow filled ditches along the road. In town, a runner and Loren Grantham were looking for the CP. All at once, that whistle, and then the burst. Man.. that street emptied in a hurry. As Loren tells it, "I hit the ground so fast, I left my steel helmet suspended in mid-air." No one was injured, but poor "Pfc. Tom's" jeep was shrapnel riddled and worse than that, forced to leave the cellar he had the knack of finding, because one of the tires was flat on the bottom and that, as even "Pfc. Tom" would admit, is first echelon maintenance. At Ohlunghen we first experienced "liberating" eggs, bacon, and chicken. Cholowinski learned how to dismount from a horse in a hurry, (falling off); "Andy" McDonald (Brooklyn) still loves tanks, after diving beneath one to avoid the Jerry Mortar shells.

The Anti-tank guns were pulled into position on the crest of a hill along a graveyard wall and covered the lone road through the woods along same and into the valley below. The same woods that were destined to be our battle ground of the afternoon and a battle field for the 222d also. However, it was "No Man's land now. As usual, the Commo were busy dodging artillery but all the time they kept putting in the Communications faster than Jerry could put them out of commission. The I & R section established an OP in a foxhole on the crest of the hill overlooking the forest in the valley, but at 2200, they were sent on a patrol of the woods to see how far the Germans had retreated and to study the terrain for an attack the Battalion would make in the morning. This is Cook's story of his patrol: "This is going to be one helluva night for a Recon Patrol. That was the one thought that was foremost in the mind of every man of the section, including our S-2 and Intelligence Sgt., who had to sweat out our return.



"It was 2200 hours when Kemerer and Watson closed Bn OP and returned to the CP, where we were to be briefed for mission. Watson was to remain at the CP and our "Jeep driver" "Pfc. Tom," would go in his place. Broyles would be the patrol leader. At approximately 2245, with the mission clear in all our minds, we started out on the most miserable patrols we were ever to go on. We were to proceed North for 800 yards to the tree line and then penetrate into the forest for 500 to 600 yards—looking for possible tank approaches and stream crossings.

As we moved out from the shelter of Ohlungen, a terrific blizzard struck us full in the face. The snow that had fallen was soft and deep, and with each step we took, we sank into snow to our knees. When we arrived at the edge of the forest we contacted a friendly outpost and then moved into the wooded area. Here we were protected from the wind, but the snow was still falling heavily; hearing was very difficult, and also keeping on the course took a good knowledge of scouting. We were depending on Danny this night for he was the point. Heitzman was on the left flank with Kemerer on the right, Broyles in the center and Tommie and myself in the rear.

After progressing into the forest for some distance without running into the streams that were on the map, we stopped for a short parley. It was at this point that we all lost about five years of our lives and Tommie acquired a few more gray hairs. Artillery had been passing over our heads in both directions ever since we started and during the previous day; some of it had fallen close to where we were now huddled. The snow was still falling and soon the weight of the snow broke the top on one of the trees that had been smashed by artillery. It made a 'helluva' loud noise as it fell thru the trees and before it struck the ground, every man was imbedded in the deep snow expecting to be fired on at any moment. Our mission had been completed, except for reporting our findings to Lt. Bryant and Lt. Col. Galoway.

"Although it had been cold, everyone of us was wet with perspiration from the four and one-half hour trek and our clothes were crusted with snow and ice. We finished that patrol at 0230 in the morning and jumped off on our attack at 0600. Yes, that had been a hectic night for us—another one we would never forget."

The attack was to jump off at 0600 in the morning, so that by 0515, we were all up and busy heating some "K" ration for breakfast. We were to attack and drive the Germans back across the Moder River and eliminate entirely the bridgehead they had established. It was the first attack we had made with our Battalion taking only a normal sector and with all our companies

side by side like we had been taught in training and, besides, we had a platoon of tanks in support. We met no resistance and the only damage done was that done to the tanks by mines laid in the deep snow on the lone road through the woods. From the time the "Time-on-Target" barrage lifted and the Battalion jumped off, we went straight through the woods and by noon the first echelon had reached the river and the boys following about 100 yards behind were digging in positions along the road which ran parallel to the river. This would be the line of defense. As it was planned as soon as we had finished the attack, the defensive position was taken over by GI's of the 79th Division and we were relieved.

The Germans from across the river continued to send mortar shells into Ohlungen to explode without warning and keep us well under cover. Orders were received early in the afternoon that we were to proceed on foot across country into another farming village of Grassendorf. In the deep snow, without rest, with equipment on our backs, we took off on one of the hardest marches we ever made. It was five miles of fighting through the snow. We slipped and stumbled in the ruts of the plowed fields until our heavy shoepacs felt like leaded driver's boots. It was dark and the usual welcome of the tolling church bell was all that greeted us as we finally arrived at Grassendorf. Most of us would have been pleased to stay in any one of the other little towns that we had passed through enroute, especially since all of these little villages are the same, with church in the center, a Gasthaus, the most prominent building, a half a dozen houses with the barns in the cellars and manure piles very conspicuously and neatly stacked beside the front porch.

After another night of good rest, any place slightly warm and dry was all that was necessary; the boys were in good spirits again by morning and indulged again in the luxury of a shave and a warmed can of "chopped carrots and apple flakes." At noon time we received the order to be ready to pull out at any minute and at 1400 we were again piled in trucks and off on another of our long cold winter rides.



## GREMECY

It was long after dark when we pulled into a small partly deserted little farming village, that had seen too much for its own good, and we were again in the area where the trucks could use their headlights. That, along with the pleasant results obtained from the bottles of wine that were found in Grassendorf, had the boys in the mood where it took a lot of tough things to destroy their good humor. Regardless of the late hour of our arrival, the numerous searching parties were sent out right away in search for the necessary materials needed to construct a stove, while others worked to cover the gaping windows with something to slow the gale down as it whipped through the buildings. The third crew was busy by candlelight sweeping out piles of snow and chunks of fallen plaster, as well as arranging some hay on the floor to make the boards a mite softer. The whole battalion got into that little town of battered buildings and how they did it we all now wonder. Cpl. McNeil and Sgt. Daley tell the tale about how they struggled with an old beat up stove until they got it to working and then along comes some "brass" and into the CP it went. Cpl. Fink and his "Elite Troops" of Capt. McCollum had a story all their own. It seems they too had trouble getting the much needed stove. So they finally got one set up. "Smoky Stover affair," PFC. Carlson said. "Man, you have to pussy-foot it across the floor or else the damn thing will collapse." It was here that Pfc. Louis Zeccihini joined the "Elite." His accordian could be heard all around the town. It surely took the grimness out of war.

In this little town of Gremecy we stayed until February 17th '45. We again received replacements, or reinforcements as they were known. The division artillery and special troops also joined us to transform Task Force Linden into the 42nd Division and actually begin the career of the 42nd Division of World War II.

Although the town of Gremecy was either a mud hole or covered with a foot of snow all the time we were there, and although the chow was the worst we had had all the time we have been over seas, there are many pleasant thoughts connected with Gremecy. As the AT boys expressed it, "at Gremecy we had our first experiences as road guards. Remember those long nights in the barn on the edge of town? "Pop" Larson and Marcum contracted the GI's (Run Robin). Busy boys they were too—. We got our first close up of knocked-out Jerry tanks in the area surrounding the town. Gibson, Gary, Floyd, Fishers (both) and Fueleing joined us here.

At Gremecy we once again got our regular rest again, and



clean clothes, our first in a couple of months. It was there that we received passes to Nancy and were able to have a bath, our first in about two months. It was there also that some of the boys decided that they were barbers and the rest of us received a haircut, the first in couple of months. It was also at Gremecy that we had a chance to go to an American movie. One was held in an old hay loft and we all hung from the cross beams and sat in the hay but the show was well enjoyed by all. Another was shown in a small barn near Moncel and the men were trucked down. This one was technicolor and the name of it was "Bathing Beauty" with Esther Williams. Some of the boys who had to go to the same barn for a "mine and booby trap lecture" the next day were still looking into the corner of the barn where the American beauties were shown on the screen the night before. It all served to take our minds off the war for the time being. The Division Band came to this little village and put everybody in the grandest mood. GI heads could be seen sticking out from every building around and it was a picture to be sure. It was a treat even to hear them play the SOP "Rainbow Song," "Good Old Mountain Dew."

Of course, there were also the more serious things to be done. We ran problems 'ala Gruber' style, dug many latrines to accommodate the men who were suffering through the GI's, and, to please the Division Inspector's erroneous report, we transferred a mature pile one Sunday from one yard to another yard. The tasks were many times hard and inconvenient but, the good American way soon won out and after a little bitching, someone soon found something humorous and the work was usually done and everybody's spirit remained the same. "Pfc." Tom Aimar was heard to say, "When I get home I will probably have to learn all over again not to grab a shovel and hit the back garden when I have to go." All the different companies had their individual problems and individual jobs to accomplish as well as did the different platoons of the Headquarters Company. One very quiet morning, all was very still when Andy McDonald was having trouble, and shouted "Whose got me blanket, "It's got me number on it." "Charley" (Kearns) Where's me blanket." It wasn't long before Charley acquired the name of "Baboon." The A & P Platoon was forever busy trying to make it possible to navigate the muddy streets which stayed that way from the melting snow. They built board walks to escape being mired down on the way to chow and up to the CP. The Anti-tank Platoon manned their 57's at road blocks 24 hours a day. By the way, the A-T will never forget Gremecy as being the place where they fired the only rounds to pass through the bores of their 57's (practice).

As the Division moved in, or rather as we began to move as

a Division, we were paid welcome visit by the "doughnut girls" of the Division Red Cross. Orders were received to form the Ranger Platoon in each Battalion and 3rd Bn asked for volunteers. They came from everywhere. Many things were accomplished while we were at Gremecy. "Gramps" Brenden was kept busy painting signs for the Cp, as well as garbage dumps and latrines and when he was not doing that, he stood guard and kept busy dodging Lt. Christopher. Lt. Christopher used to send some stranger to look for Brenden and the guy would go into the guard room and call for him and Damn if old "Gramps" wouldn't say, "Brenden?—yes he was here just a few minutes ago, you must have passed him coming up 'cause he just left, Kemmerer, where did Brenden go?" At the same time "Gramps" would say to Cpl. Fink or to the other boys, "Bet that is Red Christopher that wants me," and he would take out for parts unknown.

Our newly Battlefield Commissioned Lieutenants of the Battalion reported to their respective companies while we were at Gremecy. Lt. Alfred G. Higgins, formerly buck-sergeant of the A & P Platoon came back to us.

At the end of 21 days in the same place, we were all getting "ants in our pants" and the news that we were to move out was welcome, even if it was to the front lines again. We at least had our own artillery with us right down to our forward observers. Sgt. Foster was in the CP.



## LICHTENBURG

The trip from Gremecy to Wimmenau was another long, uneventful and tiring trip by motor convoy. When we arrived in the heavily pine-wooded Vosges mountains, we unloaded and walked the remaining few miles into our position on the line, to avoid being seen by the enemy as we relieved the 45th Division. The 45th had fallen back to this line of defense from positions further up in the mountains after a powerful attack by the Germans in December. Since then the front was, what is described in newspaper reports as "an inactive front with light patrol activity." Actually, as far as the big picture is concerned, such a front is inactive, but for the boys making the nightly patrols into and behind the enemy lines, the matter of life and death is involved just as greatly as it would be in an all out attack against Berlin itself.

Anti-Tankmen Floyd (Old Red Face), Rosatti, Radman and 'Matey' Anderson were chewing over a few of the incidents while having their daily poker and black Jack game in 'Matey's' prize cave in the Buxenburg Forest. It went something like this: "We were just 50 yards from the Krauts and that damn Perry and Matey had to have their 'K' rations heated, so they swish out and build a fire. Yeh. but how about that first night in Lichtenburg when the 1st and 2nd squads sweated it out landing the 57's into position down that long hill and in the middle of the night over treacherous muddy trails. The truck could get down just so far and after that it was 'by hand,' but not 'by hand follow me,' rather it was by hand hold 'er back as down the hill we went. The A-T Platoon CP was in the town in the basement of a beat up building and it *was* really beat up. But boy 20 pounds of spuds for every man in every basement made for good French fries. Ackerman and Cerutti did some masterful handling of those trucks in and out of those woods and up and down the hills.

"Then came the day that the A-T guns were pulled off position and back to the big hill in back of the CP in the Buxenburg forest." It was here the "A-T Engineers" were born. It seems some of the 'big brass' visited the Battalion Command Post, which was in that one house stuck out in the open by itself and they said that that was no place for a CP, in as much as the big push was to take off soon; so whats to do but everybody should move into dugouts. The A-T Platoon was called on to dig CP dugouts, Officer's living quarters dugouts and their own dugouts. No houses were in the area so this was the answer and this they did. All will agree that no one person in the company could do more with their hands and brains than Sgt. B. F. Grantham and



through his planning and guidance the A-T Platoon built an underground CP that was the envy of the whole regiment. It was warm and it was comfortable. They not only got the CP for the Battalion build ship shape, they help the companies on the lines improve their dugouts and living quarters. Dugouts had to be deep and well covered to protect from 'three bursts.' A fox-hole gives plenty protection from a point detonating shell, but a foxhole with an open top is "nix goot" for a tree burst shell that sends shrapnel flying everywhere from about tree height." The A-T boys would work like h - - - all day and then stand guard all over the area at night. Then "Chow hound" Radman spoke up and expressed it this way, "that guard duty amounted to stumbling up and down the hill in the pitch-dark night from dugout to outpost."

All this time the company kitchen was set up in the town of Wimmenau which was about 8 to 10 kilometers away and every day they would bring chow to the company in jeep and trailer and the company ate 'picnic style' in the woods. All types of concealment and cover was maintained at all times because the enemy could observe all movements that took place just over the hill on the forward slope. The 'Top Kick' was set up in Wimmenau and was not seen around too often. 'Roundy' Myers' supply room was also in Wimmenau. Rain and shine the men lived underground in the forest here. The S-1 Section was sending men on passes all this time. They were going to Paris, Nancy, Lyons and it was a case of out of the ground to a nice big city for baths and entertainment. The A & P Platoon was also busy building living quarters, planting mine fields on the front lines at night, clearing enemy mine fields and building barbed wire entanglements and guarding ammunition dumps. The Commo Section had their hands full maintaining a rear switchboard as well as a forward switchboard and keeping the wires in all along the front and rear. The Medics maintained a forward Aid Station as well as dugouts full of men in the rear. The Messenger Center did a good job of keeping their runs on schedule. The I & R Section manned an OP from the top of the Lichtenburg Castle by night and an OP on the line by day. The enemy could be seen very often as he roamed around on his hill across the broad valley. By day they spotted targets for the artillery and listened and reported the many flares and noises in the enemy territory by night. It was while living thusly in the dugouts in the Forest near Lichtenburg that 'Bernie' Romine volunteered to drive a truck full of patrolmen, who had been out all night, back to Wimmenau early one morning and he took the wrong turns and drove headlong right into a town held by Krauts. The town was Rothbach near Wimmenau. He was not heard of after that and the A-T Platoon was out one ton-and-a-half truck

'Matey' Anderson lost his glasses, which he had left on the truck and Ackerman lost his billfold. Later when it came time for 'Roundy' Myers to make up "battle loss" statements, Captain McCollum made the remark, "Dam that truck had more equipment on it than the damn thing could have possibly held."

If we remember rightly, the 45th Division assured us that this was a very quiet sector except for our own nightly harrasing artillery fire. However, either they forgot to mention it or the Germans waited for us to arrive; at any rate, they did a little artillery firing themselves. The best and most outstanding target of the Germans was the tower of the Castle where we had good observation of his actions. So the customary thing and expected thing was a nightly barrage of from 10 to 30 rounds whizzing around the Castle tower which was in the town of Lichtenberg. However, what really P----d the boys in the OP off, was the fact that they were living in a house at the bottom of the hill and the rounds that were too long or too wide had a nasty habit of landing near their cherished living quarters. The days the boys in the OP remember most was the day the 120 MM mortars made a direct hit on their house.

The way the story goes, "Heitzman and Kemerer were off duty and while Kem was eating a late breakfast after just coming off shift and while Heitz was catching up on his 'Schlafen,' there was a deafening crash and a shower of paster and dust. No meeting of the board of directors was necessary to decide the immediate action to be taken. Kem took off for the cellar calling Heitzman as he went at the cellar door. Kemerer looked back and there was Heitz in his 'long Johns', barefeet, his helmet on and his pants over his arm following right behind. Upon later investigation the nose of the shell was found in the attic of the kitchen where it very luckily lodged with only its nose making it all the way through to take a peek at a couple of scared boys who have a lasting respect for mortars, especially 120 MM's. All of us have learned to respect the German 88's and I think the following verse will just about describe the way all of us feel: (To the Tune of Casey Jones).

*Now come all you civilians and you're gonna hear  
A hair raisin' story about a thing called fear.  
Now you've heard the story about Casey Jones,  
Heard how old '97' did whistle and moan.  
Now this frightful story I'm gonna relate  
Is about a nasty weapon called the Kraut '88.'  
Now you can hear it whistle as it sails thru the air,  
It's tone is so frightful would drive Casey to despair  
To every GI it's a story daily told  
Still every darn whistle makes your blood run cold.*



*As it floats through the air so crisp and cool,  
It brings that thing called fear to every darn fool.  
Now Hercules was strong we will agree  
But he'd been scared as you and me.  
When it floats over you can feel its breath,  
The story that it tells is a tale o' death.  
Now when this war is over and you're drinking beer,  
And some loud braggart tells a tale of fear,  
He's gonna take second place if he don't relate  
The tale I just told you 'bout a Kraut '88.'*

Joe Kirk of the Medics had this to say about their set up in the area Northeast of Lichtenburg in our newly completed dugouts, "After setting up housekeeping we were fairly inactive during the day time, but we trembled as we went to bed to think what the night might bring." He then added, "What really made us mad was the fact that the enemy in this sector was far from being beaten."

The newly formed Ranger Platoon was the most important platoon of the Company during our stay at Lichtenburg. They ran as many as three separate patrols a day and night over the same territory which was carefully mined and continuously observed by the alert enemy.

S/Sgt. Louis Beasley, the only now remaining member of the original Ranger Platoon at this writing, has the following stories to tell of the many patrols they made during the company's stay in the Lichtenberg and Buxenburg Forest area:

"We went over on to Jerry's hillside at night or in broad daylight; in two's and three's or in squad strength, to sit and listen or to look for trouble, to reach a certain point and return as soon as possible or to stay all day. In other words, the only thing that Jerry could count on was that we would be there and he could really count on that, especially on the days when we were looking for trouble.

"One day Daniels, Davis, Christensen, and myself were sent out to set up an outpost over on Jerry's 'front porch.' We left early in the morning just before daybreak and dug in on the side of the hill. We then concealed our radio and started to make a reconnaissance of the surrounding territory. Three of us were walking stealthy through the woods when a sniper picked us up and poured the lead at us. We backtracked to the holes we had dug. Then the Jerries began their shower of mortars at us. I called for artillery and crawled out to see where our artillery was landing, so that I could adjust the fire. Daniels and I were only a short distance from our holes when I spotted a 15-man patrol. I hollered for Daniels to get down and pointed out the

Jerries to him. For over an hour the four of us fought it out with them. After an hour we were running low on ammunition and the radio was all shot up so I covered the other men while they withdrew. We left behind our radio and 11 Jerries dead and wounded."

And this was only one of the many patrols that kept the Germans on the alert and worried all the time we were at Lichtenburg. The Rangers did not get off Scot free and suffered a good many casualties but that is expected by the boys who carry on these patrols in the areas that the newspapers describe with one line in small print at the bottom of the page as, "Light Patrol Activity."

Then there was the lighter side of our month stay at Lichtenburg as 'ground hogs' or 'cave hermits.' We were given a chance to not only go on passes to Paris and Nancy, but our own regiment had their own rest center in the little town of Wimmenau where Regiment was set up. Groups of five to ten men could go in to take baths and attend picture shows and rest and relax for a couple of days at a time. This was 'prima' as they say in Kraut language. A Rest Center just 8 to 10 miles from the front lines made it convenient and most gratifying. The S-1 Section will never forget Lt. Maltbee who was in charge of the Regimental Rest Center and was a most enthusiastic worker and an all-around fine fellow.

The boys on the line spent a good many hours during the day tinkering about their dugouts and they acquired a certain domestic touch. As usual, the "Brass" insisted on scheduling a period for policing up the area. As many were heard to say in micmicking the big shots, "You *will* police up the area even down to the German dugouts." This they did, policed up the area to within plain sight of the enemy and within 50 yards in some places. Some even added, "If the Germans attack, they *will* find no paper and trash around our grounds that might give us the name of dirty house or dugout keepers."

The cooks in Wimmenau who were turning out good food for the types of rations they were getting, always remember the hand grenade when they think of their stay in Wimmenau. In T/4 Mirisciotti's words, it goes like this: "We found a grenade in the cupboard that we wanted to use as a food storage and we were all sweating the other one out to see who would get rid of it. Well no one seemed to want to do it so we drew straws. I lost and had to make the toss of the hand grenade out the window. The explosion in the backyard caused no damage but the repercussion from a 242nd lieutenant trying to sleep upstairs were terrific."



### THE JUMP OFF

As the days went by the more convinced each one of us became that some day we would actually take off and go through those steep, wooded mountains that stretched beyond the broad, cleared valley before us. And there would be mines and the enemy to deal with on the way. How disheartening it was to look at the job before us. The thick woods afforded the enemy all the concealment he could use and each successive ridge offered him another defense line. But without being told we all had the feeling that some day that would be our mission and that some way we would do it.

On March 10th we learned of the First Army's bridgehead across the Rhine and still without an order we knew that we would soon be jumping off on an attack towards the Rhine ourselves. So when the order came down that "I" Company would take off with the 222nd on the attack in the morning, it was not very surprising. Naturally, we all tightened up a little because it was foolish to dream that it would not be difficult and that some of the boys would not get injured, but we all had the confidence that we would succeed and prayed that it would not take too long and cost us too many of our buddies. To think that we were about to start on our trip to Berlin or where ever we would have to go to stamp out the last evidence of Nazism and the last influence of Hitler.

On the 15th of March, "I" Company joined with the 222d Infantry to attack through the area to the right of our sector and then to swing over in front of the Battalion Sector attacking the enemy from the flank.

After leaving the 222d Infantry to attack across the ridge, "I" Company met resistance and Colonel Galloway, Lt. Bryant, Pfc. Kraska a runner, and a guide from "I" Company went to contact Capt. Miller, "I" Company Commander. Runner Kraska got his first taste of warfare that day and his story goes like this: "To this day, I still can't figure why the Colonel (Galloway) acted as first scout in leading "I" Company to their objective. It was Col. Galloway, Lt. Bryant, myself, and a guide from "I" Company in that order, out in front of the company by 300 yards."

"Then it happened; bullets started to raise dust at our feet and a panzerfaust hit the ground about 20 feet in front of us. I was the first to see the German sniper in the woods and opened with my carbine. Then the man from "I" Company opened up with his M-1. Lt. Bryant called back and asked, "Whose that



man with the automatic weapon?" That's no automatic weapon, sir. That's me and my little carbine."

On March 16th the portion of H3B that was to be the marching unit accompanying the rifle companies throughout the long trek thru Germany took off up the side of the hill we had stared at for so many hours, *Hill 415*. We were again tense with constant anticipation and alertness, and, although we did not know it then, we were to be tense and alert constantly for the next two months.

The advance up Hill 415 in the words of Loron Grantham, goes like this: "We knew before we started that Hill 415 was a mined deathtrap; many feet and legs had been lost there. No vehicles were allowed and mules were delayed because they were not available at the time. Still the march had to be made and rations had to be transported across the hill to the two advance Companies who had been gone over 24 hours. Men fell out going up that hill and now and then the long single file would have to break when someone stepped out too far off the cleared path and hit a mine. It was hell sweating out the physical labor of climbing with a heavy load and worrying about the mines every step of the way. Even the Bn Commander, who was now "Lt. Col." Galloway, and Capt. Gonsoulin, the Battalion S-3, each helped to carry a box of rations part of the way up that hill. The way everyone helped each other regardless of rank or platoon or company from these first hours on is something that will long live in my memory." The A & P and the AT Squads busied themselves with the clearing of roadblocks and building of the bridges needed for the supply train to follow us up. The A & P proved to be a junior engineer outfit. The AT sure stayed right with them also.

Two of the Medics were heard discussing the mined fields and worrying about the number of casualties the shoe mines would bring. James and Madden said "It's only a doughboy that has that intermible grit and will to win over any and all obstacles." How much farther do we have to go to bring them to their knees.

By dark we had advanced to Hill 403 and were on its crest overlooking Barenmenthal, the first town beyond the hills we had watched for the past month. Here we dug in for the night and after posting a perimeter of defense, it was a fight between being too tired to stay awake and too cold to sleep. Sgt. Napy said "This country we were now in is typical of the woodlands back home, peaceful and serene."

Early the next morning before the sky began to turn gray with the dawn we were busy at getting organized to continue

our advance. During the night our most cared for and cursed out friends (the mules) had caught up with us and their new handlers, some of whom had never as much as seen one before, were busy learning how they were to manipulate them.

Our Cowboy from Oregon, "Papa" Eaton and our "Meat-slinger" from Madison, William Barnhart, took over with the mules. According to their interpretations, there is nothing in this wide world more subborn than a mule. To this day they still insist that they carried the mules most of the way. "Papa" Eaton upon being separated from the rest captured without the aid of any weapon, 7 prisoners. By 0630 we were on our way down a path which was covered with very fresh impressions of the hob-nailed boot. (Germans). At the bottom of the hill we turned onto the road that ran along the valley floor to the deserted and ruined town of Barenmunthal. It was here we encountered the first of many, many bridges to be blown in our path, but as most of the rest of them, they presented no great problem to men who wanted to get through. In the town, we paused only long enough to organize all the companies as they approached from several directions as had been planned in case there was resistance, and took time to fill our canteens with the water from the stream. We also allowed the mules to quench their thirst and then we hurried on towards our second town around the bend in the valley, Barenthal.

As we made our way alertly, watching and listening, we found numerous testimony of the fine work of the P47's we had seen strafing this area as we were making our way through the woods the day before. Some of the sights were horrifying, but we found ourselves smiling with satisfaction and the pleasure of knowing that at least that danger had been eliminated and our chances had been improved over what they were. We met our first civilians who very timidly ventured the question, "Are you Germans?"

Of course they were answered with a chorus of, "Hell no." and at that they smiled with the hope that we wouldn't harm them as they asked the second question, "Are you Americans?" The answer this time was a full throated chorus. "You said it," and a round of laughter spread thruout the column as a new face popped up at every vacant window to join the lone brave one who had dared the questions.

Before we reached Barenthal we had another "first" experience, when we encountered our first of many of the Germans felled-tree roadblocks, and mines. Some of these blocks were more troublesome than other but few of them prevented a serious problem or caused any important delay. The scouts of



the lead company in the Battalion column learned that the second Battalion arrived at Barenthal a few hours before we did and they had an array of not too super-looking men lined up for our inspection as we continued through the town to Philipsburg.

The Battalion moved along at a good speed stopping every so often to allow the lead scouts to reconnoiter the route a little in advance and then we would continue on. At spasmodic intervals we could hear a few bursts of automatic weapons fire or a few rifle shots. In such cases we would stop for a few minutes with every man having his eye on a good ditch to hit, just in case, and then, "Let's go," and we would be off again.

At Philipsburg we met the usual group of civilians with their usual look of meekness, curiosity, and anxiety that was already becoming a routine to us. We set up a CP here since this was our objective and awaited orders to move on. Within a few hours we were rear echelon. The magnitude and determination of our drive was beginning to reveal itself with the artillery following closely behind us no matter if it required moving the big field pieces three and four times a day.

After a short stay our order came and we were on our way again in single file on both sides of the road headed towards Neunhoffen. The motor elements had caught up to us at Philipsburg after not seeing them since we jumped off at Lichtenburg and now they were following the marching column at an interval of half a mile or so. From then on, they followed us close enough that they would always pull into town within a half hour after the companies did; this meant we did not have to carry so many rations and our mail came more often.

After removing a prepared log road block, we entered a small town of Neunhoffen as dusk was falling. In a short time the sniper fire that welcomed us was silenced, a perimeter of defense was established, and, if you weren't on guard, laying wire, making a road reconnaissance, or something else, there was a possible chance of catching a few winks of sleep.

In the morning, while we heated some chopped carrots and appleflakes for breakfast, we watched the artillery and reserve troops go past the window and realized that we were once again rear echelon. This attack was a night and day affair, never stopping for a rest or giving the Germans a minute to catch a breath. Any time we stopped for a few hours rest we immediately became reserve troops for another outfit that would pass through us and continue on. The procedure for these brief breaks of a few hours was also becoming a routine. As quickly as it

was possible to find some way of heating a little can of water a good shave and a cup of hot coffee went best. Then the next most important business to be accomplished was to cook a meal with whatever could be found to replace the usual "K" ration. Next, if you happened to have writing paper and a pen or pencil, writing a letter home rated very high on the things to get done first. After that, it was usually time to get ready to shove off again but, if not, a little more sleep was always a good idea—also a most pleasant one.

At a little before noon the order came down, from Regiment, and the Third Battalion was off again on its most familiar type of route cross-country. Through the woods we went over trails that could hardly be recognized as such. But no matter how little traveled the trail, it always presented the felled-tree road-blocks that the enemy had managed to arrange for every path in Germany. We had been told that we were very close to the German border when we stopped the night before, so after marching for two or three hours the work was stopped and word came down the column that we would soon enter Germany. It was March 18th, 1945, at 1734 o'clock when we passed the tree bearing the sign that stated that we were entering Germany through the courtesy of some Recon outfit.

The reactions of the different men fell into several different categories. Some immediately expected to be sniped at by a Werewolf, some wanted to talk about how this would be a moment they would always be able to remember, some were anxious to note how correctly they had predicted the date, and others hurried to be the first one to urinate on German soil so there would be no doubt as to what they thought of the stinking place. But regardless of whether they compared it with South Carolina or what they did, every man did more thinking than usual and became more determined to keep hurrying so that it all might end that much sooner.

The weather at this time in the year was hot during the day and very cold at night. It presented a choice of either carrying a roll of blankets during the day in the heat while you were marching or else freezing instead of sleeping, when we stopped out in the open for the night. This was one of the nights when it was a blessing to have carried a bed roll with you after being on the march most of the day. We stopped outside the town of Fishback, Germany, our first town inside Germany just at dusk. A three-man patrol of the I & R boys took off from our right flank to contact the First Battalion on our right to learn what progress they were making and whether they were going on to attack the town from the one end while we attacked it from the other. They returned with the info that the First Battalion had



been held up by a strong force that was defending the town. Col. Galloway, then ordered the Battalion to dig in on the hill we had taken overlooking the town and establish a defense until morning. It was a cold night and for the most part a sleepless night.

#### LUDWIGSWINKEL

With the morning the blackout was lifted and fires were built. It was a grand rush to build a big fire to throw off a lot of heat and cook what rations there were left, mostly the good old "K" ration—you know the rest. At 0800 our Battalion moved out to join the Second Battalion in their attempt to cross the Saarbrück River at Ludwigswinkel. Beyond the river partly concealed were the first pillboxes of the famed Siegfried Line. The German mortar fire was particularly plentiful here and the companies trying to crack through all day with no success. A spot on the reverse side of the hill was selected and a Battalion CP was dug in the hillside and covered with heavy logs. As we "sweated" the boys out who were down in Ludwigswinkel, Willie Meyers brought in some meat and bread as supplemental "B" rations to the continuous diet of K's we had been eating. It wasn't long after that until the whole area took on the appearance of a hobo camp with any number of fires surrounded by any number of dirty unshaven GI's, ala-Mauldin style, roasting steaks on the end of green boughs over smokey fires.

It was three days later that we were able to get moving again. In the meantime the I. & R. section established an OP on the peak of a hill overlooking the area of the town of Ludwigswinkel and the Battalion as a whole took the opportunity to reorganize after moving almost constantly since the jump off back in Lichtenburg the week before. On the third day it was a great sight to see the air corps come early in the evening to give us some direct support. Their mission was to bomb the line of fortifications that was holding us back. They flew very deliberately and unchallenged around in a wide circle taking turns at diving. Their 50's rattled a steady rat-a-tat-tat and then the thump of bomb would punctuate the rhythm like a brass drum does a snare drum. When at Ludingswinkel, the first squad went into the lines alone in the I company sector. Kojnok, Fisher, Swords and a few others were heard to say: "We sure had grandstand seats for the show the Air Corps put on that day."

That night the Division jumped off on a full scale attack again. Our orders called for us to take off the following day across country. We sweated out the news of the 222d Infantry and 242nd Infantry and listened for the noise of a fire fight. There was the occasional burst now and then but on the whole it was surprisingly quiet. In the morning we learned that they had met very little resistance and were well on their way to join up with the forces of General Patton's Army which was headed south in our direction.



The next morning shortly before noon the Battalion took off, on through the woods in the direction of the next town. It was a hard trip through the mountains. We ran into pillboxes, carefully and very cleverly camouflaged to blend with the colors of the woods. The time passed quickly when you curiously inspected all that you came upon. As it was getting dark many Jerries came out of the woods to surrender to the GI's. We were too busy to bother with them, and they just went from one to another trying to have someone take them prisoner. As we marched along the crest of the hill overlooking the town of Dahn we found some tank outfit was already at work looking for trouble. Two small patrols were sent to reconnoiter the town. Both of them came back with prisoners and the report that there were many more Jerries in the town than they could bring back. This was the beginning of a new type of war for us. From here on, prisoners were a constant problem and provisions always had to be made for handling anywhere from one to 201.

Amid the confusion of all the surrendering Germans, the Battalion after a short five hours in the woods moved on down into the town at the break of dawn and shortly afterwards we had more prisoners than we knew what to do with. This part of the German Army had given up the ghost. From every woods could be seen a makeshift white flag of no standard proportion waving in the breeze and then a group of 10, 20 or more of tired, un-uniformed soldiers would follow behind the flag searching for some GI to tell them where to go. It was amusing to see some of them go from one GI to another trying to surrender. Some general direction of the flow was very evident and they would fall into the column like nice little boys and march back towards the Regimental PW cage hurriedly set up in Dahn. As Pfc. Fuelling said, "Over the hills on foot to Dahn and Darstien, Gibson and Moran guarding Major Galloway, Swords collected 'Beaucoup' prisoners. As the Boys of the AT Platoon tell it, "We were moving along on foot behind "M" Co., they had no bed rolls, as they were told the convoy would soon be along. At 2300 we took a break in the wooded mountains overlooking Dahn. Fires blazed in the town. The TD's were still shooting up some point of resistance. But that didn't interest us—we were dog tired, cold and hungry." Little groups of men lay together, trying to warm each other. Then after three 'frigid' hours the word came down "Let's go!" and again we were off stumbling over the narrow, sometimes muddy, mountain trails, it was here too that our army took on a new appearance as the men put into use anything German that would mobilize them, from horse to two-ton trucks and motorbikes.

Amid the confusion of all the surrendering Germans, the Bat-

talion took off for another objective and left the Jerries to the Artillery that already followed up with their 105's. The next objective of the day was the town of Darstien. The boys were full of confidence now and were not to stop at anything. In fact, the boys of the small group that went into the town from the opposite side and arrived there before the main element of the Battalion did, will gladly testify as to what a tough looking gang the Battalion was coming down into town from the hill from all sides, especially after they had been shot at once when mistaken for Jerries by some of the boys.

Darstien: Yep that was it. The AT boys really enjoyed this place. Why? Guard, two on and six hours off—No Fraternalization!!—That is where Sgt. Perry found "Hoot" Gibson flat on his face in the back yard? "Too much wine" "Hoot" says "Hell no, I just laid down to sleep."

The Division went into reserve and took over the task of searching the hills more thoroughly for equipment and PW's. It was here that one lad, very tired and completely pee-d off. (Cpl. Fink) had just returned from Regt. with the 3/4 ton and had just climbed into his sack on the rear of the truck, when someone lifted the curtain and said in very broken English: "Me comrade, me surrender." As Cpl. Fink put it, "At first I thought it was the motor pool guard trying to pull a fast one on me, so I tells him to go to the place that is so familiar in every one's mind. But he insisted that I crawl out of the sack, so I peaks out and sees about 10 Jerries standing around the back of the truck. Brother, if you ever saw a fellow coming out of a sack without using the zipper, it was me." There and then I searched them and loaded them on the truck and back into Regt. On the way we picked up several more along the road; they seemed to come out from all over. Darstien will always be remembered as the birthplace of the interesting sport of looting. Numerous motorcycles and trucks were sputtering up and down the streets as the GI's tried to remedy their ailments. Military Government made its first appearance and screened the people of the town. All the homes in town were searched for weapons and radio sending equipment. Here too, we could see the great advantage of being on the winning side. We came into Germany where people in towns were much better clothed than those we had contact with in France. Their cellars were full of canned foods and their houses were in good repair. We supplemented our regular chow with late and in between snacks of canned charries, jam, canned pears, and fried chicken that we managed to "liberate."

Darstein was rather a menace to our Jeep drivers. It seems as though the road to regiment was always under rifle fire—our



rifle fire. The Companys were using the mountain as a target and a back stop. "Okie" Green, after indulging in too much white wine, cornered the Capt. and started to complain of terrific pains in his stomach. With Green this was quite frequent. Again we received replacements and after eight days, during which time we learned that the Third army and the First had both crossed the Rhine. We moved out the day before Easter, March 31, 1945.

#### CROSSING OF THE RHINE TO WURZBURG

It was a warm day as we moved out of Darstein to hell knew where. It developed into another of those never-to-be-forgotten rides with the Battalion riding on every kind of vehicle imaginable. The convoy went through the bombed-out town of Landau and then to Worms on the Rhine where we crossed a pontoon bridge just at dusk. We all had somewhat a thrill as we crossed that river as it had been our goal for some time now. We will never forget the well constructed pontoon bridge and the many anti-aircraft multiple 50 Calibers dug-in all along the river and around the bridge. We got across and took out on the fly. We were on the way but to where and how far we did not know but we were sure as hell going. Now and then we would pull over for some higher priority unit to speed around. As the night wore on, it grew cold and the men in the trucks huddled together in their blankets to keep warm. The trucks kept grinding on and on. Driving blackout all night, units became mixed up and finally all got lost and it got to the point that our drivers would follow any vehicle that moved with nothing more than the tail light of the vehicle up ahead to follow. We soon learned we followed the wrong tail light in our vehicle and met many other units that had their convoys all lost and chopped up as a result of the same mistakes being made. The consequence was we all spent the biggest part of Easter Sunday trying to get to the Battalion CP which was in Rollbach, Germany. The various vehicles began to arrive at the designated CP and hardly had the trucks stopped when all the personnel hit the ground and began questioning inhabitants, "Haben sie eire." Sgt. Daley and T/5 Kurtz came in with a few of the precious things (eggs) and after soliciting the neighborhood more closely, we finally got hold of enough eggs to have fried eggs around. "We carried our own skillet and utensils and although the trailer bulged and looked like a pregnant cow, we usually had everything we needed to wrestle up a good meal when we wanted to," this was the general agreement among all who had trailers and was mentioned by Major Ranson, Lt. Burke, McNeil and Daley.

In the afternoon, Chaplain Potter had Easter Services in the cold windy woods. It was one of those impressive services that jars you back on your heels and makes you remember some of the big picture. Some of the reasons for your individual discomforts that grow so big they seem to be the whole world to you. It was good to be reminded of your ideals and how insignificant we are by comparison. They came to that service in OD's, overcoats, field jackets and in every mode of dress. It was a far cry from the beautiful crowds that are in the Easter



parades of yesteryear back in the good old United States, but the spirit of Easter and the message was just as dear to all. Thank you Chaplain.

Along late afternoon, the battalion packed up and loaded on our own organic transportation and made its way over a cow trail to another small town recently taken by the First Battalion. Except for a single 'jet plane' that flew over in a S-S-S-S-W-W-I-S-H-H-H-H-H and the excitement involved in pulling a loaded 2½-ton truck out of axle-deep mud, it was an uneventful move.

"Easter Sunday," as expressed by Medic T/4 Eaton, Kirk, Hurst, Fox and Halberg, "will always be remembered by our first experience with a German Jet. It was here one moment and gone the next. 'Casanova' Martel, must have experienced (in his dreams) jet planes before 'cause he traveled about 100 yards on the double to dive in a fox-hole."

An hour's delay here and an hour's delay there and it was near midnight before we were told that we could find somewhere to catch a little sleep. We had traveled through a dismal forest all that time in the darkest kind of night and through mud holes that stuck many of the vehicles and added to the misery of trying to get where we were going and get to bed. In the morning we were getting wetter all the time, and saw some beaten up party. The first obstacle to confront us was about 35 cords of long wood stacked across the road. We were held up until Captain McCollum went back and got a tank to come up and fire three rounds into the pile of wood with their 76's to try to clear it out of the way. The AP shells just splintered the wood and did not do a good job of clearing it out. We all pitched in and removed it and the Battalion vehicles moved on to the assembly area within 4 miles of there. A new attack order was given by Colonel (Lt. Col. Galloway) and we all moved out on foot. We moved through a very wet wooded area in a pouring rain and we were getting wetter all the time, and saw some beaten up farm country and came out into a little town of Hofenlohr which was on the far side of a beautiful ranch country. The town was taken by surprise and the people left with just what they had on. Half cooked meals were left on the tables and stoves and the cellars had beaucoup canned fruit and vegetables as well as fresh apples. The house where CP was set up was full of mountings of all types of game and had the appearance of some hunting lodge. We spent the night here and the usual meeting of Company Commanders was held by Lt. Col. Galloway. We all settled down for the night and enjoyed this home of what appeared to be some forest ranger or big sportsman. It was here also that we enjoyed our first electric lights. The rain continued all night long and it

was early morning before the motor convoy traveling narrow muddy roads finally caught up to the foot elements who had taken off at 0530. It was here that 'Alabama' Green, Slinker, Fenno, Rodgers and Lee were seen making many trips to the cellar, along with Lt. Steffer and a few others. That wine was 'prima' and the canned fruit helped to replace all the energy spent over the high hills and muddy terrain.

The companies had moved into their designated towns with very slight resistance. 'L' Company caught the population in their town completely by surprise in the dark. 'I' took two towns with 3 shots fired and 'K' Company found prisoners coming out to meet them. They went out into the edge of town where there were two big saloons. Upon entering one saloon they asked if there were any Germans in the place and the man said, "Nein" but the lady of the place motioned to a back room and upon entering that room they found 16 Krauts all sleeping peacefully. The general opinion we were able to get was that the Germans knew that we were coming but did not know which direction we were coming from and were just waiting patiently for us to come along and take them prisoners. The problem of taking care of the numerous prisoners became a major one. It began to look as if we were going to need another Battalion to handle PW's.

By 1000 in the morning the Battalion again assembled and mounted on the organic transportation after the trucks caught up with the foot troops, we crossed the Main River over a pontoon bridge in the town of Triefenstein. We found many Polish and Russian farm workers. They gave us some morbid stories of how the Germans had worked them for years and gave them very little to eat. They told us how the U. S. planes would swoop down on the field of workers and seeing they were prisoner workers, would fly to the edge of the woods where the guards usually watched from a little platform in a "tree" and fire machine guns at the German guards. The Poles and Russkies and other nationalities were so glad to see us that we could see the joy they had waited for. We moved out of Triefenstein about 1530 and on into an assembly area in the woods. It was there order to attack Wurzburg came by our liaison officer Lt. Gustafson of Company 'I.' A company commander's meeting was held by Lt. Galloway. At 2100 we moved out on foot in a very heavy rain towards our first objective which was Wurzburg. It was a dark night and a cold rain and every man was soaked to the skin. We trudged on and if we could have only sang or hummed or something to forget the monotony of it all it would surely have helped a little. We passed through a couple of small villages of approximately 4 to 5 houses in each. The people could be seen in the windows but we



were so quiet that they did not even come to the windows to stare, which was very unusual. Some of the houses in one of the villages had felt the effects of our artillery and were smouldering and the smell of horse and cow flesh was sickening. All night long we kept on the go until morning found us looking across the Main once more. This time Wurzburg stretched out beyond the other shore. We were held up for a long time while the Engineers completed a Bailey bridge over the river. We were tired and many of the boys laid right down in the middle of the wet roads and fell asleep while we were waiting. The Second Battalion had come in from another direction and they were to go into the town ahead of us and take a large section on our right. The 222d Infantry had sent a company into the town the day before and were holding a section of our left. At 0630 as day was breaking the time came for us to move out. We were in staggered formation on each side of the road and moved cautiously along. As we approached the bridge the scene was just like one the movies would show. It has been mentioned by many of the men that a more perfect shot for a movie camera was never seen before. The bridge was covered by smoke and the smoke clouds were curling white and thick all around the bridge. As we approached, the firing started. The troops all hit the pavement and moved on carefully. A tank had pulled up into a yard on the hill above the bridge and it was firing continuously and the machine guns that were covering our approach were sending tracers to all parts of the city. With all the noise of the firing and the return fire of the snipers in the town, it would have made a beautiful shot for some movie camera fiend. We were so damn tired and weary, we did not care whether the snipers could shoot straight or not; we kept on moving. Our only interest was to run the gauntlet of snipers and get into a building and get a billet to plunk down in. The big job came of searching every house and getting all the pistols, rifles and ammunition out and then shouting 'Victory' and then relaxing for the night. Many of the remaining buildings that had not felt force of the Air Corps were now being set fire by the artillery and the tanks that were supporting us. The men of the companies were not long getting going on the 'liberating' and 'looting' as they called. At times a stubborn sniper would not quit pinging away at the men as they jumped from one building to another for protection. The Anti-tank platoon with Lt. (Johnny Dee) Salem and all the boys were heard to shout with glee, "Ah! Wurzburg and Souvenirs, boy oh boy!" 'Gay Paree' Perry, Monger (who was with us at Gruber and came back to the outfit at Darstein), 'Andy' Mac McDonald, 'Matey' Anderson, 'Red Face' Floyd, 'Ack Ack' Ackerman, 'Andy' Anderson (Hilbert), 'Ceroot' Cerutti, 'Ed' Cowan and 'Red' Fisher were on the loose, you know. They

all agreed that the trench knife is the No. 1A1 'Lootin' tool. Cameras were found by the dozens and 35 MM's were passed out to whoever did not have one. Lieca's, Rolla Cords, and many 120's were found and trading was the business now. Champaign was liberated by the cases full and cases of eggs, and all kinds of food stuffs was found in plentiful amounts. 'Navada' Escue, 'Joisey Joe' Ruggeri, Williams, 'Choley' Cholewinski, and 'Loot' Gibson were also among the more active, freeing various and sundry items here.

The CP was set up in an old hotel and plenty accommodation was provided for all. The Communication was on the ball as usual, and the wires were working and the switchboards were taking calls right on schedule. The A & P Platoon was called on for guard duty and many other problems of making things ready for permanent capture of the town. We had accomplished this mission of entering the town and now it was a question of keeping it.

There was little rest for the other companies in the Battalion as they were ordered to take the hill overlooking the North side of town. The grand strategy was always to not only get into the town, but take the hills above the town and then you had it 'cinched'. 'K' Company jumped off on the attack of the hill on the North at 0300 on the morning of the 5 of April, 1945, and radio contact with them was being maintained by the Communication Platoon. Everyone else had settled down to do some good old sleeping after a night of celebration with wine and champaign. At 0415 we were all awakened by the continuous "Rat-ta-tat-tat" of a machine gun and it sounded like it was right under our windows. That was not so uncommon but then the 'burp' guns for the enemy opened up and terrific explosions and all hell was breaking loose out side and one or two explosions that shook all the buildings in that area. Boy! what an awakening Captain McCollum ran throughout the building waking everyone and all of us scrambled out of the bed in an effort to find our weapons. We had fallen asleep and left our weapons in this strange room and trying to find it in the dark was nerve racking. I heard many of the boys say afterwards that they never did find their weapon until after daylight. Sgt. James Art had all the facts on this night down pat and he goes on something like this, "All of a sudden, you aren't as rear echelon as you think, in fact, you feel almost like No. 9 in a rifle squad when the Krauts start to fire over your head with 'burp' guns and panzerfausts and grenades. It was our first night in a big German city, which had fallen into the 42'd hands during the day. We knew that the Jerries probably held the high ground surrounding the city but their exact strength was unknown. That ignor-



ance, strangely enough, gave all of us confidence that we probably wouldn't have had otherwise. "K" Company was assigned the job of establishing the first contact with the enemy and after a careful preparation, they launched their offensive at 0300 in the morning and by some stroke of fate, they managed to surprise over 100 Krauts in their foxholes—mind you, the two guards were caught napping. Up until this time everything was peaceful around the CP, located in an apartment building near the railroad yards of Wurzburg, and everyone was sleeping rather soundly. We were confident that we definitely had the upper hand. Suddenly our tranquility was interrupted by a Heinie yelling, 'Allus fur Deutschland, Heil Hitler!' and 'Hitler over Allus,' and then dozens of yelling voices were heard repeating the phrases over and over again. Our machine guns were peppering away and some of our GI's were heard hollering and sounded as if they were pointing out the various targets to our machine gunners. The first thought that struck the men in the CP building was that we were surrounded. All hell was going on outside. It was thrilling to hear our machine guns firing away. The Jerries had evidently planned a surprise for us but it was not successful, thank God." It was good old 'I' Company that was 'on the stick' this time and a gunner by the name of Barker and three other gunners were the boys who saved our necks. The Jerries were everywhere and were right around the corner from the CP. 'I' Company CP was just next to us on the corner of an intersection and the Krauts were coming from the back side of 'I' Company, planning to take 'I' Company's CP and the Battalion's CP also. We were told later that the men from 'I' Company who were guarding a roadblock down the street had been captured and escaped and came back to the CP of the company and warned the company commander and Lt. Chuk and Capt. Miller had placed the two machine guns at this intersection to intercept the oncoming Germans. It was a close call and I think all will agree with Chaplain Potter when we thought we were all going to become PW's of the Germans. Art added, "We counted about 10 dead Krauts on the main street and some of them had gotten as close to 'I' Company's CP as the entrance. One was killed on the walk right at the entrance to the 'I' Company building. About 50 more all SS troopers, were to use one of our company's CP's and our Battalion CP as a base of operations after they mopped us up. However, that steady nerve of those machine gunners and that 'Rat ta tat' of those machine guns spilled the beans for some more of Adolph's fanatics."

It was in Wurzburg the next day after our grand entrance that the Anti-tankers *nearly* got to fire some of that precious ammunition that they had lugged all the way from the States

seems. The big castle on the hillside, with our Anti-tank guns looking right up at it, was full of snipers and machine gun nests but the 'Little Colonel' chose not to let them get their gun bores dirty. Another beautiful chance to fire was 'foiled' by no orders to 'load and lock.' Artillery was turned loose on the castle instead.

The next day mopping operations necessary to clear the entire city and the ones who were engaged in this attack were busily engaged in that delightful sport of looting in a city that had plenty of loot. Gwynn has this to say, "The Commo Platoon drank champagne like water." Pfc. Zeke Edmunds said, "those poor war workers back home are paying 25 to 30 bucks a bottle for this stuff and we just go out and pick it up." Fenno, Simon and Oleksyn were lucky to find any of the Pink delicacy. Every man, it seemed, down to the last private refused to drink anything else. Everyone insisted on playing host so that he might furnish the drink and show-off his own private stock. Every squad had its own crate of eggs and the one little kitchen was a mess to behold on the 3d and 4th floors. Watches, accordians, cameras and pistols were just a few of the other items that the boys found and had use for. The civilians had taken off, leaving what they couldn't carry behind them and the GI's came out better equipped than they had ever been—that is, in some respects. That town was a prize but it will never be forgotten in the memories of all. With vehicles running around the town all night long, it has often been remarked how very lucky it was that one or two of our jeeps did not come whistling around the corner just as that terrible fire fight was going on that morning near the CP. The occupants would have been killed for sure.



#### TO SCHWEINFURT

The Germans were met by Company 'K' on that hill outside of Wurzburg and the hill was taken and with 'K' intercepting the retreating Germans from their attack on our CP, the Company's total PW count amounted to well over a hundred. By evening on the 6 April, 1945, we knew that our stay was to be a short one. The rumors of moving in the middle of the day were too thick to be ignored. All the men began rounding up their equipment for another move. Sure enough, that evening as the troops moved out of Wurzburg, that is, all except 'K' Company who were dug in on the hill they had captured so gloriously the evening before, we looked back at the town of Wurzburg with all buildings demolished and walls left standing and recounted our experiences with silent thoughts—thoughts that would remain with us all the rest of the years of our lives. A conquered city now and mopped up by the 'ground forces' which was the finish after the Air Corps and all the rest paved the way. But we now had more to conquer and the war was still on so we moved onward. For many it was 'loot and scoot,' for others a hard war.

The assembly area was in the very woods that 'K' Company had taken the day before and it was here that Lt. Col. Colman of Regiment gave Lt. Col. Galloway his orders to attack the town of Unter Durbach which was just over the hill from Wurzburg. Plans were made for the attack and again no one knew the strength of the enemy in this little town. The Artillery Observers had warned that many Krauts had been seen in the town from their positions.

Love Company pulled out first and was attacking from the left side of the town and before they pulled out of the assembly area the Germans were contacted and the bullets started to go every which way. The PW lines started in and many of the GI's formed a gauntlet line for them to run and they cursed them and kicked them and gouged them in the rear with rifles as they ran by. The resistance up front was plentiful, but there were few of them that wanted to put up a real fight. Many of them would be stubborn and lay down in their foxholes until the soldiers came right to the foxhole and then they would holler, "Comrade, comrade," and give up. Others would lay low until some GI passed and then raise up to shoot at him from the back. 'L' Company and 'K' Company progressed very rapidly until just before they entered the town. The damn Jerries opened up on 'L' Company with 20 MM Ack Ack guns from the ridge right across the valley. They laid off until the troops got down below



them and they had the boys all pinned down in the open and began pouring the red hot lead to them. Our machine gunners were quick to return the fire and 'K' Company and 'I' Company, who were on the hill on the other side of the town, moving into the town, had a ringside seat to 'red hot lead' flying back and forth as the Krauts and the 'L' Company boys exchange terrific fire with each other. It was plenty hot for at least a half hour and then the 'L' Company boys made it so hot for them they took off. The Artillery was beginning to find their range by now also and the mortars from Company 'M' were dropping too close to the Kraut Ack Ack for them to stick around. All went well for awhile then the 'K' Company was into the village and was taking plenty of prisoners. The total ran up to 169 in about nothing flat with German Officers coming in like sheep going to water on a dry day. Some of the guards that were guarding them had wrist watches from their wrists to their elbows. Many nice pairs of gloves were taken from the German officers. 'L' Company began to advance from their side of the town and all at once the company that was in reserve on the hill, which was 'I' Company, became the recipient of all the Ack-Ack attention from another direction on further around the hill across the town. The Krauts were then firing directly over the town and everyone scrambled for cover. 'L' Company had quite a high casualty rate from the surprise Ack-Ack and had to join 'K' Company and 'I' Company.

As soon as Lt. Col. Galloway finished a short company commanders meeting in the newly designated CP in Unter Durbach, the companies continued the attack and during the night they took the ridge up where all the Ack-Ack was coming from. All night long the Communication radios were on and Robert Sell and Graham and McKeever were up keeping abreast of the situation and the advance of the attacking troops up the hill beyond Unter Durbach.

In the morning the attack was resumed. It was almost a rat race and it was all we could do to keep up with the rats. It was hike, hike, hike. We covered about 19 miles on foot the next day. From Unter Durrbach in the morning to Thungen before we stopped and found billets. We found good billets, for most of the troops slept well for the first time in about 36 hours.

We took off again the next morning and it was town after town on and on and this was the 8 of April, 1945. At 1430 we met opposition in a little town of Bucholdt and after clearing the town, snipers continued to harrass the troops from the small gullies outside of the town. 'L' Company sent one platoon out and not thinking the job of rounding them up too great, they

sent one Tank Destroyer out with them. They were surprised to learn they were SS Troopers and well dug in and determined to fight it out. Again 'L' Company suffered casualties and had a hard time rounding them up. The entire battalion was held up all afternoon. The Company stayed at Alt and billeting was made easy by a couple of Australian soldiers who had been prisoners for 4 years. They knew where the best houses were and helped Captain McCollum and the S-1 Section find good places for the troops. All the platoons had plenty good old country sausage, ham and fresh eggs while in this town of Alt. Many French prisoners were liberated at Alt and next morning they were seen with their suitcases ready to go back to Paris and other cities. We got off to an early start that next morning and were on our way to another great objective. Schweinfurt was being talked about and the many nests of 88 concentrations were being drubbed by the Air Corps over ahead of us and to the right. We moved out rather slowly and by noon we had taken the little town of Obach but with very heavy resistance. The 88 concentrations over to the right gave the troops plenty opposition. We all could see the big city of Schweinfurt in the distance. We remembered too well the time the Air Corps had lost 63 flying forts while bombing this city due to the heavy flak. We later was to see the concentration of Anti-Aircraft weapons that brought down more American planes than any other opposition encountered in all the war. After Obach the next town was Kutzberg and here again the Ack Ack boys were found. The troops finally took the town and they called for the rest of the troops to move on in. Pfc. Wm. Parker, a runner, was with Major Ranson when they started across the open country from Obach to Kutzberg and he will never forget it. He was back in Obach when he told us, "Man oh man! Major Ranson and myself and the rest of the runners started across that field and we heard the whistle of an 88 coming in, we hit the ground, but then we heard about a dozen coming in. We got up and started to run like hell back to Obach and here came the 88's galore. Boy, I tell you, he added, I was never so dam scared in all my life. There must have been a barage of at least 60 rounds came in and covered that road." A very short time later the Headquarters Company was told to come on to the town of Kutzberg. The runners were worried but they came on and when we all reached the town some of 'L' Company troops came up to us and said, "Did you all just come across that open country out there?" We told them "Yes." They said, "You mean that you all came across and did not get a damn shot fired at you?" "Yep, that is right." A couple of them just came up and patted a few of the men on the shoulder and said, "Let me touch a charmed person just once." It was very inconveivable to them that we did not get a shell and they took



such a barrage. As Kemerer puts it, "They threw everything they had at us—AP, HE, Time Fire, and Ack-Ack." This is where Lt. Burke did a stunt rarely seen outside of a 3-ring circus. Sgt. Carney had his jeep in a hot spot when the 88's opened up. To save the jeep, Leo waited for a lull, hopped in the jeep, started the motor, and headed for the woods. We don't know where Scotty was, but Lt. Burke didn't bother to ask Carney, "Going my way?" asked Lt. Burke. "No sir!" replied Carney. Lt. Burke just caught him on the fly. But the Battalion pushed on regardless of the 88's and mortar fire. There was a ridge all along to Kutzberg and this was a real gauntlet to run with the Jerries throwing everything at everybody. Captain Pick, in an effort to escape the withering mortar fire attempted to shelter himself behind a five gallon water can. As Green (Alabama Slim, as he was known) says, "I saw the reconnaissance boys hiding under the Recon car, when all of a sudden 'Wham!' goes a shell. We runners all made a dive for the underside of the recon car, yelling at the men already under cover there to "Move over." We peeped out from under the car and observed all the soldiers running toward us from up the road. We recognized Kelly and Parker. Kelly is rubbing the seat of his pants and cussing "Those damn 88's." Seems that 'Kel' Kelly had gotten pretty well down into a hole, all but his rear end and a piece of shrapnel hit him right in the seat of his pants. Kelly said, "Did not even tear my pants, but I feel like I have had a damn good spanking by the folks back home. Hanover added, "Well, at least it brought back old memories." Kelly was then heard to mutter, "Men, it don't pay to volunteer." Parker got a shapnel wound in the shoulder and had to report to the medics. Five point and another 'Purple job' for 'old daddy' from North Carolina. Many PH's had been awarded by this time. Another approach to the town of Kutzberg was found for the runners, and we all arrived O.K. About the time we arrived in the damn old dirty town we were all sweating out some more opposition and possibly some more enemy artillery when a GI dashing madly around a house giving chase to a squawking fat hen. We all let out a sigh of relief and continued on our way (leisurely) to find the Bn CP.

The PW's we were now getting were a younger and better conditioned soldier than the ones who had been 'Comrading and surrendering,' mainly because they underestimated our speed of advance and were too surprised to resist. We spent the night in Kutzberg and during the night the Krauts blew a railroad bridge and it shook the shacks everywhere in that vicinity. While Lt. Colonel Galloway, Bn CO has his meeting in the CP, Company 'I' continued on to capture the town of Konungren. We had just about accomplished our mission. We were to go around Schweinfurt and take all opposition in back and wait for the

242nd to flush the Krauts out of the city. We were getting units of every outfit old Adolph had. They tried everything in the book to try and stop us but we were moving too fast and they could not get set up in any one place long enough to do any damage. The drive was a general attack and if some of them were successful in stopping any one outfit, the divisions on the left and right would by-pass them and it all amounted to a simple case of the Krauts just couldn't afford to stop anywhere.

We stayed one night in Kutzberg and then jumped off the next morning and was on our way by vehicle. We sweated out the woods on each side of the road and were told many times that we would run into opposition in various places but we did not find a lot of opposition. We took a little town of Hambach and the town had just suffered Time on Target from the Artillery and it was one more town of ruins. It was not a large town to begin with and when we moved in, there were many dead people around. The remainder of the population had turned out as firemen and the pumps were still going. Hand fashion pumps with a short hose. Looked like a "tight fight" with a short stick. We spent one night and that was enough with all the smell of smoke and burning houses. Again the ham and eggs were plentiful and again everyone pulled out frying pans and cooked up another lucious bate of 'swien fliesch and erie.' William Parker was heard to remark, "I have eaten so many eggs, I will never look another one in the eye."

The next day the troops moved into the town of Dittelbrum which was definitely above Schweinfurt, in fact, it was the last town before entering the outskirts of the city. The Battalion moved in and was just before closing in on the city when news came that the 242nd, who was on our right, had taken the city. From Wurzburg to Schweinfurt the 3rd Division was on our left. We stayed in Dittelbrum for a day and a half and moved out to go back for a couple of days as reserve. We traveled back to Kutzberg and then to Obach. We were in reserve for three days and enjoyed the Division Band that came up to play for us. It was a real luxury to enjoy hot chow. The Chaplain had services in the local church, clean clothes arrived and all was O.K. Then came the news of the President's death. We were all somewhat depressed and rightly so, we had lost the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy. The war was still not won though and we carried on.

Obach is a town especially dear to the hearts of the runners, for it was here that they were blessed with a new boss, replacement T/5 Weaver from the Signal Corps. At that time Weaver liked only one thing about the Rainbow Division and that was the bottle of Champaign they gave him at Division Rear. But



the runners soon made him one of the gang by inviting him in on the wine drinking party already in progress. The same party that caused 'Red' Kraska not to find the door knob at a crucial moment during the night and resulted in another use of the steel helmet, M1-A1. The runners are quite important as explained by Runner Barber, "To the average GI, unfamiliar with the various types of duties performed by men of the different sections, looking over T/O's and scanning the Training Manuals will result in little information pertaining to a Battalion Runner. It is with humble pride the runners of the Third Battalion have acquired the nick-name of "Lt. Col. Galloway's Galloping Ghosts," or GGG's. The word ghost may sound farfetched, but have one of the famed runner's pound at your door in the wee hours of the morning on a dark and dismal night then with his flashlight in hand go poking around from room to room trying to determine which one of the Blanketed Blank forms laying about is the Commanding Officer, he has the message for, and see what *you* think?" A faithful group of boys those runners. There was Kelly Parker, Bierman, Kraska, and Barber. All enjoyed a good rest.

We had just driven up to the town of Obach when 'Six' Daley jumped out of the jeep and he and Kurtz and McNeil were going to look for a billet. 'Six' was feeling good and we walked into a huge house and 'Six' says, 'Mac talk to these people,' he then more or less stumbled around the room and nearly over a baby in a carriage and then we walked out. As we came down the steps, Lt. Col. Galloway came up and said, "What does it look like in there Daley?" Daley, with thumb pointing upwards said, "Kinda dark in the cellar, sir." We then were enjoying this thing called 'Reserve.' We walked down the street and a passing German did not exactly suit 'Six Daley's' looks so he grabbed him by the nap of the neck and was just before popping him one when Kurtz pulled him away. Nothing like popping the Burgomeister of the town, we thought later. Were we surprised!!

All platoons were well settled in billets by the time night came on and Bill Lechluder and Gloyd had just returned from a trip to Wurzburg with some more of that good old champaign that we had enjoyed just eight days prior to this time. We all made merry and were having a good time. Baths were in order again and that made our stay much more pleasant. Some of the band members who played for us at this 'reserve town' were astounded and their mouths fell open as the boys told them that we just took this town about 5 days before.

We were alerted to move and by 0900, any questions, move out' was the order. We more or less backtracked ourselves over the territory we had fought for the week before and it was a grand sight to see what a large town like Wurzburg looked like

a week after we had taken it. It was good to see the same town safe enough to allow the 'rear echelon' boys who follow up, to wear garrison caps and sit in front of their billets completely relaxed and with no fear of being sniped at. Small world, here today and gone tomorrow. The civilians strolled the streets and the whole appearance was so changed from when we had seen it last, that it was hard to realize that the change had taken place just 10 short days past.



#### NEWSTADT TO NURNBURG

We were on the way to be sure and that town of Wurzburg was only another town on our route to a small bombed out town by the name of Hellmitzheim. This place was another of those small villages that the Germans took refuge in and it was just too bad for the small town because it was just a small country town and WAS is the word. There were only about two houses in the town that were not completely wrecked. Many of the buildings were still on fire. We stayed here for one night. General Linden visited the CP during the day. Guard Carlson was on the ball this time, he never forgot the time that he had forgotten to salute the General, he 'highballed' the General and then flew into the CP and roared out, "ATTENTION!!!! With his customary, 'GRRMMPP,' (clearing of the throat), the General entered the CP.

The direction of attack for the Division was being completely reversed. Instead of attacking North like we were, from Wurzburg to Schweinfurt, we were now shifting to the South of Wurzburg and attacking South to Neustadt and Nurnburg. It was also strongly rumored that we would hit Munich before we were through with this push. After interrogating high German Generals picked up along the line, and on up after the war was over, we learned that those sudden changes in the direction of attack were never anticipated or understood by the German High Command. However, the moves proved to be a very effective phase of our grand strategy. It was that night with the CP in Hellmitzheim that the companies were committed to the line and joined the 12th Armored in its assault against the city of Neustadt. The population of Neustadt was about 50,000 and was quite a nice little city. We heard plenty rumors that the enemy had tank concentrations here and that we had perhaps met the main line of resistance.

We were traveling deeper and deeper into enemy territory, but we were living high, eggs, ham, bacon, shnapps, cogniac and wine. As Hade and some of the other Anti-tankers put it, "It was ride, ride, ride, stop, dig in the guns, 'Out of Action,' Hitch the guns up again, 'More weight on the barrel up there,' any questions? Move out! Dust, rain and sleep as you ride—we got 'em on the run and we can't stop now." Boy, it is rough in the E T O—you do know!

It was while fighting for the town of Neustadt along with the 12th Armored, that the Police Department and the City Mayor cooperated so well in helping us to capture the town.



We drove as far as the Police Station and rushed in and told the Burgomeister the town was surrounded and the officials came in and surrendered. There were so damn many tanks, Self Propelled Weapons and Rocket Launching Tanks in that 12 Armored, it is easy to see why anyone would surrender. This took place right at the crack of dawn and the first tanks entered the town catching all the population except the Police Department asleep. They had to cross over a bridge that had been built by the Engineers during the night. The speed with which a town would change from being a town of empty streets, silent except for the noise that we made and motionless, except for our moves, into a deeply interested and curious people with all the noises of a busy city and all the traffic of bicycles, motor bikes, autos, horse and wagons; this was all very amazing to us. It was the pattern that we got used to after awhile, as every city was the same.

Neustadt was a very clean city as we remembered it. One of the first towns with a stork's nest on the chimney of the City Hall. There were many stork's nest's around the town on top of the chimneys. This is one thing that was typical of a German city that we had read about in the past. We are wondering where the stork went when all the artillery was coming in. At any rate the snipers were in this town as well as many of the others. Also this was a town with very much cogniac and champaign. An armored man from the 12th appeared on the scene with an arm full of cogniac and climbed into his tank and got rid of it and took out for more. Some of us tailed him and that was the beginning. This warehouse also had damn good cheeses. "I will never forget that damn good accordian that we brushed aside just to get to a case of what we thought was champaign and was sour wine," says McNeil, very disgustingly.

It was in Neustadt where the Anti-Tank Platoon did alright for themselves on all types of drinking material. They were not doing so good for awhile there, pushing one door after another in and finding nothing, the crew of Swords, Kojnok McDonald, and Arley Sours were about to make a 'dry run' when they came to a door that was stubborn and they figured that it must have the bumper crop in it. They heaved and finally shoved the door down and someone whizzed out beside them and all of them looked with a flash and it was Lt. 'The Voice' Salem whizzing out with his arms full of cogniac. They all said, "Have a heart Lieutenant," "Nix" was the reply, "get yours like I got mine, there is more where this came from," and there was. It was full of beautiful towns we all thought, this Germany. This town of Neustadt had many nice homes in it. We were assigned billets

in preparation for the night and the tankers all moved on out. There were hundreds of them droning down the road towards Nurnberg. This was surely to be our next objective. With such a nice set up of billets and plentiful fruits, and eggs plus beaucoup to drink, we were willing to let the TD's and Tanks go on their way. We had just settled our little heads for the night when we got a call to move out. We hit the road at 0100, "boy, I never hated to stir out of a bunk so bad in my life," Lt. Christopher and Lt. Clinton the Artillery Officer was heard to say: "My bunk was 'prima' but there must not be any rest for the Infantry" Lt. Taylor, the Commo Officer agreed with them. Well we hit it and dread it or not we were on the way. We stayed at a farm village during the night and the people were full of 'Nazi propaganda.' They just knew we came in to kill everyone and rape all the women. We had to put the family of one of the houses out and every time any one would get close to any of the women, they would scream 'bloody murder.' We soon assured them that they had we Americans down all wrong and they took out and we did not see them again. We left this place the next morning and traveled in the woods all the next day. The little village we had just left was named Rennhofen.

Paul Scott of A & P was asked if they cleared all the roads from Rennhofen to Stinzendorf of all mines and he answered. "We took out about 16 S-Mines and that was the most nerve racking of all mine sweeping we ever did, we had to work from 0100 until daylight without a light."

As the convoy moved across the country roads, there were frequent stops and you could bet that everywhere we stopped and everytime we had as much as 10 minutes, there were fires built. The morning was very chilly and the fires were very comfortable. Pfc. Oleksyn of the Commo Section was heard to say, "If we stopped as long as 15 minutes we had a fire built and if we were there as long as 30 minutes, we had our breakfast cooked." The people in this particular part of the country certainly had delicious ham, sausage and bacon. The eggs were plentiful also. The skillets we carried along were the most handy articles we had in the overloaded trailers.

"Andy Mac" McDonald certainly had his troubles keeping up with the convoy. He would get tanked up on spirits and was down for the count of nine many times. He would usually get up in time to make the kitchen truck. As Sgt. Ruggeri said, "He usually missed the A-T truck by about one bottle too many."

When we went into a new village for the night, it was a race to see which platoon would get the best billet or which one would get the most eggs. The usual answer from the civilians was,



'Nicht habe sie' that did not stop the searching parties from seeing for themselves. I (Mc) remember one time we came into a small village and Lt. Taylor and Major Ranson were standing in the entrance of a barn to keep out of the rain and Captain McCollum said, "Well you all look happy, where are all the eggs?" Lt. Taylor says, "There is an old setting hen back there in the corner and that's all the eggs there are around here. Capt. McCollum said, "Don't tell me that now, where are those eggs?" About that time the old farmer came out and the Captain says, "Habe sie eier," the farmer began to beg and say no and then the old lady began to beg and say no eggs. The Captain went into the house and found out they were not telling the truth, he had his arms full of eggs and Lt. Taylor and Major Ranson were laughing like hell. They had all they could carry themselves.

We traveled all the next day from one little village to another and met a well organized resistance at Cadolzburg. This town will always be known to us as the town where the castle was burned down. The town of the 'flaming Castle.'

Pfc. Joe Lang has this to say about Cadolzburg: "The unique combination of the A & P Platoon and the Ranger Platoon, which was due to heavy losses in Ranger Platoon, was a real combat outfit. One of the outstanding remembrances of Cadolzburg was the fiercely burning Castle which showered us all with hot sparks as we entered the town. We had a lovely time riding all over town looking for the Battalion CP. The streets were jammed with tanks, TD's and vehicles of all kinds.

After settling ourselves in our billets as comfortable as possible, we were informed of the urgent need of men to strengthen the patrol going out within an hour to take a town up ahead of our location. As usual, the A & P got the nod. We gathered up hand grenades, extra ammunition and blankets and took off to the assembly point. We departed at 2300 and began what seemed an endless night of walking. Most of us had but 4 to 6 hours sleep in 3 days and we stumbled more than walked. One thing that annoyed us continuously was the plowed farm lands we had to cross. There were frequent bursts of machine gun fire over head which kept us guessing and hitting the good old sod. We got lost and after some more endless walking, we finally arrived at the town at 0515. At the break of dawn we attacked and took the town without opposition. We took a few PW's who were usually willing to holler, 'Komrad,' they informed us that the main body of Jerries had moved out prior to our entry. Lt. Steffer, patrol leader, sent us out on a house to house search for the enemy but they had vacated. The people were both surprised

and terrified to see us and our unexpected appearance was proven by a little incident which occurred to Pfc. Yeaman, Helthall and myself (Lang). We approached a house and tried the door to no avail, we then pounded with our rifles and within five minutes our efforts were rewarded by the appearance of a sleeping looking middle-aged German who begged us not to kill her. We calmed her down by assuring her that he had no intention of 'Kapootin her.' I thought I had made the find of the day when I located a nice leather holster with a pistol inside it. On close examination, I found it to be a wooden pistol in it. At 8 o'clock we were surprised to see our First Battalion cautiously advancing on our prize town, tank destroyers and all. The look of amazement on our faces was really comical. We hollered, 'Komrad' and gave up to them and were their faces red. They wanted to know what in hell we were doing there in their town. We informed them of our accomplishment as 'Task Force A & P' and then we laid down right in the street and slept the sleep of the weary. Mission accomplished."

The rest of the Battalion was in the town of Cadolzburg all this time and were enjoying somewhat comfortable billets. We enjoyed good hot meals by the kitchen and at 1500 on 18 April, 1945, we moved out. Cadolzburg will always be remembered as the best organized town that we had encountered for some time, and it caused great concern and speculation as to the price we would have to pay for Nurnberg, which was certain now to be our next assignment. We knew there was no stopping for us now. It was go, go, go until it was over for we could not afford to stop now. If the enemy ever got a chance to dig in, we would have a bad time. We too were suffering from losses and we had not been fully reinforced; so we could not afford to meet very much resistance. Supplies was another problem that was not in our favor. We could not get supplies for a long siege this far into Germany. Cadolzburg was an artist's picture of war that night. It had been necessary to use the TD Rockets to fire the Castle high on a hill that afforded snipers a fortified vantage spot and now it was blazing and throwing a brilliant dancing light on all the activity of the civilians working against the fire, as well as the U. S. Army pushing on towards Nurnberg. This little city of 30,000 will always be remembered as the city of the "burning Castle" and the civilians will never forget the war and an old landscape (the Castle) that had held for 1,000 years and now because a few foolish snipers would not see fit to give up, caused it to be destroyed. As the Anti-Truck pulled past that burning Castle in Cadolzburg that night and became jammed in with all the tanks and vehicles, it came to a stop and Sours hollered, "The truck is stopped, someone get the coffee pot, let's make some coffee." Liberating went on as usual and everyone branished their



M1 and A1 'looting tool' in the form of a Heinie trench knife. As Koeppel and Gwyn put's it, "For the stubborn doors and stubborn drawers (in dressers of course) you can't beat this 'Lootin tool'."

By this time the Third Battalion had caught a little rest and it was late afternoon of the 18th of April and we had left Cadolzburg at 1500 and was now in a small town named Leichendorf, which was on the Southern outskirts of Furth and Nurnburg and we dug in here for the night. Our mission was to seal-off the only route open, by which the Germans could still escape from their defense of these two cities. The rifle companies had the missions of going on as far as 6 miles further to take small towns and set up road blocks to prevent escape from Furth and Nurnburg. Our Anti-tank platoon had its mission along with the rifle companies. The rest of the company dug in to defend this small village and the Battalion CP.

The companies did a masterful job of closing the gap and for the next day they had all they could do to convince the fleeing Germans that now there was no way open by which they could escape. The bag of prisoners was one of the largest single day's catch the Battalion had made. Along about 1600 in the afternoon "K" Company had cleared the town of Stein under severe fire from another suburb of Nurnburg by the name of Reichelsdorf, which was located across the river. The bridge between the two towns was neatly blown needless to say. That evening the Battalion withdrew from these newly won positions and by convoy crossed the river at a point further West, through the courtesy of some Engineer outfit this time, using another Bailey Bridge. Once across the river, the Battalion jumped off on a night attack at 2300 and took the town of Reichelsdorf at 0300 in the morning; here again we got very good cooperation from the Police department. Most of the troops found billets and got some well earned rest. Still others found looting to the liking and again beaucoup cameras were rounded up. It is now the morning of the 20 April, 1945, and I & R Section played policeman all night as well as doing O.K. in the camera collecting department to say nothing about the pistols. The Anti-tank got their share and A & P also had their fingers in the pie.

As Kemerer puts the story, it went something like this: "It happened by chance that they selected the Chief of Police's house as a likely billet and found the Chief in uniform and willing to put his whole force at our disposal. Lt. Col. Galloway saw the chance to clean this town up in a hurry so he assigned a member of the I & R Section to each one of the town's patrolmen. This made the job of walking the beat necessary. We walked from house to house to awaken those not already awake and tell-

ing them that they would be expected to attend a town meeting at 0600 in the morning. The town was ours with very few shots fired. They were all caught asleep or else expecting us so it was very easy. The people were further told that they should bring all their cameras, weapons, ammunition and radio receiving equipment with them to this meeting. One of my (Kemerer's) special stories at this point, 'The Jerry cop knocked at the door of this one house and after not receiving an answer, he tried the door which was locked. This was unusual since most of the people do not lock the door to the house. So he knocked again a little harder and this time rattled off a little German lingo. This brought forth in a voice, 'Nitch'. By this time the cop was getting quite excited and nervous that I would cause an unnecessary death and pleaded with me to let him explain once more. So, again he went through a long story in German and while he was still going on, the door suddenly opened. The cop's hands went up in the air and I hurriedly whipped my carbine around to find myself and some GI from the second Platoon of 'K' Company staring each other in the eye, muzzle to muzzle. The GI hurriedly explained that he wouldn't have German speaking men interrupt his slumbers and I explained that he wouldn't have to turn in his M1 at the meeting this morning. The cop explained to us that we were both Americans in our own language and from that house on, we both announced ourselves and I was particular to use strictly GI language."

Reicholsdorf will always be remembered as the town that the SS-ers put up a hugh roadblock on the main road coming into town and it seems that two U. S. flyers who had been German prisoners and escaped, got in with the Chief of Police of the town and told him that we were coming into the town and for the Chief to get a bunch of civilians together and remove the roadblock. They worked and removed the roadblock. Then the SS Officers came down from the hills and made them put it back up. Then just as we were entering the city the civilians worked hard and removed the roadblock again. The two flyers were very interesting fellows.

This is the town that Doty (S-1 jeep driver) was seen having a good time with a big hammer on a number of cameras that no one seemed to want. They were box cameras. Captain McCollum set in to "busting" up a number of Heinie weapons and was going about it so fast that he snatched up an M1 and had put it out of service before he realized what he had done. Such is war though 'Se le Guerre'. We got our usual 'move out' orders about noon and were on our way by 1400. This was the 21 April 1945, and another little farm village was to be our billets for the night. We spent the night and at noon the next day we



moved out again. By this time we had completed reservations on all back-trails and with the mud and hard rains we went merrily slipping and sliding along through woods and every back trail known in those parts.

#### ACROSS THE DANUBE TO MUNICH

As at Wurzburg, Schweinfurt, and Neustadt the boys all hoped when we got to the town of Nurnberg, rather just above Nurnberg while the 222nd went into Furth and Nurnberg, that we would go into reserve and get the rest, we kept looking forward to. It was the same tale as in the cities before, we rested one day in a small town named Gutzberg on the outskirts of Nurnberg, and then on thru a muddy slippery forest trail to heck knew where. We soon got our OI and then we had a little mopping up to do and then the big deal was coming up. The night of 22 April 1945 we took the little town of Durrenmuengenau and the company stayed for the rest of the night. The forward troops were entering the little town of Berbach and was meeting heavy automatic weapon resistance. It was a miserable night to be out and the Krauts were firing artillery everywhere but seemed not to know just where to fire. They were so badly confused they did not concentrate on any one thing. They nearly made a lucky shot on the convoy of the Company when they fired on the road as the vehicles were lined up in perfect order along a sloppy road. We took the towns of Wemfels, Theilenberg, Spaltz and Absberg where we stayed for the night. General Collins, Division Commanding Officer, visited our CP at Theilenberg and was only there for a short time. The 692 TD's were doing some good work with the troops in the town of Spaltz. The convoy entered the town of Spaltz at 1700 and the troops had gone out the other side to attack Absberg. The convoy pulled out of Spaltz in the rear of the troops and were cutting across country to the town of Absberg and entered the town of Kalbensteinberg. The 3 TD's that were with us were in front of the convoy except for the lead jeep. As they entered Kalbensteinberg. Lt. Christopher and Lt. Taylor and Willie 'Roundy' Myers saw a Jerry with a big panzerfaust aimed at the road ready to fire on the first TD that came into sight. Willie the Supply Sergeant barrelled off the jeep and hit the ground waving for the TD not to come any closer. It just did stop behind a building in time. The German fired the panzerfaust and it struck a building over the jeep that had Lt. Christopher and Lt. Taylor, Pfc. Jordan, driver, and Schneider and Myers, the huge charge threw splinters of steel everywhere and Lt. Taylor was severely wounded. Lt. Christopher and some of the TD men killed that Heinie and everyone pulled out of the town, since we had no troops with us except the ones on the motor vehicles and we did not know the strength of the enemy. We returned to Spaltz and went around another way to Absberg. We were all sorry to hear later that Lt. Taylor did not survive the wounds. By now the troops



were all just about worn out. It was go, go, go all the day and most of the night. We were mopping up little towns where the tanks and TD's had by passed and the PW's were getting to be an enormous problem. The Germans were just about as willing to give up and get the fighting over as we were. Our artillery had played hell with them every time they attempted to put up any resistance. The men in the lead jeeps had sweated out the untravelled roads and rumors of mined roads and booby traps made travel by vehicle about as dangerous as being a foot marching soldier. Jeep drivers like Carney, Aimar, Doty, Cowen, Jordan, Scott, Gloyd and Yeaman well remembered how they sweated out the roads many, many times. Strange roads deep in enemy territory, anything could happen. We once came to a road block that had to be removed and when the A & P got through mine-sweeping the area, they had taken out 6 S-Mines. These drivers said they definitely learned to stay in the ruts of any vehicle that had been over that road in the last 3 months.

It was drive, drive, drive again and again. Twenty-four hours a day we were on the attack with only a two or three-hour break now and then. At one of the check points on our drive from Absberg to the Danube River we would always see our liaison officer from Regiment whizz by everything on the road and everybody and we knew then that our new orders from Regiment were on the way to our Battalion Commander. The Battalion took one small village after another, always tense with the thought that the Germans must have a line set up somewhere and that we must not walk into a trap. The afternoon of the first day of the drive to Munich it rained and Lt. Bryant and his boys reported after contacting the Recon outfit on our left flank that there was pockets of resistance the Armored outfit had by-passed. Plans were immediately made to take care of these little items but schnell. Late the afternoon of the second day of attacking through the rain soaked woods, the Bn assembled in a good sized village and there were rumors that this would be our home while we were in reserve for the next few days. We all found good billets and started to work on a feast of what could be found. Anything that wasn't canned stew or carrots and apple flakes was sure to be delicious. Eggs as usual turned out to be the main course.

It was a grand feeling to take your shoes off to go to bed and some of the men even went further and stripped down to their woolens. "Don't wake me for breakfast unless the kitchen sets up and has french toast or pancakes," was the last words uttered by most of the men before they dropped off to sleep.

After a good full half-hour's sleep some anonymous loud voice announced, "Let's go." "WE are moving out in twenty

minutes." It was hard to make that first move and to come to your senses to realize you had to move in a hurry to be ready to leave in twenty minutes. It was get dressed, roll your bedding, fill your canteen, grab a 'K' ration or two, slip into the straps of your pack, sling your musket over your shoulder, and take off.

The 1st Battalion had crossed a bridge over a fairly wide river before the German demolition squad had arrived to set the charges that had already been stored near the approach to the bridge. 1st Battalion rushed on across to make a bridgehead secure. It was walk, walk, walk, walk all night with only one burst of machine gun fire from one of the TD's with us when they saw a suspicious shadow. Of course, after we crossed the bridge and joined the 1st Battalion our spell of being in reverse was over and the Bn started its third day of continuous attacking. To keep the conditions consistent, it rained the third straight day. For a little variety, it turned very cold in the evening and the rain turned to hail the size of marbles.

The convoy moved behind the 1st Battalion and crossed a canal into a little town of Degersheim, Germany. It was a sad looking town and well battered up. The Krauts tried to defend it and that was just TS for them. The odor of briskdust, and burnt out smell was nauseating. We moved out of this little town and on toward the Danube. We pulled into the little village of Nussbuhl and had to hold up here. It was a cold and windy day and the artillery was flying in both directions. A German tank or two were making their last stand against the tanks of the 45th Division, who had passed through us at this time. The long shots that the Germans were throwing in made it rather uncomfortable for us. Our vehicles were not all in the little town as yet, in fact, they could not all get into it. The 88's would whistle in and we would all duck but the vehicles had to set out and take it. The 45th tanks passed through us like they were 'hell bent' but after they passed this little town of Nussbuhl and got down into the valley, they met some opposition and we were sitting up on a little hillside where we could see the whole show. We saw one tank go up in the smoke right before our very eyes. A direct hit by an 88 shell. The mortars and burp guns were very active here and the 'long time no see' Luftwafe also decided to show itself and although we had the roads jammed with convoys, they contented themselves to strafing one column of the 2nd Battalion who was to our right and never paid us a return visit. It was quite amusing, after it was all over of course, to see our observation planes hit for a landing strip when the German planes came over. Then when they had passed, the little Piper Cub went back up to continue spotting targets for the artillery.



The Battalion's objective for the day included eight towns and after waiting for the 45th to pass, we had the most of them still to take after dark. The troops moved out and most of Headquarters Company stayed in the little town of Nussbuhl until 0500 next morning. This was the morning of the 25 April 1945. The radio message sounded something like this, "George 6 to George 5, over." "Hello George 6 this George 5, send your message, over." "Hello George 5, move motor convoy to check point "R" now." "George 5 to George 6, Roger out." The convoy and Headquarters company moved out and passed the thick jammed roads near Hochfeld, and Daiting. There were many wagons and horses torn up and wrecked all along the road. One jeep in the 'M' Company convoy hit a mine and literally demolished the vehicle and got 'Red' Davis, who was driving. The company and most of the Battalion stayed in the town of Daiting most of the day. There were many prisoners taken and as fast as they were 'shaken down' they were loaded in trucks and moved back to the rear area.

We were set to spend the night when we got a good message from Regimental Commander to move to assembly area in the high ground above Daiting. At 2115 the Battalion was assembled in the woods and all Company Commanders were called into a meeting. At 2256 the Battalion 'jumped off' and moved out towards the Danube River. At 2435 the troops and the convoy arrived in the town of the little village of Leitheim, Germany. We spent the night here and among everyone scrambled around to find billets, Sgt. Beasley used super technique in his inquiries at one house. Beasley walked in and all the occupants were asleep on the floor. He shined his flashlight around and the man and woman of the house were just about half awake when Beasley was heard to say, "Well, I guess you all will have to Raus mit em, and do you have any eiers?" Well, they were so dazzled from the crude awakening they could not take all of it at one time. Some of the men found billets and some of them did not. It was a clear night with a full moon and a clear view for a good ways. It grew very cold and the heat of a burning building in this town that had been strafed, was an asset to some of the boys because some huddled around a wall that was still burning and slept for the remainder of the night. The men were dog tired and badly in need of a rest but the Danube river lay just about 3 miles ahead and it was a bridgehead across it that was ordered. Not a moment was to be lost, now that the enemy was off balance. We moved out of Leitheim and to Altisheim which was on the banks of the Danube river. The 2nd Battalion had crossed the Danube in assault boats during the night and our companies followed them across in the early morning. The Headquarters Company did not make a move until daylight then moved to

Altisheim about 2 miles closer to the river. The Runners for the Battalion that were attached to the Hq. Company went with the troops when the Commander moved out to cross the river. Here is the way T/5 Weaver describes it: "As we started to get in our assault boat prior to crossing the river, a few rounds of mortar fire paid us a visit and set us scurrying back for cover. One round hit in the river giving some of the boys a shower bath. When the firing had slowed down, we tried it again—this time we were successful."

"Lt. Col. Galloway set up his forward CP in a farmhouse about 400 yards on the other side of the river and his 'Gallopig Ghosts Runners' were put out as guards. The Company 'L' runners, Pfc. George Hanover and Pfc. Kelly had rejoined us just before the crossing. Kelly, Kraska and Weaver were put on guard on one side of the barn and were to watch a wood and a stream against approaching enemy. After awhile Weaver went into the barn to answer a rather urgent call of nature. This was a mistake as he was soon to find out, for just as he was comfortably settled, four or five shells came screaming in and just missed the barn. Cpl. Weaver was caught with his pants down to be sure. I didn't know whether to or go blind, as that shrapnel began to bounce around on that farm machinery in that barn. We all noticed he is not blind however. Ten minutes later, Lt. Col. Galloway came around to see if anyone was hurt. He spied a pair of legs sticking up from a crevice between a manure pile and the barn and went over to investigate. 'Are you hurt?' he asked. The feet went down and a head appeared over the crest of the manure pile. 'NNNNNO SSSSSSir,' said our hero as he pointed in the opposite direction from the way he faced.

"Lt. Col. Galloway made some unkind statement about a person not being able to do much guarding from the depths of a manure pile and sauntered off chuckling to himself. T/5 Weaver examined himself and found to his sorrow that his shoe had been slit open but his foot was not even scratched—so no Purple Heart and no extra 5 points. Weaver had one chance to redeem himself about 300 yards away. He called Kraska and together these two heroes marched off bravely, daring the murderous mortar and possible sniper fire as they went. It seems that they had seen a couple of 'Krauts' passing in the field about 300 yards away. Weaver zeroed Kraska as to what to do and how to approach them and they were on the brink of becoming famous when the 'Krauts' hollered back to them, 'Me polski, nix Deutsche' so our brave 'Gallopig Ghosts' fouled up again." This all took place just across the Danube river in a little village known as Bauernhannes, Germany, on the 27th of April,



1945. The 3rd Division was on the right of the 42nd Division and the 45 Division was on the left of our sector as we crossed the Danube river and continued on.

The motor convoy moving across the Danube river was a slow and dangerous movement. The Germans had the Ferry bridge and the pontoon bridge well zeroed in with mortars and 88's. The vehicles were well dispersed at the river crossing and even then the 88's caused some damage to some vehicles and several personnel had to be evacuated. This experience is described by Bob Hade: "While waiting our turn on the ferry to cross the Danube river, with the mortars coming in, I remember Floyd dived head first into the foxhole that had just been completed by Helton. He landed in a prone position with Helton piling in after him. Helton's well filled combat boot landed on Floyd's head. Later 'Old Tuck' Floyd revealed, 'I thought sure a shell had lit right on top of me.' This is all very amusing as this is being written, but then it was serious business with everyone.

The convoy finally got across the river and caught up with the foot elements who were waiting at this little town of Bauernhannes, Germany. There was some opposition which kept the stillness of the night punctuated with the distinctive noise of the German burp gun and mortars kept dropping in all the time. We did not get any very close to our area however.

About 9:30 P.M. or 2130 Greenwich Village time, we saw three beautiful sights. As described by McNeil and Daley and also witnessed by Doty, it was this way: "Old Jerry had zeroed the spot in with his mortars earlier in the day and harrassed it throughout the day. The Luftwaffe flew over a few times but somehow they escaped the hail of Ack-Ack that was sent up by the 431 AAA that was covering the Ferry and Pontoon Bridge Crossings. After dark however, old Jerry was not so lucky. We heard a roar of airplane motors and this brought a continuous stream of beautiful tracers from the 40 MM Ack-Ack and Multiple 50 MM Anti-aircraft. This looked like a 4th of July celebration and a big cheer went up as one of the German Aircraft was on the receiving end of some of this hot lead and caught fire and kissed old mother earth. It was a grand feeling to know that your team was 'on the ball.' We witnessed two other such operations and old 'Bed Check Charlie' did not send any more around those boys. They were red hot with their shootin' irons you can bet on that. It was three down in three tries.

As far as the Danube river itself is concerned, Kemerer has this to add, "The Danube river that inspired such beautiful soothing music as the Blue Danube Waltz was a muddy grey-

green torrent." It was anything but pretty to us and certainly did not inspire any musical inclinations in our souls. "The only thing musical that can be remembered about the Danube that 26th day of April 1945, was the shrill whistle of those 88's that the Krauts were sending in spasmodically throughout the day," is the feeling expressed by 'yours truly.'

The 1109 Engineers did a masterful job of building a pontoon bridge across the Danube river at Altisheim. It was just up the river a little ways from the ferry that our company and Battalion was to cross on. The Ferry was very slow and could only carry two vehicles at one time. We finally had to cross on the pontoon bridge built for the 242nd Infantry. The PW count was a little light today, only 90 PW and we suffered only 4 wounded.

The Battalion CP was selected early in the morning at the place mentioned above or on a former page (Bauernhannes, Germany) and after a few hours of eating and napping, the Battalion moved out at 0230 to cross the Lech canal which runs North and South and was the last major water barrier on the road to Munich. The Company with all the vehicles and the 57A-T guns did not get away until about 0930 and we had beautiful sunshiney weather to travel in. The enemy held up the advance of the forward elements for some time early that morning and some of the men fell asleep on the wet ground. When the sun came out after daybreak it was a very beautiful day to be sure.

Gradually the enemy automatic weapon fire became more scattered and the troops moved. We moved across the foot bridge built by the Engineers and were followed by the 1st Battalion. The last man in the foot elements had hardly gotten across when the Engineers started on a pontoon bridge to get the convoy across. As the big convoy of vehicles crossed the pontoon bridge, we could see a huge steel bridge wrecked and laying in the water. It was a strongly built bridge, and a very pretty one. The Lech Canal was very swift and the Engineers worked hard to get our convoy across. With the bridgehead well established South of the Danube and East of the Lech Canal, the 3 Battalions struck off for 3 different objectives. Our OI (Operations Instructions) called for us to take the city of Rain by 1030. The troops moved right into town with very little opposition now. The Air Corps had done a good job of convincing the Jerries that they had better 'talk turkey,' the evening before while our troops were held up. We could see the results of the Air Corps' work as we moved down the street of Rain. This was a nice little town of 35,000. There were some pretty little establishments here. Tired as we were, we all had a grand feeling that one of our last obstacles had been surmounted. About that time the Kraut



artillery brought 3 rounds in and a deafening roar was enjoyed by all, who had a good shelter. A few of the Medics, Ed Neubauer, Clyde St. John, John La Fond and 'Hary S' Lund were overheard to say this about the town of Rain, "we liberated two cases of eggs, 60 dozen to be exact. These eggs lasted approximately two days. In round figures this means just about 30 eggs per man per 2 days." "I cannot eat another fried egg," Marion Madden was heard to say. "Well boil 'em up 'cause we cannot carry 'em over rough roads like they are," James answered. This little town of Rains had a helluva lot of Kraut equipment in it and the town square was stacked very high with all manner of ammunition and weapons very shortly. The men who were interested in camera equipment and film did right well for themselves. One FO with one of the rifle companies was lucky enough to find a whole case of 1 x 20 films. Many of the men by this time had gotten the benefit of a helluva lot of pictures at the expense of the Heinies. The cameras had been located all along the route and the film came along later all along the march and as a result many men have pictures to take back home that they would not have had otherwise.

An interesting happening as related by Ferson, 'Chief' Marcenel, Jim Chambers and 'Chop Chop' Guerrero, "We have seen everything, and how." Did you ever hear a T/5 tell a General off? Just before crossing the river into Rains, T/5 Gloyd tried to turn the truck around on a very narrow road. It seems that a number of 'side road drivers' were giving out rather freely with all types of conflicting advice. Many sleepless nights did not help Gloyd's attitude or disposition any either, so when the advisors began getting loud and abrupt with their advice and much of it confusing, Gloyd's temper began to rise. Finally a very gruff voice said, 'Back that truck up further and that was the 'last straw.' 'Come on drive this - - - truck yourself if you think I can't,' said the Massachusetts farmer. He then looked a little closer at direction of the gruff voice and then f-r-o-z-e right where he was. To his great amazement he had been firing back at a bright sparkling star that nearly put his eyes out—General Linden in person." As Gloyd put it later, "I am shore glad that he had other things on his mind about that time because he walked away and did not say a word." Any way we assumed that the picture of Levenworth faded from Gloyd's mind as the 'Gen.' walked away. You can rest assured that for several days Gloyd looked before he answered anybody.

The Company had again picked some fairly decent billets and were about to enjoy a damn good night's rest, this being the 27th of April, 1945, and some days since we had stopped long enough to get any rest; again we were to suffer disappointment.

New worlds were to be conquered. We moved out with a minimum of questions. We all thought we were in reserve but not this battalion, we were moving out.

The quartering party found the designated town and there were suppose to be no troops in this little village except the 3d Battalion and possibly one other company. Instead we found the 242nd Regiment Engineers, and part of another outfit. By the time the troops got into town the quartering party had found a total of three empty houses and that was all and I do mean ALL. Of course, Col. Galloway and his advisor was p..d off as usual, but there was not any more houses to be had unless we made a few. Then someone got the bright idea of taking a look at the map for some village off the main beaten path that all the troops were traveling down. So after a quick trip to a nearby village, the Company and Battalion moved into a little town named Stadel which was just three miles off the main road. This proved to be an excellent solution to the problem. There were no troops in the place and although the houses were few, the hay barns were plentiful and warm. We guided troops into these billets and barns the rest of the night. As one brave Laddie put it, "The barns the most of us had to sleep in were comfortable compared to what we had been having. In fact, we all felt the same about it as what T/5 Meister did when he said, "No matter where we stop, you always know that the Battalion Guards will be higher or lower than anyone else—Captain McCollum always saw to it that we were either in the attic or in the cellar." This time we won the attic. The guards always did a good job and with a very minimum of bitching about where they were put or what was to be done. They usually got what was left every time we found billets. Not until good billets were enough to go around did they rate a room like the other men.

We were not all as comfortable as we could have been in this little town of Stadel but at least we were all able to take a little nap and not be expecting a call to move out. We stayed here the nights of the 27 and 28 of April and heard we were moving out, but instead we stayed one more night which was the night of the 29 April and it was a God send because the troops really needed the sleep they got. All this time we were receiving news of the excellent success of the Russians on their drive on Berlin. We also got news from Division that the other Regiments and the 20th Armored were speeding towards Munich. This was the main topic of conversation. We could not see how the war could go on much longer and still it drug out. The Germans were definitely trying to get around those terms set down in the 'Big 3 Conference' ie: "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER."



An amusing sight is to see the Armored outfits operate when attached to an Infantry Regiment. We had some 692d TD' attached to us and there was never a road too narrow for them to travel on or a space too narrow to turn around in. I saw a TD having a little difficulty trying to save some Kraut some expense and wear and tear on some property until it got monotonous and then he just stepped on it and took about half of the house and fence and a few trees along with him.

We were not long in receiving our orders to load up and join all the traffic that was converging on Munich. We moved out on the 30th April and moved to within 10 miles of the big city and spent the night at a little village called Schwabhausen. This was a nice little village this Schwabhausen and our billets were enough to go around. We stayed just long enough for our liaison officer to get to us. We received our OI with orders that the Third Battalion was to act as a Task Force under the control of the 6th Army Group. We then became Task Force ALEXANDER. Our Commander of the Task Force was to be Captain Alexander. Our mission was to remain behind after the Division continued their pursuits of the retreating Germans and guard intelligence targets in the city of Munich, Bavaria.

We moved out of Schwabhausen and into the suburb of Munich, Obermunsinger. We stayed here only a short time but we were here long enough to see some of the awful results of some of the Nazi Propaganda. The first thing that greeted us was the Ammunition and Pioneering Platoon having to guard a house where a Nazi fanatic had killed three women and the Dauchund dog and had shot himself but did not kill himself. He was trying to do it but he could not make the grade. He had shot the tops of the women's head off and he lay on the floor moaning and groaning. "Me no like," added Pfc. Gutierrez, "Mucho mal este hombre, would rather combate on the front line," he continued in his broken English and Mexican language.

The rest of the Company was billeted in houses around the CP for the protection of the Battalion CP as well as the Task Force CP. The rest of the Battalion was billeted so as to form a circle around the Task Force Headquarters. All men were taking advantage of this little time to relax and get somewhat straightened out with all their equipment as well as all the 'loot' they had picked up on the way.

Many of the platoons were having luck locating drinking material and this time the guards got a house all to themselves for a change and a good set-up. It seems they were not long uncovering a store of fine champaign and by midnight all were happy. It went something like this in the words of Cpl. Fink,

'Weasel' Bernard, Lee, Carlson and Godfrey: "Someone made the grand announcement, 'CHAMPAIGN' and as the owner of the house and his family were allowed to stay in the house, they could not do a lot 'bout the fact that they had made the discovery down in the basement. Well as the evening proceeded along it seem that guard Thomas Godfrey felt so good that he decided to take a bath. The civilians were quite bewildered to say the least that he insisted on taking a bath in cold water. Thomas said he would not be cold because he planned to keep his underwear on. We might add, he was 'feeling his oats' by now. Well 'Top Kick' Carlson and Guard 'Smiley' Carlson insisted on helping Godfrey with his bath. They were all feeling 'high' and all were laughing so hard they all three nearly fell into the bath tub. They were getting right chummy with each other and passing out the unsobber compliments by the gross. In the course of the bath, Godfrey, got provoked because he had held on to his Heinie pistol and it was not until someone called it to his attention that he noticed that he had kept this German Luger under water all this time. Someone said it would not shoot now. He decides to see if it will. It seems 'Smiley' Carlson had made it up the stairs and flopped down on a couch to rest awhile. He had hardly laid down when bang! bang! Godfrey cut loose down stairs to see if his damn Luger would fire. The shots came through the couch in two places one pierced the couch in front of Carlson's head and one right in back of his head as he lay on the couch up stairs. This was very, very close for Carlson. Many of the men of this Company had seen close calls and this was just laughed off like the time Sgt. Cote was foolin' with a pistol and Carter was reading a paper near a tree and the pistol went off and clipped one corner of the paper Carter was reading.

All plans were now completed for the Task Force to set up in Munich and it began to look like 'Luncheon in Munchen' for awhile now. The Battalion took over the targets that were assigned to the Task Force Alexander. The Company had every available man guarding something. The Anti-tank platoon took over a couple of targets and one of them was the Bavarian Motor Works. It was here that the platoon again had its part of the fun. Bob Hade and Fred Grantham describe it this way: "Motorcycles whizzing everywhere! There were some close shaves to really serious accidents. At one time it was Swords, Gary and 'Willie' Williams meeting in a blind passage-way, results, 'Bone smashing,' 'Bruises'—it was brutal. Then came a shout to a passing civilian, 'Hey! Russki! Schnapps, Cogniac!' Well believe it or not, there was something left to drink for the A-T boys and they got it."



The Battalion CP and the Task Force Alexander CP was set up in private homes on the Northern outskirts of Munich where we remained throughout the week.

We had just set up the CP and all were getting set to relax when a three Jeep convoy took off for a sight-seeing ride to Dauchau. Lt. Jennings F. Bryant led the group through the Concentration Camp and it was a horrible dream if I ever saw one. I would never believe it if I had not seen it with my own eyes. 'Nappy' Napachank of the Medics has this to say about it, "Those pitiful wretches were underfed prisoners of the Nazis. These people would have to eat grass to get rid of the pangs of hunger. There were about fifty open freight cars which were loaded with skeletons and corpse of the prisoners who had died enroute to the camp. They had died of starvation and the cold. Dachau—a horror camp with all the implements of hateful Nazi torture and treachery."

Many of us could here give our description of this horrible sight but one thing we will add that some of the men agreed on and that was after we came out from seeing all the terrible sights, we saw a crowd of people and on investigation we saw some of the liberated prisoners of the Dachau Camp beating a couple of the SS guards to death with their fists and with clubs, and it did not affect some of us to stand there and see these underfed liberated prisoners get their revenge in a small way. It was just that horrible. The men that had the chance to see Dachau Concentration Camp will never forget those sights.

The war's end found the 42nd Division 100 miles East of Munich in the old music famous city of Salzburg, Austria. After a week in Munich the work of the Task Force Alexander was completed and the Battalion joined the Division once again. We were located in a small village of Schonstett, near Wasserburg.

The Anti-Tank Platoon guarded a roadblock at Wasserburg and some of them have this 'parting shot' to fire: "Wasserburg—all by ourselves in a big town. Hey, Fueling come tell these Jerries they can't drive this truck. There Andy did his prowling, Delbert Fisher says, 'I'd like to pull guard all night, especially if it's raining.' (We wonder) Louis Kuchta shooting the breeze with the 'Polskis' in their own lingo. Schwegel always looking for something, 'Somebody stole my cup,' 'I know I had it right here a minute ago.' 'Willie' Walz and Williams whipping up superb meals. Kojnok and Lockaby rejoining the platoon from their 'gold brick' set-ups back on Special Duty. Boy we again had fun with our work and we will always remember our experience with the 232nd Infantry." Then to make things turn out just right, Kenneth Gunderson who was known to the company

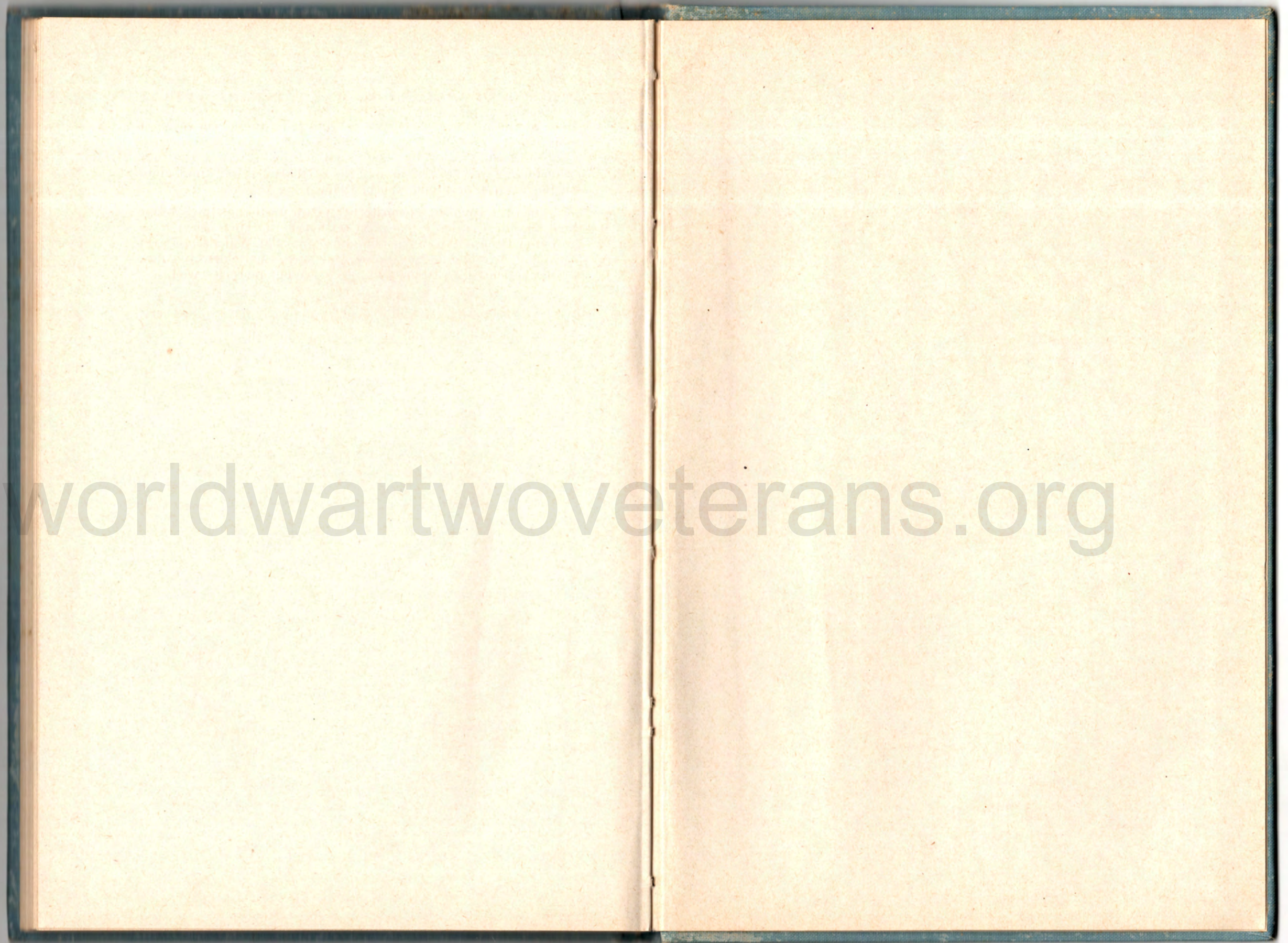
as Sgt. 'Gundy' was among the American prisoners recaptured at Meuseberg just about 30 kilometers from Munich and Lechlinder of the motor pool went over and got Gundy and brought him back to visit the company. Sgt. Gunderson was the Squad Leader of the Anti-Tank squad that was captured at the first taste of war we had. This was in the battle at Kilstett and Gambenheim, France, on January 5th, 1945.

Since the town of Schonstett, and up until the time of this writing, the Company has been with the Battalion serving as forces of Occupation in Austria and names like Walchsee, Markt Grafting, Kirchbuhl, Mayrhofen, Salzburg, Saalfelden and now at Bischofshofen, Austria, will also serve our memories well.

Many points here need further explanation, but you need to use a vivid imagination and in short, you nearly have to be there.

We sincerely hope our efforts serve you well.





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