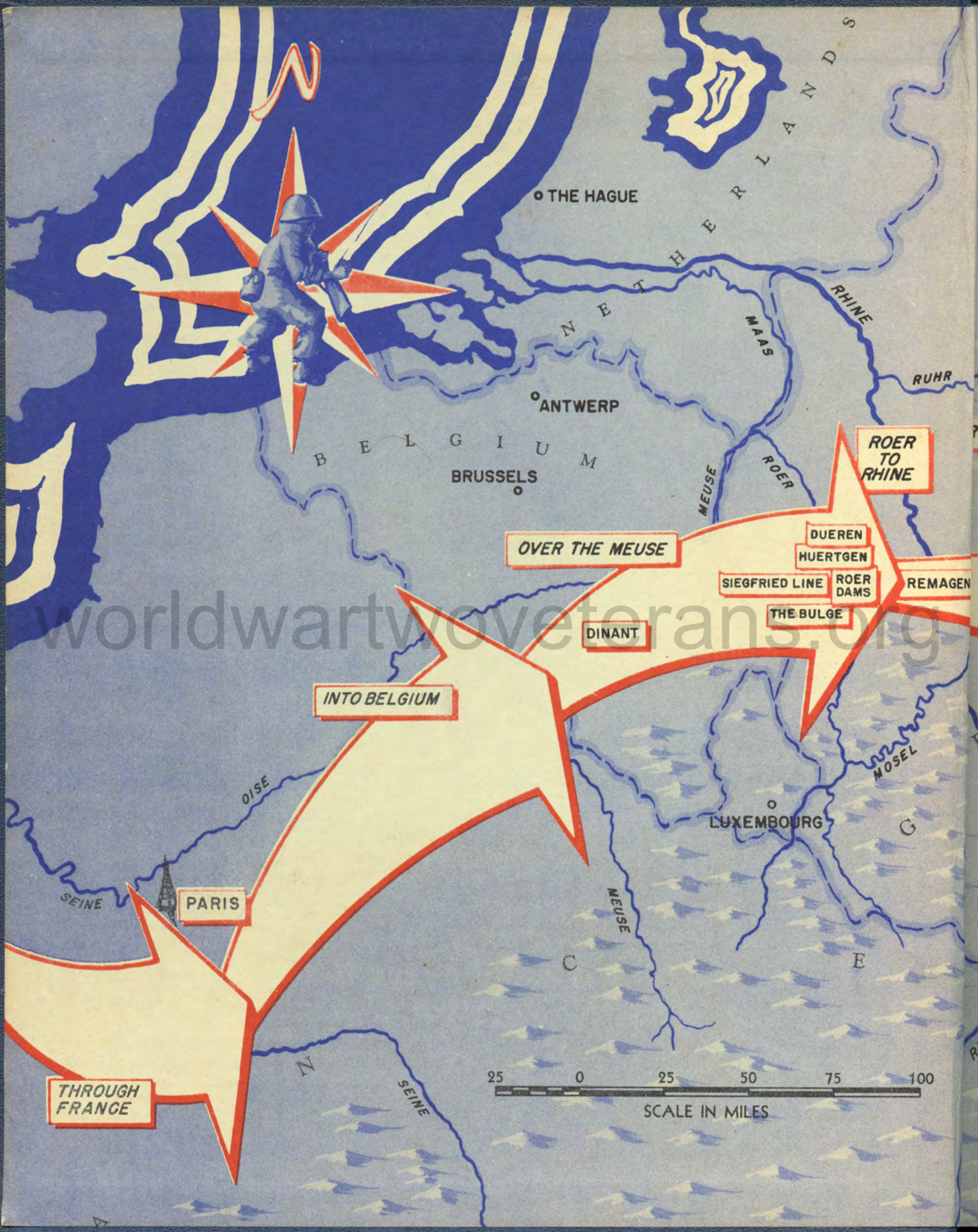
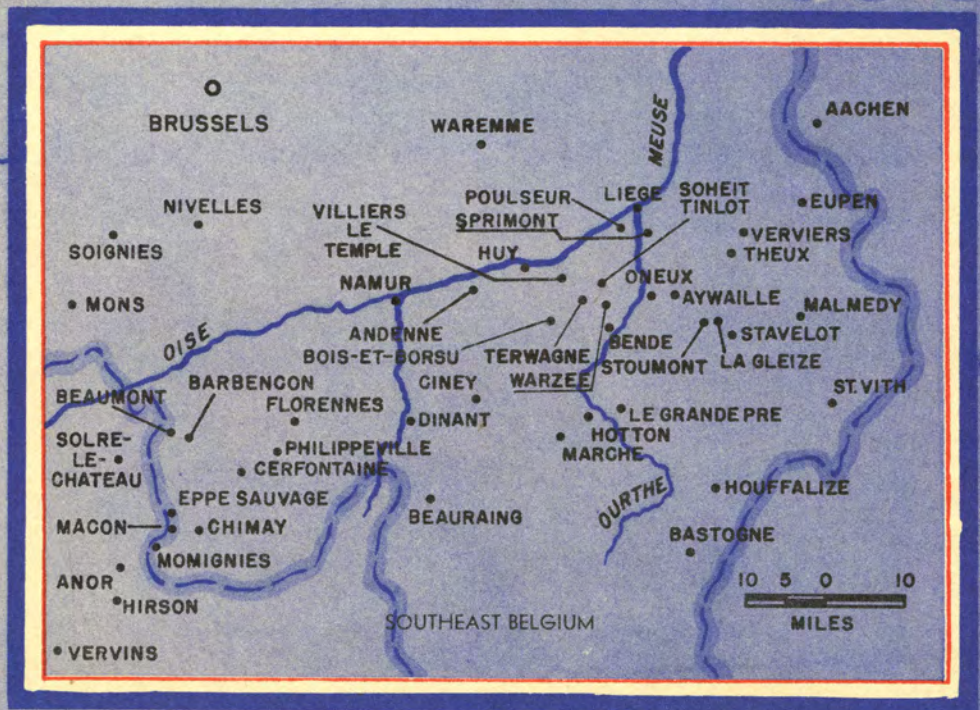
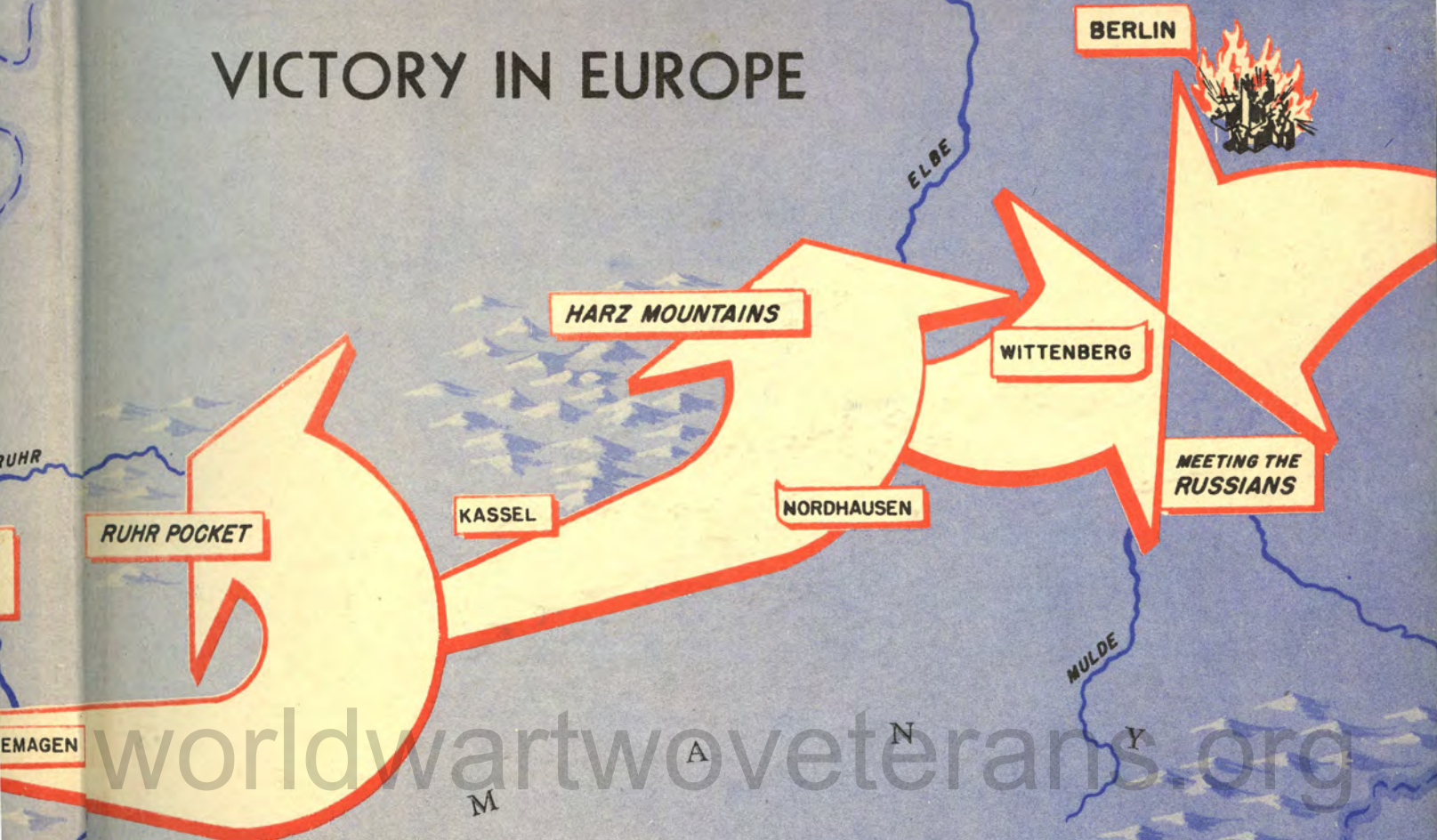




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EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

*A History of the Veteran
Ninth U. S. Infantry Division*



Compiled and Written by
CAPTAIN JOSEPH B. MITTELMAN

Maps and Supplementary Art by
S/SGT. LAWRENCE E. REED

THE NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION

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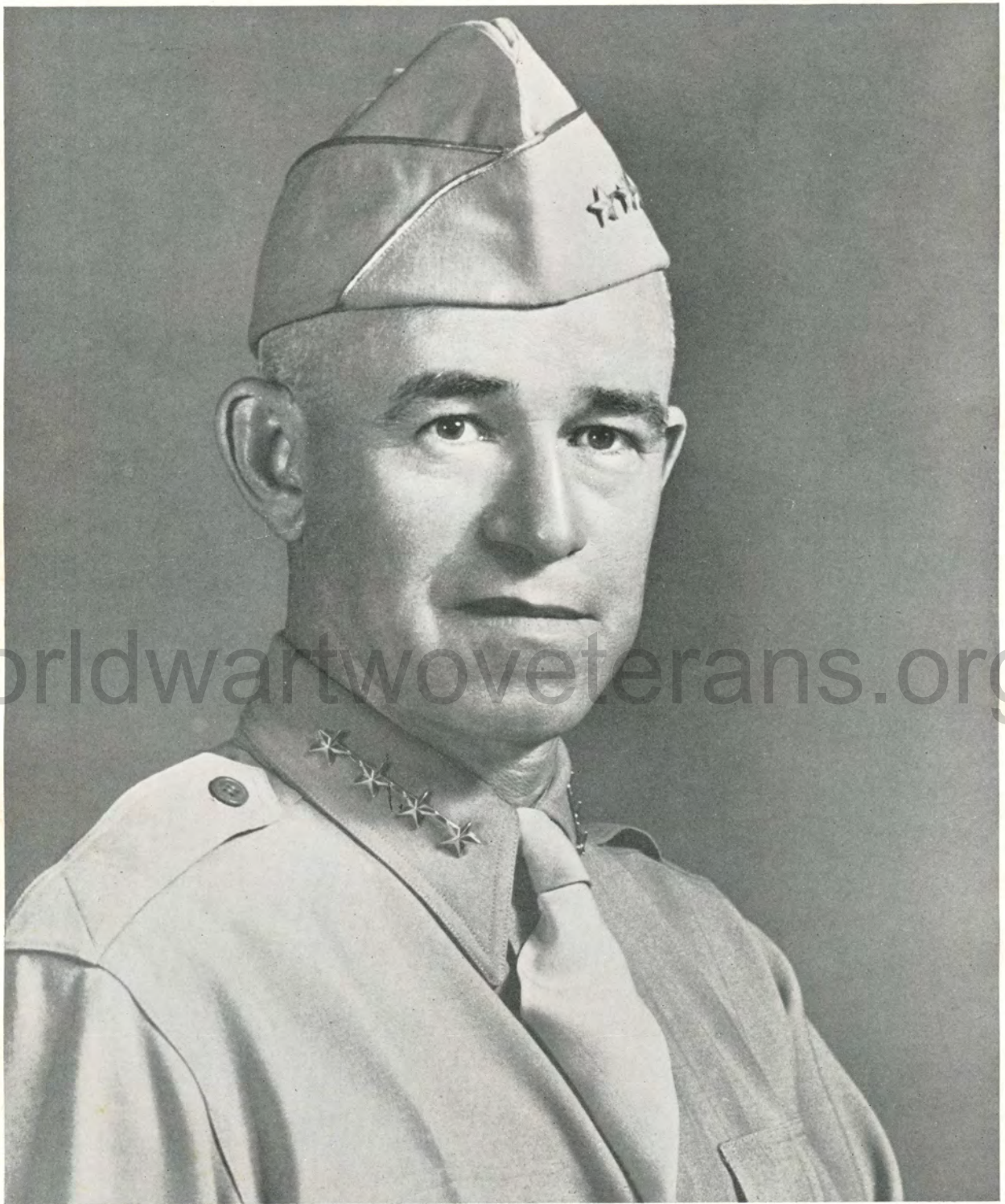
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To those who wore
The Octofoil

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*With Admiration—to the men of
the Ninth Infantry Division*

Omar N Bradley

★ ★ FOREWORD ★ ★

EVERY combat division has its own story. But not every division can match the story of the Ninth Infantry Division. I have looked forward to the publication of this history, because I know these men and their fighting experiences well.

I met them first in Africa, where, as part of the Second Corps, they participated in the Tunisian Campaign and helped pound out our first major victory over the Axis. That was the beginning of their long and distinguished combat record in World War II. Later, as a Corps commander in Sicily, as an Army commander in Normandy, and as their Group commander in the final months of battle, I knew and counted upon their ability to accomplish a mission speedily and effectively. I have never forgotten the courage, stamina and teamwork which distinguished them always and made them one of the outstanding fighting units in the United States Army.

No history can ever fully recapture the grim and bitter hours through which a division on the line must live, nor can it describe adequately the many factors which go into the makeup of good fighting men and good fighting divisions. But it can offer us a lesson in bravery, hard work and high morale which should never be forgotten.

To the men of the Ninth I extend cordial good wishes for every success in the peacetime careers they have so well earned.

Omar N. Bradley
General, U. S. Army

★ ★ CONTENTS ★ ★

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★ ★ PREFACE ★ ★



TO write of the Ninth Infantry Division is to be faced with a dilemma. Acres and acres of records abound in Army and private files—each paper sheet in seeming eagerness to shout its own particular praise of America's *Old Reliables*. Thousands upon thousands of photographs and sketches depict the sensational combat records of the Ninth. And more than fifty-five thousand different versions, regarding what happened to the Division during the years 1940-1947, easily could be gathered from a like number of individuals who wore the tri-colored *Octofoil* upon their shoulders.

Of what, then, should an historian write? That question was of peculiar concern in the deliberations and long discussions of the author and his advisors in planning *Eight Stars to Victory*. After a cautious two-year extraction of information from several roomfuls of reports, wartime publications and private papers, a sufficient amount of material was compiled to write a set of several volumes. As a matter of fact, each individual platoon or squad was rated worthy of the space covered by this one history.

The segregation and elimination of inapplicable material was the next job. In this, many factors had to be considered. Firstly, each man who lived a part of this story had his own particular views of what happened. These various interpretations of *Eight Stars* are the natural, logical outgrowth of the fact that one fighting soldier engaged in combat sees things a little differently than does his neighbor. In addition, soldiers fighting for their lives have infrequent opportunities to record historical facts—there are too many other things to do in battle which are of infinitely more importance.

For the infantryman or medic, the battle seldom is more than those actions which occur within a mile to the front, flanks or rear. For the artilleryman and armored force soldier, the area is slightly larger,

but equally small in comparison to the *big picture*. Moreover, it has been noted quite frequently, that persons, standing side by side at the scene of an accident or fighting in adjacent foxholes, see things in different lights.

In compiling and writing this volume, therefore, we desired keenly to portray the events which would be of mutual interest to every former member of the Ninth, their families and their friends. That has been the prime motivating power behind this story. Confirmed official records have been used as the basis for the text, together with a liberal interspersing of on-the-scene reports, first-hand information, interviews, diaries, newspaper accounts and photographs. The finished work in its preliminary stages was reviewed by a board of former commanding officers and other combat veterans to insure that *accuracy* and *balance* were present; and every effort was made to include some mention of each unit engaged as part of the team that was the Ninth Infantry Division.

This, then, is not just a history of the Ninth, it is more *the story* of that Division. Its heroes named are simply examples of many others—of thousands unsung in their daily acts of bravery. And although some of the terminology of the Army has been eliminated so that persons unfamiliar with such expressions might better enjoy this tale, it was felt that totally obliterating service jargon would subtract from the realism of the work.

Many unusual words are explained in the supplement to this volume, and a smattering of the exacting data and figures sometimes sought by the military is contained here as well. Maps were drawn to be of interest to the layman as well as the soldier or tactician; photographs were selected for general interest and not for proving that any one battalion or company won the war single-handed!

* * * *

NATURALLY, the Ninth Infantry Division did not win the war by itself—and such a statement by any unit smaller than a theater command is false,

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

bigoted and without foundation. Moreover, the Ninth was not perfect. It made mistakes and probably some big ones. But more often than not, the Division performed excellently under adverse conditions.

The men of the Ninth were not all heroes, and the officers were not all infallible. A majority of the *Old Reliables* were among the finest soldiers in the world. However, as is natural in any large organization—military or civilian—there were some *eight-balls*. At times it was necessary to relieve certain officers and men from command and other important duties. In some cases courts-martial were necessary . . . but that is the normal conduct of war in any outfit.

Realizing that each page devoted to relief of commanders and courts-martial would be of aid to no one except persons with an axe to grind, we have eliminated all reference to such occurrences. It is not the purpose of *Eight Stars to Victory* to crucify anyone who may have lost his head under the strain of combat.

Furthermore, while this is a book of all the organizations which made up the Ninth Infantry Division, it is mostly the story of the platoons and squads of frontline soldiers who did the fighting, the suffering and the dying. Many platoons experienced a complete turnover *eight or more times* during the days of combat, and to them should go the majority of the credit for any success garnered by the Ninth.

* * * *

THE TREMENDOUS task of gathering the maps, photographs and research material for a history of this size—as well as the compiling and writing of the text itself—could not have been accomplished without the helping hand of many persons. Although a list of those who rendered assistance is contained in the supplement of this volume, it would seem well to give particular thanks at this time to that fine group who worked closest with the author and who made possible the completion of *Eight Stars to Victory*.

First of all, we had in charge of our staff two veteran combat leaders without whom there would

have been no book . . . no historian. Lt. General Manton S. Eddy, as chairman of the Ninth Division Association History Committee handled the immense and complicated problems which arose from time to time in a most commendable manner. His keen understanding and unpublicized aid in our long road to the finished volume were an enormous factor in the success of this history. In addition, he carefully read that portion of the volume pertaining to his period of command, so as to insure that an accurate and well-balanced story would be presented. Working with General Eddy was Colonel John G. Van Houten, our immediate superior, who not only performed innumerable services in reference to the history while overseas, but who upon return to the States immediately jumped into the task of overseeing our work. It was largely through his efforts that funds were made available to provide gratis one copy to the next of kin of each Ninth Division soldier killed in action.

Special thanks are due General Omar N. Bradley, who wrote the foreword of this book and the excellent letter which closes Section XII.

The excellent map and artwork, as well as the paper jacket of Staff Sergeant Lawrence E. Reed is his own mirror. Working day and night this soldier produced the *schematic maps* found throughout the pages of this volume. In many other ways Sergeant Reed proved a valuable assistant. Mrs. Hazel G. McGuire—secretary, critic and corrector of spelling—typed over one million words to bring you the 180,000 words contained in this text. Mr. Hans G. Meile did the cover, section initials and supplementary artwork, as well as planning the initial layout. Mrs. Doretha Gray helped get the volume ready for the publisher. These were my *staff*—capable, understanding and hard-working.

The group of experts who checked and rechecked the first drafts for accuracy and balance were all volunteers, who gave freely of their time and effort to implement this work. Mere mention of their names is insufficient reward for jobs well done, and the Ninth Division owes them a debt of gratitude



PREFACE

for this service. The men of the Ninth knew them well:

Major General Louis A. Craig
Major General S. LeRoy Irwin
Major General Donald A. Stroh
Brigadier General Erwin S. Randle
Brigadier General Hammond D. Birks
Brigadier General George W. Smythe
Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey
Lt. Colonel Van H. Bond
Lt. Colonel William C. Westmoreland
Lt. Colonel Frederick C. Feil
Lt. Colonel Randall H. Bryant
Lt. Colonel Peter O. Ward
Major John H. Whitmore
Major Robert Bingham

Division commanders, Major General Horace L. McBride and Brigadier General Jesse A. Ladd, gave their support to this work while the Ninth was yet overseas, as did the various public relations officers and regimental and artillery battalion historians. Thanks are due the Ninth Infantry Division Association, the Historical Division and the Historical Records Section (AGD) of the Department of the Army (Washington, D.C.), the Maryland Military District under Colonel John M. Lentz, Second Army Headquarters, Second Army Signal Section (Camp Holabird, Maryland), the U.S. Army Signal Corps (Washington, D.C.) and the Ohio Military District for being most sympathetic and cooperative. Lt. General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Lt. General Leonard T. Gerow, Major General Robert B. McClure, Major General John T. Lewis and Brigadier General Wayne C. Zimmerman aided greatly in providing the means to solve our many problems.

Hundreds of former members of the Ninth Division wrote letters of information, sent photographs

and personally visited the historian. Their first-hand experiences uncovered a wealth of information. The various history committees which have been constituted along the way did their bit as well. And there were other organizations and individuals who gave the history a boost.

When all this voluminous information was converted into the final draft text, two professors from Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore City Junior College, Colonel Clarence T. De Haven and Dr. Lawrence H. Baker, did a most commendable job of proof-reading the entire book for errors of grammar and spelling.

Finally, at the publication phase itself, Mr. Roy Kautzman of The Heer Printing Company proved to be a superb advisor and friend.

* * * *

AS MENTIONED previously, to write of the Ninth Infantry Division is to be faced with a dilemma. But it is a satisfying job—for few military units have lived as colorful a career; fewer still have been so consistently excellent under all conditions. When one spends two and a half years researching, compiling and writing the story of such a group of men, he is compelled to stop and take notice. As time goes by, the job becomes a *trust* and a *duty* . . . later an *obsession*.

Now that my work has ended, I turn over the story to you. Guard it . . . retell it . . . pass it on. It is timeless and true.

Joseph B. Mittelman

COLUMBUS, OHIO

*When the Hun has seized the rod,
He smites his fellow man and God;
But when the Hun is poor and down,
He's the meekest man in town.*

—From the Dutch, 1580



Section I

The Birth of a Division

The Past in Review



THROUGH of more than three thousand spectators watched the impressive ceremonies that day. It was July 15, 1947, at Fort Dix, New Jersey. In the stands were combat veterans of World War II, their wives, children and friends, as well as many patients from nearby Tilton General Hospital. Lined up on the reviewing field were several high-ranking officers who had distinguished themselves in battle. Farther down the parade grounds, an infantry division was prepared to enter the scene with the usual fanfare and martial music that accompanies a large military ceremony.

There was something that all these people had in common that July afternoon. They were participating in one of those rare moments of postwar American history—the rebirth of an infantry division which had achieved a fighting record equalled by few others. After six months of honored rest, the veteran Ninth Infantry Division was being re-activated.

Behind the twenty-five senior officers who crowded the reviewing stand rose the massed standards, colors and guidons of the famous Ninth. There were those of the 39th, 47th and 60th Combat Teams—all members of the World War II Ninth Division; and there was a new set, belonging to the 365th Infantry Regiment, formerly a unit of the 92nd Infantry Division. These four regiments constituted the reborn *Old Reliables*; and their colors, standards and guidons were resting, for the time being, with a guard of honor from the 327th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Everyone had praise that day for the gallant achievements of the Ninth Division. First Army commander General Courtney H. Hodges spoke of the Division's excellence in battle and Major General Manton S. Eddy took over from there. General

Eddy, former combat commander of the Ninth quoted the battle-honored service records of the units being reactivated. After the reading of each infantry regiment or artillery battalion record was completed, former commanding officers presented organization standards to the new unit commanders.

Finally, it came to the last and most important standard of them all, that of the Ninth itself. General Eddy presented this red and blue emblem to Major General William W. Eagles, former battle commander of the 45th Infantry Division and now the first commanding general of the new Ninth Infantry Division. As his first official act, General Eagles ordered the Division to pass in review.

Behind the striking music of the Division's 75-piece band, the newly reactivated Ninth passed in review, flags waving in the Jersey breeze and participants doing their best to make the occasion a memorable one. Tentatively the new Ninth was to be a training outfit, constantly changing and always full of recruits—but it was to be a crack unit just the same. That was apparent in the faces of the men marching by; it radiated from the reviewing stand and was in the hearts and hopes of former Ninthmen who had come to view the Division they liked so well rejoin the Regular Army.

From the sidelines and from the spectators' stand, these former members of the Ninth gazed intently at the standards and guidons passing by—those were the same emblems of freedom which had led them through North Africa, Sicily, France, Belgium and Germany. And here were their old outfits, too. There was the 39th Infantry—memories of Algiers, the landings in Sicily, Quineville, Octeville, Mortain

There were old-timers who fought in the battles of Europe marching side by side with the youngsters who know little as yet about the uniform, but the spirit of the Ninth seemed to be prevalent everywhere.

—Warren H. Kennet (NEWARK NEWS)

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

and the *Siegfried*. Here came the 47th Combat Team . . . remember them at Safi? Cherbourg? . . . or at Remagen? And the 60th, those *Go-Devils* . . . Port Lyautey, the famous silent march in Sicily, the River Douve, those night attacks, the Schmidt Dam . . . who could forget the 60th? One could not forget that hard-hitting Division Artillery, either. They stopped Rommel at Thala and saved the Allies from a great defeat . . . their heavy firepower made possible the story of the Ninth.

What a story these guidons and standards told . . . and what an amazing saga the regiments and the artillery of the Ninth Infantry Division had lived. Eight battle stars were their lot during World War II: in the first World War the three infantry regiments had earned many additional honors as well. Yes, the pages of history held open a span of thirty years to record the birth and rebirth of the Ninth and its regiments. They were years of ups and downs; of victories and hardships, comradeship and devotion to the love of freedom. In two wars the enemy had been the same, and in both wars the result had been equally catastrophic for the German nation.

Let us turn back the clock to the beginning of it all . . .

* * * *

IT was the time of *Square* divisions, *Springfield* rifles, high-standing collars, wrap-leggins and tin helmets. Mechanized warfare was symbolized by the Parisian Taxi Army—or by the flimsy *Spads* which dared Von Richthofen's *Flying Circus* to battle dog-fight fashion. Quite appropriately, therefore, in those bloody days of frontal attacks and trench warfare, infantry was an important factor. And quite appropriately, the War Department created several more infantry divisions. Some were formed and shipped overseas in time to stem and turn back the Prussian tide of 1918. Others, like the Ninth Infantry Division, were not to see battle until an Austrian paper-hanger, named Adolf Hitler, tried to outdo the Kaiser in conquest and cruelty.

World War I was well upon its way when the War Department authorized the activation of another Regular Army division—the Ninth. It was a sweltering July day of 1918 when the first cadre streamed into Camp Sheridan, Alabama. These

were the regulars who would form the skeleton upon which the new Division would grow. A few days later the Ninth Field Artillery Brigade was born at nearby Camp McClellan, and under the first Division commander, Colonel Charles G. Clark (father of General Mark W. Clark) an intensive combat training program was begun.

All the units making up the original Division were Regular Army, except two infantry regiments—and these obtained their founding personnel from old line outfits. In those days of ankle choker breeches and summer heat, it took just such well-trained men as these to withstand the tortures of training under the overpowering Alabama sun.

When two months of vigorous training had melted into the heat of summer, the Division received its first commanding general, Major General W. A. Holbrook. He assumed command on September 18, 1918, expecting to lead the Division overseas. During late October the Ninth completed its major training and prepared to sail.

But General Holbrook was to be denied the first combat command of the Ninth Division. Before the Ninth had completed arrangements for overseas movement, the whirlwind campaign of the American Expeditionary Force ended. Germany sued for peace and November 11, 1918, was selected as Armistice Day.

Cessation of hostilities also put to an end any further training for the not-too-sad doughboys and artillerymen of the Ninth Division. On New Year's Eve, 1918, the Division began the double process of demobilization and inactivation; by mid-February of 1919 the Ninth Division was but a memory. Its period of active duty had been of too short a duration even to design a shoulder sleeve insignia!

The original Ninth Division was composed of: 17th Infantry Brigade (45th and 67th Infantries, 26th Machine Gun Battalion), 18th Infantry Brigade (46th and 68th Infantries, 27th Machine Gun Battalion), Ninth Field Artillery Brigade (25th and 26th (Light) and 27th (Heavy) Field Artillery, Ninth Trench Mortar Battery), 25th Machine Gun Battalion, 209th Engineers, 209th Field Signal Battalion, Trains (Hq. Train and Military Police Company, Ninth Sanitary Train, Ninth Motor Supply Train, Ninth Ammunition Train) and Division Headquarters.

THE BIRTH OF A DIVISION

* * * *

ALTHOUGH the Ninth had a brief and unexciting activation during World War I, the infantry regiments destined to reform the Division during the second world war saw a great deal of action. The men of the 39th and 47th Infantry Regiments earned a combined total of sixty-six *Distinguished Service Crosses*; the 60th Infantry Regiment produced the soldier whom General Pershing called ". . . the outstanding individual hero of the American Expeditionary Force."

The old *square* division had two infantry brigades, which in turn were made up of two regiments each. As partners of the 7th Infantry Brigade, the 39th and 47th Regiments fought under the banner of the 4th Division. The 60th Infantry gained renown with the 5th Division.

Camp Syracuse, New York, witnessed the birth of the 7th Brigade on June 1, 1917. Fall found the 39th and 47th switching their training area to Pleasant Beach, a summer resort just outside Syracuse. Whatever life of ease was afforded by this locality ended on October 25th, however, when the brigade began movement to Camp Greene, North Carolina. Here, home meant a squad tent floating around in a quagmire.

During early December, the 7th Brigade became part of the 4th Division. New Year's Day passed and 1918 began with renewed training—despite atrocious weather, which necessitated bringing food and other supplies by mule pack train.

Over at another area of Camp Greene was the temporary home of the 60th Regiment, which came into being shortly after the 7th Brigade partners. Such great victories as the *impossible* crossing of the Meuse, and the memorable battle of St. Mihiel, were in the making when the 60th Infantry received its colors on June 11, 1917. Hallowed Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, was the place; and it was altogether fitting that the regiment which produced *America's Greatest Doughboy*, Captain Sam Woodfill, should have its first breath under the shadow of Lincoln's historic speech.

But for the 60th, as for the 39th and 47th Regiments, Camp Greene seemed a long distance from the trenches of France during the first three months

of 1918. Doughboys spent their dollars in Charlotte, cursed high wartime prices and thanked heaven that the mud was drying at last.

Then came the tense day of March 21st. A full-scale German counterattack threatened the entire Allied line; Russian resistance collapsed, then disappeared. Von Hindenburg now was able to throw an unbelievable force of two hundred veteran divisions against the Allies on the Western Front. For the Allies, the situation was grave. American reinforcements were needed urgently and President Wilson quickly ordered every available unit shipped overseas. That meant the 4th and 5th Divisions, and these outfits pitched vigorously into the task of preparation.

* * * *

ONE YEAR, to the day, after America's declaration of war, the 60th Infantry started upon the long journey which was to end in France. Within a few days its heavily-laden soldiers climbed aboard transports at Hoboken, N.J. By May 4th the entire regiment was reassembled at Bar-Sur-Aube, France, and an extremely tough program of overseas conditioning got under way.

Meanwhile, back at Camp Greene, the 4th Division prepared to depart for the battlefronts of the old world. On April 25th, the 39th and 47th Infantries left for Camp Mills, New York; shortly after their arrival the regiments set sail.

Sun-bathed France was reached on May 23rd . . . and not a moment too soon for the unlucky doughboys who were jam-packed into Italian cattle boats. Wide-eyed soldiers of the 47th landed at Brest, with two companies of the 39th attached: Bordeaux was the debarkation point for the latter regiment. Broadway's bright lights, Chicago's Loop, Texas' longhorns, San Francisco's Golden Gate and muddy Camp Greene seemed far away, indeed.

Early June was spent under the tutelage of battle-hardened instructors of the British 16th Infantry Division at Samar. Training with the French followed—six miles behind the front lines. Now the 39th was, at last, able to fire its rifles. In the haste to ship divisions overseas, the regiment had been deprived of any target practice. Such was the strange war of 1918—a vast majority of men in the

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

39th Infantry had been sent to within hearing range of the battlefield without having fired a shot in their lives!

At this time, Germany had just two knockout punches left in her bag of tricks. The first was a masterful drive, which began on May 27th. When the legions of Crown Prince Wilhelm began this ambitious thrust, it was a signal for all *Yanks* to strip for action and head for the front. By-passing Paris, the 39th and 47th traveled in those well-known rail chariots of two wars, the *40 and 8's*, to the north of the French capital, detained and began marching to their destination of Chateau-Thierry, under the path of an occasional German shell.

Next day, to the south of St. Die, men of the 60th Infantry went on the line for the first time. Their entry into combat was planned to occur in a "quiet sector." On June 18th the Germans struck at the 2nd Battalion with liquid fire and gas, and thus occurred the first recorded frontline combat for any unit of the later reactivated Ninth Infantry Division.

The German drive which began on May 27th was halted and a lull reigned along the trench-pocked front. Then on July 14th—France's *Fourth of July*—the Crown Prince launched the enemy's last great offensive . . . only to be stopped short of his goal once again. Marshal Foch, the supreme Allied commander now rushed up extra divisions for his long-awaited counter-offensive, and the Germans issued a retreat order to their troops over the Marne.

* * * *

ON July 18th the Aisne-Marne Offensive began and the fortunes of war swung in favor of the Allies. Part of the striking power which sparked this drive was furnished by fresh American troops—among which were those of the 39th Infantry. What happened to the regiment is so typical of combat that it might seem well to linger awhile on this action:

Slightly to the north of the River Ourcq are the villages of Troisnes and Faverolles. Here also is the Savieres, a deep stream of slight breadth. Its water rests upon a swampy, sticky mud—not unlike America's Mississippi. From this ancient battleground the 39th Infantry was destined to have its entry into combat.

On July 20, 1918, the 39th Infantry Regiment received the French *Croix-de-Guerre with Gold Star*, for its spectacular capture of Cresnes Wood and Noroy. Its baptism of fire, to quote the French citation, ". . . gave proof . . . of admirable bravery." This is the first decoration won by any unit of the later reconstituted Ninth Infantry Division, and gained for the regiment the nickname of *The Fighting Falcons*.

It was July 17th . . . a pitch-black night of living nightmare. To complete the relief of the French 11th Infantry, the 39th had to make its way over a shell-gutted road which was under constant artillery fire. Warm summer rain added to the general discomfort of the situation. Stumbling forward, soldiers dodged shells, slid into craters and were forced to hang onto the pack of the man in front—so as not to become lost.

Now the regiment was on line. Men flopped into trenches and tried to grab some much-desired sleep; officers checked for the next move. It was against an objective directly to the front, a shell-cropped thicket of woods perched upon a hill. To reach this area (Cresnes Wood) the 39th needed to cross the difficult River Savieres. Germans thought this operation well nigh impossible and had most of their fortifications and gunpower facing in other directions.

The battle of indoctrination began at 4:30 A.M. with all the death that twenty-three battalions of French artillery could rain down upon the Germans. In retaliation, enemy field pieces blazed away at the Americans. Men ducked instinctively; a nervous lump of expectancy throbbed in their chests and stomachs. They were next! A long wait . . . and then the 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry went forward into battle at 8 A.M.

Mud dripping from their knees, the doughboys hesitated momentarily at the north bank of the Savieres. Anxious minutes passed while wooden poles were brought up and flung across the slimy stream. Then slippery shoes negotiated these hastily-devised bridges and the 39th Infantry was across, ready to surprise the *Hun*!

Like the rising waters of a spring flood, footsloggers oozed up the rugged terrain. The enemy

THE BIRTH OF A DIVISION

had expected little trouble from his rear, consequently this unorthodox assault proved too much for the Germans in Cresnes Wood. Machine-gun crews, while offering some resistance, were overwhelmed by this surprise sweep through the swamp—as the Americans mopped up position after position. When the 2nd and 3rd Battalions reached the River Ourcq, the 1st was busily engaged in counting noses of its more than one hundred prisoners, as well as the regiment's first captured machine guns and souvenirs.

The battle continued, as the regiment pushed beyond the rim of Noroy village and halted for the night. At four the following morning, the 39th launched an assault against the powerful German positions to their front. Without flank protection or artillery support, the 3rd Battalion advanced 300 yards over open terrain in the face of enemy machine-gun and point-blank artillery fire to capture the main enemy strongpoint.

At the same time, the 1st Battalion was driving on the typically French hamlet of Chouy. On its flank was the 2nd Battalion, trying desperately to advance through a combination of swamp and closely-knit woods, where men found it difficult to keep up the pace, let alone fight.

Unknown to the 39th Infantry, the *zero hour* for the morning assault had been moved up to 5:30 A.M. A tremendous preparation of artillery was scheduled to precede the attack—over the very ground upon which the regiment was advancing. When this information was received it was too late to stop the concentration and within minutes, French 75 shells intended for the enemy fell among the Americans. The 39th was hit badly from all sides.

This was a time when courage was all that could hold together an organization and the 39th was superb. It outdistanced the French artillery to its rear, captured the chattering German machine guns to its front, and overran blazing Chouy. A few hours later the regiment was relieved and returned to reserve. As the 39th Infantry trudged wearily to the rear, many men thought of the strange experiences just encountered. Some part of their insides had changed—they never again would be the same.

* * * *

ROUGH times were in store for the footsloggers of the 47th Infantry on July 28th. They were moving up to relieve two battalions of the hard-pressed 42nd (*Rainbow*) Division at Sergy. In one of the most bloody battles of the war, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were to suffer over 500 casualties during three days of combat. Considering that only 1,200 men actually engaged the enemy, this was a tremendous loss. But the first encounter of the 47th with the Germans was a memorable success. Sergy, strategic town of the Ourcq Valley, returned to Allied possession and the 4th (Prussian) Guards Division was mauled beyond recognition.

It was on July 28th that the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 47th Infantry reached the high ground above Sergy. During the following day, these units battled forward against increasing opposition. The 3rd cracked the German lines and began entering Sergy. Fighting *Indian style*, the Americans infiltrated in small groups and soon were in possession of that town. Then the enemy recovered from his surprise, and a terrific onslaught of artillery and machine-gun fire was thrown at the 3rd Battalion.

Repeated counterattacks were repulsed by the now isolated battalion. Ammunition and food supplies were running low; wounded and dying were everywhere—both American and German. Medics ran a gauntlet of fire to evacuate the first casualties, then set up an aid station inside Sergy. Losses mounted as mustard gas and enemy air attacks rained down upon the stubborn doughboys.

By the 30th, the battalion was using German guns and ammunition, throwing captured *potato-masher* grenades. Enemy dead were piled high around the town. A final murderous artillery barrage all but destroyed Sergy on July 31st, after which wave after wave of the enemy advanced to take the town at all costs. Suddenly to the rear of the 3rd Battalion came new blood, a machine gun company from the 42nd Division. They opened fire in time to assist the besieged battalion. This new force was too much for the Germans, who admitting defeat, withdrew. Limping, gassed and wounded, the 3rd Battalion was relieved in Sergy; it had shrunk to the size of a line company!

On August 1st the Germans began to retreat through the mud toward the Vesle River, covered by

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY



THE 39th DIGS IN AT FRESNES (July 1918)

delaying machine-gun crews and followed closely by the 39th and 47th Infantries. At the Vesle the enemy had a natural barrier. It was Cresnes Wood all over again; only this time, machine guns and artillery covered every possible avenue of approach. Patrols of the 39th Infantry probed across the Vesle near Bazoches on August 4th . . . the first Allied troops over that river. When the regiment attempted to cross in strength on the morning of August 5th, however, it met an inferno of lead. After many costly tries, only 38 men were put across by the 39th and a temporary halt was called to the operation.

The 47th Infantry relieved the 39th and early on August 7th the 2nd Battalion led over the Vesle, followed by the 3rd. By swimming, crossing on fallen logs and other ingenious methods, 350 men managed to battle their way to the far shore. Germans counterattacked, but the infantrymen brushed

aside the overwhelming odds and by the 8th were in the town of Bazoches.

During the river crossing, most of the regiment's gas masks had been ruined and the foe was firing thousands of gas shells. The 47th was holding the bridgehead alone and taking a severe beating . . . it was forced to withdraw or face annihilation. Slowly the doughboys worked their way back across the river, leaving over 100 dead lying in the wake of their retreat. The Germans were too strong on the Vesle; a stable front had halted the Allied advance, of which the farthest troops forward had been the 47th Infantry.

* * * *

TWO main offensives remained before the American Expeditionary Forces could say *finis* to the war. Both were All-American drives, executed as such at the insistence of General Pershing. The first was the St. Mihiel Offensive, which marked the be-

THE BIRTH OF A DIVISION

ginning of the United States Army as an entity in France: the second and more important was the immortal Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the American push which cracked the German war machine and ended the war.

For the 39th and 47th Infantries, the period from September 12th to October 12th meant a continuation of the hardest type of fighting. It meant the battle for *Dead Man's Hill*, where the brigade partners plodded through swamps to capture 1,700 prisoners, over 40 artillery pieces and countless numbers of trench mortars and machine guns. It meant rain and mud, poison gas, wet clothing and aching feet. Barbed wire, water-filled holes for beds and nights under shellfire added to the discomfort of battle.

During October 12, 1918, however, the 4th Division was relieved by the 5th Division along the Meuse. Days later the 39th and 47th Infantries marched back to the Second Army area, to train, rest and recuperate. Their good fortune was even better than most realized, for the brigade's part in the great war was over.

Veteran fotsloggers hiked back to the rear, lean and filthy with the mud and sweat of combat. Peaceful terrain and nights of sleep—interrupted only by memories—seemed too good to be true. Now the destructive sounds of war faded into the distance, as weary feet tramped out a steady cadence . . . thump, thump, thump . . . down the road and out of sight.

* * * *

THE first decisive German defeat at the hands of the AEF began on September 12th. Three days later the 60th Infantry was on line, advancing against heavy odds. There followed a brief period of rest and on September 25th, the 1st Battalion was dispatched to aid the French, north of Pont-a-Mousson. Then came Meuse-Argonne, the offensive designed to crack a powerful German wall of final defense which had been four years in preparation.

Columbus Day found the 60th Infantry reconnoitering Cunel, a valley town astride an important road junction just south of Bois-de-la-Pultiere. A wooded knoll of this forest jutted into Cunel, and here was an enemy strongpoint. In addition American forces had to cross an open slope to enter the town.

Doughboys had gone without sleep over 72 hours by the morning of October 14th; many had been in action and under constant shelling. Yet the fighting continued until some were ready to drop of exhaustion.

At 6:30 A.M., the 60th assaulted Bois-de-la-Pultiere. It was necessary to seize Cunel prior to taking the woods and Companies *B* and *C* charged over the open terrain to capture that town. They lost almost half their men but kept on advancing. The remnant companies worked through the town and into the woods, where they met a withering stream of machine-gun fire. The Germans had caught the American flank.

Battling forward through Bois-de-la-Pultiere, the 60th found the enemy everywhere. Mud and dense thickets made the going tough; disorganization was a natural consequence. By October 15th the regiment was chopped to pieces and desperately in need of sleep. Nonetheless, it started a 7:30 A.M. attack which led from Bois-de-la-Pultiere through Bois-de-Rappes, a forest death trap. Rugged fighting ensued, but in its delirium of battle the regiment kept going until the 16th, when welcome relief arrived. At that time a tired and battered 60th Infantry accepted 600 replacements and could have used more.

* * * *

IF German soldiers were astounded by the unusual military tactics of the American infantryman, they were to be surprised even further by his daring ingenuity. During the early hours of November 5th, the 60th Infantry effected the *impossible* crossing of the River Meuse. This action was regarded by contemporary military experts as indicative of the

It was at Cunel and Bois-de-la-Pultiere that Captain Sam Woodfill earned his *Congressional Medal of Honor*. The advance had stalled, halted by a series of German machine-gun nests. Captain Woodfill, commanding Company *M* of the 60th Infantry, decided to do something about this condition. He grabbed a special sharpshooter's rifle and made his way forward. One-by-one, the intrepid captain destroyed the machine-gun nests. When he had finished, 19 Germans lay dead by their weapons, the advance was stalled no longer.

In 1920, when Sam Woodfill was at the ceremony for the *Unknown Soldier*, General Pershing referred to the gallant captain as "America's greatest doughboy."

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY



skill possessed by American fighting men. General Pershing referred to it as “. . . one of the most brilliant feats in the history of the American Army in France.” Whereas no single unit has ever won a modern war, the crossing of the Meuse under a devastating fire did convince the enemy that further resistance was futile.

Permanent bridges along the Meuse had been destroyed by the Germans during their retreat. When the 2nd Battalion approached its boat launching sites on November 4th, enemy artillery began to destroy all equipment. Boats would start for the far shore, only to be cut to ribbons by the accurate German batteries. Since the footsloggers were on flat land and in the open, men dropped on all sides. Flesh and blood could stand no more and the 2nd Battalion pulled back.

Leap-frogging over the 2nd Battalion, the 3rd Battalion moved into position for the river assault. On November 5th at 2 A.M., Company *I* followed

Captain E. C. Allworth over in the first successful attempt. This unit was reinforced by the remainder of the 3rd Battalion in successive waves . . . the first Allied troops over the Meuse. (For this daring action, Captain Allworth received the *Congressional Medal of Honor* and Company *I* was cited by the U.S. Army.)

Against greatly superior odds, the 60th Infantry drove back a dumbfounded enemy. Up the cliffs and through the bridgehead poured the regiment. By repeated acts of bravery and excellent teamwork, the doughboys cut a nine-mile path over ridges, mountains, valleys, hamlets and woods toward ghostly Foret-de-Woevre. Mud, rain, rugged terrain, fatigue and a ferocious enemy defense failed to halt the American drive.

Word was received that the Kaiser had abdicated and fled to Holland. The tremendous struggle was nearing an end. On November 10th just after 1 A.M., the 60th Infantry began its last assault of the war—through the Foret-de-Woevre, an “impenetrable everglade of swamps, wood and undergrowth, cut by frequent muddy trails and roads.” Roads to the rear were jammed with traffic; heavy artillery impeded the 60th’s advance, but even in the jungle of the Woevre Forest, signs of victory were beginning to bear fruit.

Mile-after-mile the Germans retreated, leaving their soup kitchens in the midst of meal preparation; their weapons and supplies lay nearby. Following at close heel was the persistent 60th Infantry, chopping through brush and briar—giving the enemy little respite. Germany later would claim that the *home-front* lost the war, but the men of the Woevre knew otherwise.

Now it was the morning of November 11, 1918. The 60th Infantry Regiment was preparing to attack the heights of Juvigny when the joyous news of *Armistice* flashed across the front. Rifle fire stopped and the whining shells dropped no more. A deathly silence penetrated the air. It was over . . . no more killing . . . no more dying . . . peace!

The signing of an armistice meant many things to many people. Allied statesmen declared the war literally had ended: Prussian career militarists looked upon the peace as a lull between battles. They wanted time to rebuild and prepare for another war.

THE BIRTH OF A DIVISION

Doughboys looked for immediate passage home, and mothers wept tears of joy. In a German military hospital lay an Austrian named Adolf Hitler; his war was just beginning!

* * * *

YET America had not finished with Germany. Before the war actually could end, a treaty of peace was necessary. The armistice was only for an initial period of thirty days; moreover, victors must occupy and no exception was to be made of Germany. The 39th and 47th Infantries were moved to the Moselle valley while troops of the 60th Infantry took over a portion of the Luxembourg border as their zone.

In December, the 4th Division was sent to guard the Rhine River. First of all American units to reach the famous waterway was the 39th Infantry Regiment, and soon both the 47th and 39th Infantries were guarding the Ludendorff Railway Bridge at Remagen. Paradoxically, it was here during the spring of 1945, that the modern versions of these regiments were to expand the Remagen Bridgehead.

For a while Germany refused to sign the terms of peace. Troops were placed on a war footing and General Pershing issued an ultimatum. Then the Germans decided to sign and occupation ended for the 39th, 47th and 60th Infantries. During the summer of 1919, the regiments sailed home.

OCCUPYING GERMANY (DECEMBER 1918)



EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

Under the National Defense Act of 1920, the United States Army was cut in size and on September 21, 1921, the future regiments of the Ninth Infantry Division were inactivated. In terminating their World War I careers, the trio could be proud of the part they had played in the victory. The 39th and 47th Infantries counted battle streamers for Aisne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, Lorraine, St. Mihiel and Champagne. There were forty-four *Distinguished Service Crosses* awarded to men of the 47th; the 39th had won the French *Croix-de-Guerre with Gold Star*. Of the 5,330 officers and men who had gone into battle with the 47th Infantry 2,747 were casualties. As for the fighting men of the 60th Infantry, they could boast of streamers for St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Alsace and Lorraine. Two

Congressional Medal of Honor winners came from their ranks and their *Company I* was cited for one of the outstanding river crossings of modern times.

* * * *

MONTHS rolled by and in 1923 the Ninth Infantry Division was placed on active reserve. But few people then thought that the Ninth would participate in a second war against German aggression. For those were times of *square* divisions, wrap-leggins, campaign hats and *Model-T Fords*. America had fought the *war to end all wars*, Germany was licked. Everyone knew that. How could the *Fatherland* ever hope to rise again? That same question was being asked in Germany . . . and an answer was found!



THE OCTOFOIL

SHOULDER sleeve insignia became official for all units after the first world war and in 1923, the Ninth Infantry Division—with War Department approval—adopted the *Octofoil* as its *patch*. The selection was a unique one, as the design dated back to the 15th Century, when it was customary for each son to have an individual mark of distinction.

Perhaps *Octo*, meaning eight, is a bit confusing to many when speaking of the Ninth Division. But in foiling there are eight foils (positions) and heraldic rules gave the *Octofoil* to the ninth son, since

it was symbolic of his being surrounded by eight brothers; which is an explanation of why this eight-petaled insignia is correct for the Ninth Regular Army Division.

The design chosen for the Ninth consists of a red quatre-foil atop a blue quatrefoil, with a white center. The red stands for the artillery, the blue for the infantry and the white denotes the color of numerals found on division flags. Surrounding the Octofoil is a rim of olive drab—symbolic as nothing else of the U.S. Army.

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Section II

Recalled To Arms

1940-1942



LITZKRIEG and broken treaties were Germany's answer to the war-weary world of the 1930's. Burdened with domestic troubles and disarmament, the Allies of World War I hopelessly stood by, watching aggression on the march. For them, *peace at any price* was

preferable to war.

Nazi Germany and her Axis friends took full advantage of that preference. Dictator Adolf Hitler soon possessed a mechanized army and a modern air force which converted the defeated German nation of 1918 into the acknowledged military power of Europe. Benito Mussolini showed his true colors by invading Ethiopia. World-defiant Japan was beginning its long struggle to save *China from the Chinese*. With one of the world's largest navies and a veteran army of several million troops, emperor-worshipping Japanese were the dominant power in the Far East. The stage was set for an explosion. It came in 1939, just twenty-one years after *the war to end all wars*.

Bluff and power diplomacy had placed Austria and Czechoslovakia under the heel of Germany—without a shot being fired. To gain time for the construction of defenses, Soviet Russia signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. Hitler was ready at last to strike with hot steel and death.

On the historic morning of September 1, 1939, black German boots went on the march. Ill-prepared Poland saw her cities devastated, her sons and daughters slaughtered by the thousands. England and France declared war on Germany on September 3rd, but this was a hollow gesture. By the end of the month resistance in Poland was at an end. Even the Nazis could not have foreseen the complete weakness of the Allies, who offered little help to beleaguered Poland—save sympathy.

With the opening of war in Europe, the United States Army tried desperately to obtain appropria-

tions for modernization and increased manpower. Only 174,000 men (including the Air Force) were on active duty in the outmoded American Army. Small countries, like Roumania and Belgium, could boast of larger armies than that of the United States. Behind two oceans and a wall of isolationism the American people had felt secure. Yet while *potentially* great in strength, in *actual* arms and men the United States was but a third-rate power.

The fall of France and the British evacuation at Dunkirk, during the late spring of 1940, served to awaken the people of America. War was knocking at their door with loud thumps. Congress passed a law raising the authorized strength of the Army to 375,000. Under the provisions of this act the War Department called up the last of its Regular Army divisions, the Ninth, on July 20, 1940. It wasn't to be an old style *square* division, but one of the new streamlined *triangular* divisions. Thus, with the reactivation of the Ninth Infantry Division on August 1, 1940, was born a new kind of army.

When the cadre for the Ninth Infantry Division arrived at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, everyone envisioned a well-appointed camp. Certainly the largest artillery post in the world would have permanent barracks and modern conveniences. But the founders of the Ninth were in for a rude shock.

The reactivated Ninth Infantry Division was composed originally of the 39th, 47th and 60th Infantry Regiments, 26th and 34th Field Artillery Regiments, 15th Engineer (Combat) Battalion, Division Headquarters, Headquarters and Military Police Company, Ninth Signal Company, Ninth Reconnaissance Troop, Ninth Quartermaster Battalion (later company) and Ninth Medical Battalion. Several weeks later, the artillery regiments were reorganized. They became the 26th, 34th, 60th and 84th Field Artillery Battalions and Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Ninth Division Artillery. The veteran 6th Field Artillery Band was redesignated the Ninth Division Artillery Band. Addition of the 709th Ordnance Company completed the Division's permanently assigned units.

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While there *were* permanent buildings to house a normal complement of 4,000 officers and men, the new Ninth Division was to begin life in a tent city. Barracks were promised in the immediate future. However, Federal laws required certain bidding procedures prior to construction. Thus the soldiers were greeted by a desolate, insect-infested tract of sand. Brush and sand pines were the only permanent fixtures—and these had to be removed to make way for pyramidal tents.

The first men to arrive for the Ninth were 93 Regular Army men from the 2nd Infantry Regiment at Camp Custer, Michigan. Sergeant John J. Waldrop was the number one registrant, checking in at 6 A.M. on the morning of August 1st. Shortly afterward, Sergeants Raymond Duckworth and Ralph Bogle (later Captain) followed Waldrop into the future home of the Ninth.

By August 2nd all 93 men from Custer were in the area, and the 39th Infantry Regiment was formed. As the days passed, more and more cadremen arrived. Within three weeks the soldiers numbered 1,881 and hailed from 24 states . . . this group formed the framework upon which the remaining units of the Division were built.

The immediate task at hand was to swing axes on the stands of pine, and clear space for erecting an elaborate tent city. There were many hardships to overcome. Everything, from roads to sanitary facilities had to be built by the new Division. A man had to feel mighty dirty to take a shower, too. The nearest showers were three walking miles distant, at a neighboring CCC camp. In the Division area no hot water was available; it would not be until November.

Tents were erected in orderly rows, only to be burned down at the average rate of one per day. Usually, the fires broke out during the night and men were routed from hard-earned slumbers to battle a raging inferno of canvas and wood. In spite of evidence to the contrary, one private claims to this day that the fires were officially planned to keep the men alert.

* * * *

THE Ninth's first commander at Fort Bragg was Colonel Charles B. Elliot. Here was a rough and ready campaigner with forty years of service.

He had risen through the ranks from private and could wear the *D.S.C.*, *Silver Star*, *Purple Heart* and *French Legion of Honor*. Under his initial supervision the Division grew, and the area became a real home under canvas.

Five weeks of organizing and building showed great results. But it was hard, dirty work. Without ample tools and equipment, and facing a thankless job, men of the Ninth Division tackled nature. Sweat and labor cleared trees and brush, built roads, set up the tent city, constructed latrines and bath-houses. Some companies even adorned their tents with name-plates and house-numbers.

As the manual duties of the founders dwindled, they were joined by thousands of raw recruits . . . all volunteers. Some of the new men had no uniforms, no records and no inoculations. Many rookies had to be drilled in civilian clothes. Upon receiving these new men, the old-timers forgot their own problems; there was a Division to build!

Soon the troops had their own 12-page newspaper, movies, athletics and a rustic type of army town—complete with streets and walks. Even swings were provided for those desiring such amusement, although rain frequently intervened in most outdoor pleasure.

The Divisional area was several miles south of the main post, off Fort Bragg Road. This main post always had been considered an excellent assignment for Regular Army officers and non-coms. Usually 4,000 to 5,000 soldiers manned this typically southern post, which was named for a Confederate general.

Fayetteville, nearby town of 18,000, was both picturesque and old . . . and was populated with the descendants of Scotch pioneers. Without the national emergency Fayetteville might have remained simple and native. Unfortunately the successful drive of Hitler's legions through Europe had great repercussions.

Adolf Hitler was changing many things, including the appearance of Fort Bragg. Hewn out of the scrub oak and sandy fields of the largest of artillery posts, was to be a cantonment destined to hold 67,000 men in uniform. A great and costly project of building had begun. It turned out to be something so enormous that it upset the economy of Fayette-

RECALLED TO ARMS

ville, Raleigh and a fifty-mile area surrounding Fort Bragg.

As soon as contracts were approved, mass-production building was given a go-ahead signal. The Army wanted to have its barracks completed before winter's cold set in. This called for rapidity and thousands of workmen. Before long the crews of carpenters and electricians had multiplied so greatly that soldiers wryly remarked that there were more construction men than soldiers at Fort Bragg!

* * * *

WITHIN a short period over 9,000 men had reported to the new Division. The 15th Engineers had constructed roads and made clearings for training. Artillery and rifle ranges were made ready, and recruits commenced learning the finer points of actual firing. Sharing of minor hardships had welded the men closer—a winning team was in formation.

Tragedy, however, was to strike the Division early. On September 13, 1940, Brigadier General Francis W. Honeycutt arrived from Fort Stotsenburg, Philippine Islands, to become the reactivated Ninth's first commanding general. With this change Colonel Elliot became Division chief of staff. Seven days after assuming command, General Honeycutt was killed in an airplane accident near Woodbine, Georgia. He was remembered in the tradition of the Army. The first memorial field of the new Division was named in his honor, as was Honeycutt Place in Fayetteville, a housing project for non-commissioned officers and their families.

After the untimely passing of its first general, the Ninth was placed under the leadership of Brigadier General Rene E. DeRussey Hoyle, who had arrived to command the Division Artillery.

It was in September, too, that the worst electrical storm in modern Carolina history hit Fort Bragg. Lightning struck and thunder roared. The tent city was beaten by wind and incessant rain, and a miniature flood covered the roads. Fury of the storm had disrupted the lighting system . . . the misery of wet clothes and personal belongings was widespread. Here was certainly a test of the morale and spirit of the Ninth Infantry Division.

But the men of the Division were more than equal to the catastrophe. During the black of night they



GENERAL HONEYCUTT

sloshed through puddles of water to their canteens. Under the light of candles they gathered in groups and sang. Some had guitars to spark their songs, others just sang. They could have huddled inside their wet pyramidals and counted their sorrows, but these soldiers mastered an unpleasant situation. "At least no one will have to walk three miles for *these* showers," laughed many.

That spirit never left the Ninth, fortunately. Out of the sweat, midnight lamp-burning, initiative and continuous training of a handful grew a mighty Division. The reservists and five-week trainees became more expert. The regulars became superb.

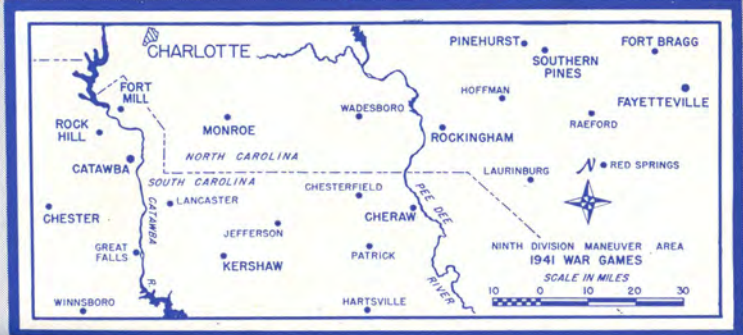
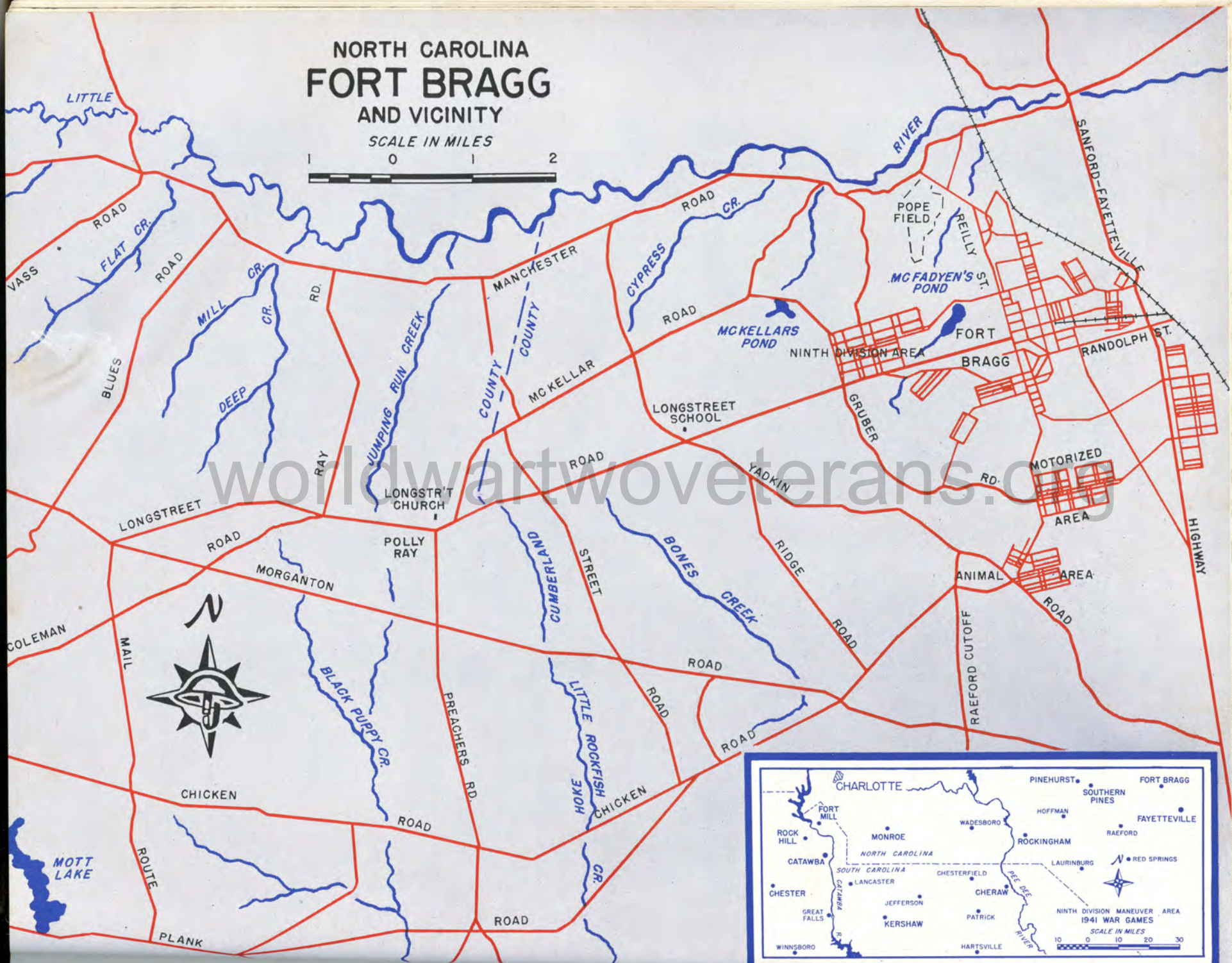
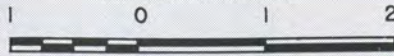
October passed, and by November the Division began to prepare for eventual movement into more permanent quarters. Hopes were high that this would be soon. The cutting winter wind and the freezing mornings made *reveille* a tragic thought. Before the Ninth was to move into its new area, however, many things were to happen.

* * * *

COMMANDING officers changed like the time of day during the first months of reactivation. At first captains commanded regiments, then majors

NORTH CAROLINA FORT BRAGG AND VICINITY

SCALE IN MILES



RECALLED TO ARMS

and finally lieutenant colonels. The latter usually were promoted to full colonel; some attained the rank of general officer.

Among the real soldiers who influenced the course of the Ninth Division was Colonel (Major General) Frank C. Mahin. As a lieutenant colonel he succeeded Major Esden to the command of the 60th Infantry Regiment, on September 2, 1940. Colonel Mahin was one of the first *immortals* of the Ninth, respected and admired by both the men and officers.

During the first World War, he was badly wounded and gassed. For fourteen months, he had lain in a base hospital. The terrific slaughter of inexperienced soldiers stuck in his memory, and Colonel Mahin was determined that the men of the 60th Infantry would not suffer through ignorance. He pioneered the theory of firing weapons during the first week of training. By knowing immediately the feel and construction of a rifle, a soldier would have a much better chance of living.

Colonel Mahin's ideas spread. On Sunday morning, November 10, 1940, an article by the local military correspondent of the *Raleigh News and Observer* appeared. It was captioned, "They're Streamlining Training at Fort Bragg." The story told of Private Stanley August Lybek, a former Wisconsin tractor driver who was being transformed into a soldier in rapid fashion. His training sergeant was the famous E. F. Groves, whose handling of recruits made him both a well-known instructor and a first sergeant.

Lybek was one of the new Ninth Division recruits clad in sweat-covered blue denim fatigues and learning the rudiments of military life. Whereas the Army once had supported a theory that it would take three years to produce a fighting man, it was now necessary to accomplish the same results in one year.

The War Department knew that the peace of America was likely to explode at any minute. It had been trying to obtain some sort of Selective Service Act to augment the Regular Army and National Guard with one year trainees. Voluntary enlistments were so irregular and slow that such a law seemed the only solution.

Then Germany began the air Battle of Britain. No one knew how long that island kingdom could

withstand a full-scale *Luftwaffe* assault, and the Atlantic Ocean suddenly looked much smaller. Although centuries of antagonism toward peacetime conscription stood in the way, Congress finally passed the first Selective Service Act during the fall of 1940. It provided for an Army of the United States to consist of 500,000 men in the Regular Army—federalizing a National Guard of 270,000 and selecting 630,000 young Americans for one year of training.

There was only one way to train this vast new army: split the experts and spread them throughout the United States. On November 13, 1940, the War Department announced its plans for carrying out the new law. Camps and reception centers were named and the famous fishbowl drawing was held. A greeting from the President followed:

Having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the land or naval forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service therein.

The wisdom of the draft was proved during the year that followed. Most of America's armies have been raised *after* an enemy had struck. Sometimes, as in World War I, the United States was almost defeated before it could train and ship a large enough army to the field. For once the American Army was to be fairly large in time of peace.

* * * *

DURING early November, the Ninth greeted the man who was a symbol of the changed Army. He led the Division as he would a football team until it was acclaimed second to none. Under his direction Fort Bragg was the first American Army camp to have super-highways. Rules and regulations were forgotten temporarily to allow for speedy construction of service clubs, theaters and barracks . . . Fort Bragg became the model military camp of the United States.

The leader was Major General (General) Jacob Louk Devers, who joined the post as both commanding general of the Ninth and of Fort Bragg. At 53 he was the youngest major general in the U.S. Army. President Franklin D. Roosevelt personally

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had chosen him to find bases for the United States in the highly-publicized *Fifty Destroyer-Base Exchange* with England.

General Devers was a highly successful but unorthodox commander. His youthful complexion and physique belied his age. The word *impossible* was not in his vocabulary . . . cutting of *red tape* was encouraged, as was the unusual.

One day that marks the beginning of the Ninth as a top-flight division, was the Saturday of its first Divisional review. Colonel Mahin had assembled the marchers on November 16, 1940. This was the first time General Devers had seen the Division as a whole. Moreover, it was the first time that any of the newly activated divisions of the expanding Army had held a formal review.

When the commanding general arrived upon the field he found an extremely cold day. A 30-mile-an-hour wind whipped across the clearing. The *old man* was mighty glad to be wearing his overcoat. But as he looked down the lines of GIs he saw old uniforms. Some were made for the CCC; others were model 1917's; few fit their wearers. Most of the soldiers were in their shirtsleeves, as blouses (coats) and overcoats were unavailable. When General Devers saw the Division wearing such inadequate clothing he was amazed. Off went his overcoat, he flung it to one side. If the men could make the parade in their shirtsleeves so could their general. For one hour and a half he stood in the cold, reviewing the troops.

The legends of the general who wore breeches and boots began. Another *immortal* was added to a growing list by men who could sense a real leader. But their commander was not finished; the troops had been living in tents without a vestige of hot water. In his first speech before 9,000 shivering soldiers General Devers said:

"You men have put on a good show. You look like soldiers. This is a fine division and it will be a great division. I've been down through your area in the two days I've been here and there is one thing I want to tell you. Next Saturday night you can have a hot bath. There will be heaters for water down there in your bathhouses. I don't know where I'll get them, but you will have a hot bath."

GENERAL DEVERS —▶



RECALLED TO ARMS

Sure enough, there were hot baths on Saturday! It was the first touch of hot water for some men in over three months. Probably several rules had been broken to get those boilers down to the bathhouses, but the general had taken care of his men.

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WARTIME'S financial boom now had hit the Fort Bragg area. Carpenters, painters and electricians were averaging one dollar an hour. The bus fare (round trip) to Fayetteville was forty cents, and to a private drawing twenty-one dollars monthly, that was quite a sum. Food prices rose, and small shops mushroomed to reap the rich harvest following a government payday. A steady influx of workers crowded into the small towns surrounding the camp. When the building program at Fort Bragg was completed, the post numbered third-largest among the communities of North Carolina.

Married soldiers found it almost impossible to rent a room, apartment or house off the post. It was hard for men living in the tented area to make 6:30 A.M. formations, but it was even harder on non-coms and officers who had to drive up to fifty miles for the same formation. These commuters lived wherever they could, at Pinehurst, Southern Pines and within a fifty-mile radius of Fort Bragg. . . . *the Ninth Division will move tomorrow marching the five miles that separate the sprawling tented area and the southeast tip of the reservation to the newly-completed division barracks, and so become not only the first of the expanding Army's new divisions to appear in a formal review but also the first to move into permanent barracks.*

—*Raleigh News and Observer.*

Weather had held up the Division's moving on December 15th. That night, however, fires were lit in barrack furnaces, and cook stoves in the mess halls were warmed. Construction was completed. As the men began arriving the following day, they beamed happy glances at the superb change in their existence. The cold of December had made tent-life uncomfortable.

The movement was not completed immediately; but soon the entire Division was situated in its new four-million-dollar cantonment area, two miles southwest of the main post on Ninth Division and Long-

street roads. Hot baths, real shelter and glass windows seemed too good to be true. There were showers and heat—and little chance that water would inundate one's bed during the night.

Being shifted into more suitable quarters was not the only Christmas present for the men of the Ninth. Holiday furloughs were granted to those who could be spared from duty, and those who remained at Fort Bragg were able to feast themselves upon a fine Yuletide dinner.

Few of the soldiers who ushered in the New Year of 1941 thought of war. January meant the return of training, lectures, calisthenics and other *tortures*. Back, too, was that old bogey of the military world, *KP*. GIs at Fort Bragg sorrowfully nicknamed the chore *Keep Peeling*.

* * * *

ON January 3rd General Devers placed the camp on a wartime footing. Wednesday afternoon no longer meant time off, as a 44-hour training program had to get under way. Social functions were limited to weekends only; however, parades and reviews for visiting persons of importance continued. Units of the Ninth participated in the inaugural parade of North Carolina's new Governor; and Ambassador Josephus Daniels, United States envoy to Mexico, visited the Division.

Women started *joining* the Division about this time. Mrs. Emma J. Foster, of Mt. Airy, was appointed senior hostess for the Ninth Division Service Club, guest house and library. She was assisted by Miss Eleanor Barr, of Greenville, Mrs. Dorothy McFarland, of High Point, and Mrs. R. E. Williams, of Clinton. These ladies were selected from amongst 700 applicants. With the staffing of extra facilities, life was a bit more pleasant for GIs spending an evening in camp.

The Ninth Division had approximately 9,681 officers and men in the cantonment area. Construction had been completed in 109 days at a cost of \$4,419,018.00. Originally planned for 8,000 men, the space finally was increased to hold 14,000. The Ninth Division area consisted of 586 buildings, including 253 *sixty-three man* barracks, 80 mess halls, 80 company administration buildings, 11 infirmaries, 10 post exchanges, 3 theaters, 2 fire stations, 5 recreation buildings, a post office and other structures.



PART OF NINTH'S NEW CANTONMENT AREA

Selectees began arriving during the month of January. For the most part they were from New York and New Jersey. It was January 16, 1941, when Captain (Colonel) Van H. Bond of the 60th Infantry brought back the first 500 men from Camp Upton, New York. They were a bewildered, sad-faced group of individuals, stemming from every type of family, job and background. An additional 500 recruits arrived on the 17th from Camp Dix.

The flow of selectees continued and hard-bitten regulars immediately entered into the task of *zero-ing-in* the novices. Thirteen weeks of basic training were instituted, with a variety of subjects featured. Most of the new men soon caught the spirit of the Division. However, some objected to their veteran instructors, whose language was anything but Oxonian.

January was a full month. One battery of Divarty was selected to parade for the third term inauguration of President Roosevelt. The Division boxing team—known as the *Fighting Ninth*—overcame a measles outbreak to win the local *Golden Gloves* tournament. Lt. General Hugh A. Drum (First Army commander) visited the Division during a

whirlwind inspection tour, and later in an impressive ceremony, the Ninth dedicated its first flagpole.

Soon some of the men were able to report home on what they had learned. Special passes were issued over Washington's Birthday weekend, when about 500 members of the Ninth left for New York and Philadelphia aboard chartered Queens City busses. Every aid was furnished by the government, with state police escorts meeting the busses at each state boundary, and convoying the soldiers to the next one.

* * * *

ON March 18th General Drum conducted a CPX (Command Post Exercise) for the Division and the Ninth reacted well in its first big test. When he left, he'd decided that the Ninth was one of the best divisions in the First Army.

Amusing situations were always cropping up at the wrong times. At the Division's first full parade on Honeycutt Field, everyone started off with a serious expression upon his face. The date was March 22, 1941. Over 14,000 members of the Division rolled past in review. A terrific cloud of dust ac-

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companied the marchers, particularly the mounted units.

Then it happened. A truck (with howitzer attached) became stalled in front of the reviewing stand. After a slightly embarrassing hesitation the red-faced crew quickly regained their senses. They jumped down onto the dusty field, and with a *heave-ho* pushed the truck and gun past the on-looking generals. The parade kept streaming by, to the approving smiles of the reviewing officers.

When the first recruits joined the Ninth under the Selective Service Act, they discovered that life was governed by bugle calls. In Company "B", 47th Infantry, the new arrivals were told to stand at attention (fall-in) whenever they heard a strange call. One day practically all of the company heard a call and fell-in. A few of the old-timers grabbed mess kits and took off—for chow. It was MESS CALL!

As the Division and Fort Bragg expanded, prices reached unbelievably high levels. Rentals were skyrocketing as well. One lieutenant was renting a *cow shed* at forty dollars per month! An investigation was started, but this aided little.

Then the crisp spring weather warmed up to summer. The men of the Ninth changed into khaki uniforms and began duty at 6 A.M. instead of the usual 6:30 A.M. Longer evenings featured the ever-popular Service Club dances, with girl partners from the *Ninth Division Defense Clubs*. And there were the USO shows. Movie-singer Alan Jones and song and dance-girl Ginger Harmon performed for the Ninth with such a troupe.

Suntan weather meant more outdoor training, too. Despite the benefit of wooden barracks, the Division was to spend more time outdoors than in. On the first day of June, Colonel Mahin's reinforced 60th Combat Team (60th Infantry Regiment, 34th and 60th Field Artillery Battalions and one-half of the Ninth Reconnaissance Troop) left by 741-vehicle motor convoy for the vicinity of Bowling Green, Virginia. They were to engage in a two-day maneuver with the 44th (National Guard) Division.

Although the regiment had been in training only five months, it outmaneuvered the 44th. With only 4,481 men, the 60th C.T. did a superb job of *defeating* the Guardsmen who had over 15,400 troops. This was the first large combat-field problem for the Ninth and won great national praise.

Few regiments in peacetime have been through such a campaign in one week as have the troops of the Sixtieth Combat team which went 276 miles to Virginia last week, met and confused the entire Forty-fourth Division, came home without denting a fender of their 741 vehicles, and that night went out on the reservation here, on schedule, to take part in more maneuvers.

—New York TIMES.

At the end of June the entire Ninth began its first Divisional war games. Already two of the regiments had received nicknames. Colonel William R. Schmidt's 39th was called *The Fighting Falcons*, and the 60th termed *The Go-Devils*.

As the field exercises continued the weather became increasingly hot. Temperatures of 99 degrees and more were recorded. Then came the well-remembered day in July, when the sun's rays measured 130 degrees on the thermometer. Glassy-eyed doughboys of Colonel Sam Gibson's 47th Infantry completed a "heartbreaking road march of 27 miles, at a cadence of 112 (steps) per minute."

The July 5th reassignment of Colonel Elliot seemed to signal the great change in veteran personnel that was to hit the Ninth Division. First, 172 men were chosen from a large group of volunteers and sent to paratroop training. For privates this transfer meant thirty dollars monthly salary and fifty dollars *jump pay*, after successful completion of the course. That was far more than twenty-one dollars per month!

A mixed feeling of sadness and surprise hit the Division next. The Army announced that General Devers was to command its entire Armored Force. While the men of the Ninth were happy over the general's promotion, they were exceedingly sorry to lose his leadership. Many soldiers wanted to follow General Devers to the Armored Force . . . only a few could. By special request the popular commander was able to stay with the Ninth until its first reactivation anniversary on August 1st.

* * * *

THE first anniversary of the Ninth's reactivation caused a great many speeches. None, however, seemed to sum up the events of the past year as well as a short talk by Mayor J. Scott McFadyen of Fay-

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

etteville: "This year has seen the Ninth Division grown from a handful of cadremen to one of the best trained and most powerful organizations in the United States Army. . . ."

Evidence of this statement was everywhere. It was on the faces of the men, as they marched by the cheering crowds. It showed in their husky frames and handling of equipment.

Since this was the last parade that General Devers would review as commander of the Ninth, all units were anxious to make a good showing. The general stood upon a raised reviewing platform, resplendent in his boots and breeches—presenting a neat, soldierly appearance. But as the new equipment rolled by the reviewing stands, another of those mechanical errors marred a Division parade.

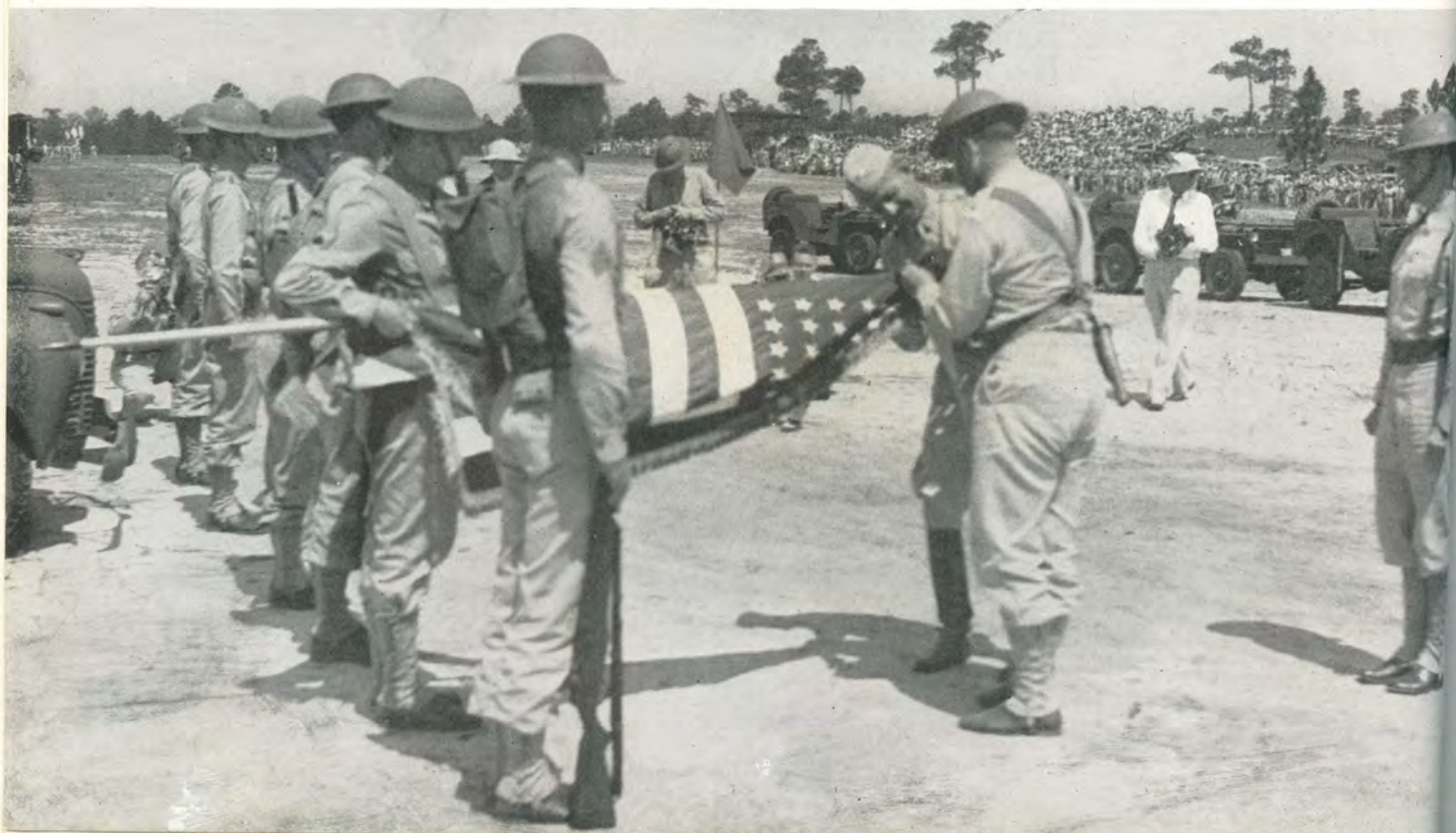
Brand new dump trucks of the 15th Engineer Battalion were on display and filled with personnel. Just as the vehicles were passing General Devers, one of the drivers through inexperience kicked a wrong lever. The dumping portion of the truck went into action. In a flash a pile of surprised engineers was dropped in front of an equally surprised general!

As the men of the Ninth Division lined the curbs of their area on August 2nd, General and Mrs. Devers left for Fort Knox, Kentucky. Heartfelt best wishes were on each man's face for the major general who had done so much for the Ninth Division. At this time Brigadier General R. E. D. Hoyle relinquished the command of the Ninth Division Artillery and became Division commander. Shortly thereafter, Colonel (Major General) S. LeRoy Irwin assumed command of the Artillery.

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WHILE the Ninth Division was celebrating on August 1st, the people of Europe definitely were not. From the northernmost tip of Norway to the southernmost portions of Greece, Adolf Hitler was either undisputed master or conqueror. Smashing at the gates of Moscow was a seemingly invincible *Wehrmacht*. For all purposes the Nazi juggernaut had reached its peak of power. Nothing had withstood the onslaughts of its *Panzer* divisions, *Luftwaffe* and fanatical *S.S.* Troops. Nothing, that is, except the stubborn British Empire and a rapidly

ORGANIZATION DAY: 60th RECEIVES STREAMER FOR "COMBAT EXCELLENCE"



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growing underground movement on the continent of Europe.

Italy entered the war on the side of Germany after France had been overrun. England appeared next on the growing list. Two-hundred thousand Italian desert veterans waged successful war against the British in Egypt and Somaliland. Then by a series of swift assaults, General Sir Archibald Wavell's small composite force drove back the *envoys from Rome*. Only two British divisions attacked a vastly superior enemy, and the *Desert Rats* bagged 130,000 Italian prisoners against their own casualty list of 1,800.

Trouble intervened, however, to halt this temporary success. Hitler sent his armies reeling through the Balkans and the British were obliged to dispatch one-half of their tiny desert army to aid Greece. Meanwhile, an excellently trained and well disciplined *Afrika Korps* replaced the badly-mauled Italians facing Wavell.

More trouble plagued the hard-pressed British. It came from the pro-Axis populations of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Egypt, and from the Arabs in the Holy Land. Moreover, German submarines aided the *Nazi total war* by sinking ships almost as fast as the United States and England could build them. Japan was bellicose, too. She waved her *Samurai* swords at the world, threatening all non-Asiatics with *Japanese Peace*. American ships were machine-gunned in Chinese waters and General MacArthur secretly prepared the fortress island of Corregidor for any eventuality.

After Dunkirk the United States poured forth an arsenal of weapons. From that time until final victory, more and more arms, ammunition, food, tanks and planes were rushed to the United Kingdom. Ships were transferred (lent) to England, as were large sums of money.

Hitler had attacked Russia during June of 1941. By the end of July the Soviet Union appeared destined to follow the rest of Europe under the heel of Nazi tyranny. Over *one million* Russian fighting men were encircled; hundreds of thousands were killed and wounded. All Germany was jubilant. It looked as if the *Fuehrer* and his German *supermen* had the world by the tail. Only two great powers remained to dispute the world domination program

of the Axis, the United States and Great Britain. If the Americans were eliminated, England might well fall. If the British were forced to surrender, the Western Hemisphere would be isolated and the United States would be forced to deal with a world controlled by Germany and Japan. Thus one thought struck the Axis high commands simultaneously:

*Why not strike before the growing
might of the United States becomes
too powerful? . . . WHY NOT?*

* * * *

GREAT changes were to influence the Ninth Division during its second year of re-activation. Most of the founding cadre were to leave and form other divisions. Methods of training were to improve, and an ever-increasing amount of time was to be spent away from the comforts of camp.

On August 4, 1941, Colonel (Lt. General) Alexander M. Patch of the 47th Infantry Regiment was appointed Brigadier General in charge of Camp Croft, South Carolina. He later was to lead troops in the Pacific and the Seventh Army in Europe. General Patch was typical of both the officers and men of the Ninth. The Fort Bragg *POST* described him aptly: . . . *as a brisk, battle-wise soldier, whose tall, lean appearance never failed to command respect and loyalty.*

Upon taking the oath of rank before the assembled 47th Infantry, General Patch said, "It is always the organization that makes the General, and not the officer who makes the organization. All that I now am and the rewards which I have recently received can be attributed to the enlisted men of this regiment."

With the coming of cooler weather the pace of training was stepped up. Late August found the Ninth on maneuvers during a steady drizzle, which kept everyone feeling miserable. Opposing the Division was a *Blue Force*, composed of 30th Infantry Division troops from Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The well-trained Ninth bested its opponent during the August field problems, which were simply dress-rehearsals for larger-scale maneuvers to come.

It was on the field of maneuver that the men of the *Octofoil* discovered that their commanding general had been a rather good quarter-miler at West

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PREPARING FOR THE "GAS CHAMBER"

Point, thirty years previous. After using a steady dog-trot to escape capture by the 30th Division, General Hoyle conceived of the idea of keeping troops in condition through the use of *double-time*. Thus began a long-standing procedure.

Back for a temporary respite from the field, the men of the Ninth settled down to enjoy a few pleasures. Off-duty hours generally were spent in drinking beer, going to a movie, dancing at the Service Club—or listening to smooth tunes, like those which poured forth from Sergeant (Warrant Officer) Bob Warren's *hot trumpet*.

Featured articles often were written about the Ninth. There was First Sergeant Cooley of the Ninth Medical Battalion's Company A. At the age of 19 years he was the youngest first sergeant in the

U.S. Army. And there was the Ninth Division Service Club, under the able overall direction of Mrs. Dorothy N. McFarland, senior hostess. It had the largest cafeteria volume of any club in the Army. The establishment was praised by the Army's Inspector General, as well as being described in an edition of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Prize article about Fort Bragg and vicinity, however, was a nationally featured column by Jean Lightfoot, *NEA* correspondent. Wrote she on Fayetteville:

There isn't much for a soldier to do in town.

Stand around the old yellow brick slave market that bottlenecks traffic on the square. Eat chow mein at New China restaurant, fried chicken at Rainbo restaurant, steak at Prince Charles Hotel

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restaurant, or a hamburger at Smith's lunch. If you have any money.

Dance, drink beer and feed the nickleodeons at Elbo Inn, Lighthouse Barbecue, Pat's Tavern (private dining rooms: \$1), Shell Chateau (private dining rooms: \$1). If you have a doll and a couple of dollars . . .

* * * *

SEPTEMBER brought news of more maneuvers, the officially announced: *Largest peacetime maneuvers in the history of the United States*. And radio waves brought news of an explanatory nature when Secretary of War Stimson came to the microphone to explain War Department action under the Draft-Extension Bill. Soldiers were to be kept in the service for an additional twelve to eighteen months. Some, over the age of 28, would be released at once.

Between September 13th and 16th the Ninth sent advance detachments to its future bivouac area near Chester, South Carolina. These small housing parties followed a general route, one which later was used by convoys carrying the main body of the Division. They proceeded across the reservation to Southern Pines, then via Rockingham, Monroe, Osceola, Fort Mill and Rock Hill into their destination. The Ninth was to bivouac east of Chester initially, on the banks of the Catawba River. After the *fighting* began, the Division units were to move into a pup-tent city near Kershaw, S. C., thence to Cheraw on November 15th, until the end of the war games.

The 39th Combat Team (including the 26th Field Artillery Battalion) was the first complete combat unit of the Ninth Division to set up at Rock Hill. It moved in on September 26th and was followed by other outfits of the Division. Physical and mental stamina were to be well tested during the ten weeks that followed. Wrapped in blankets and huddling around fires at night, the men found cold weather as much a problem as any maneuver.

These games consisted of a series of practical exercises between corps and armies, as well as inter-corps combat exercises. Making up the I Army Corps were the Ninth and 30th Infantry Divisions, and the 13th Field Artillery Brigade. Tactical problems consumed a major portion of the week and

generally were completed in time to allow a free weekend.

The natives of the *battle* area were very friendly. Some of the best treatment ever accorded men in uniform was shown by these Carolinians. Many GIs were invited to supper, for weekends and for the evening. This kindness was greatly appreciated. Problem-weary men particularly were overjoyed at the prospect and the realization of supper in a huge southern mansion—complete with servants.

During early October the Ninth Division had a Quartermaster railhead at Catawba and the Division base camp was near Lando. But the infantrymen of the Ninth gave little thought to Division headquarters. Sparked by the 60th Infantry, they were pursuing and polishing off superior numbers of 8th Division troops.

A small security patrol from the 9th Division's 60th Infantry crept quietly through the dark woods of South Carolina shortly after midnight. No Carolina moon betrayed them, no sound broke the air. Hour after hour they had been crawling through the dense underbrush scarcely breathing lest their presence be betrayed.

Suddenly, off to the right there was a rustling of leaves. Each man felt as though a sharp knife had been plunged in his heart. Waiting a moment, the lieutenant turned and whispered orders quietly.

The soldiers spread left and right in an ambush-ing formation, rifles ready for action. Then, sharply the signal was given, and the squad closed in—to capture a stray mule from a nearby farmhouse.

—Charlotte Observer

Despite the *snafus* of this play war—and the many faults and shortages uncovered—some units did themselves proud. Chemical-warfare men routed tankers and saved the Division command post from capture by spreading *poison* (tear) gas upon the armored men, who had neglected to carry their gas masks. The 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry cap-

During the time of maneuvers, the semi-permanent buildings of the Ninth Division were occupied by a 6,000-bed hospital. This was a precautionary measure, since an estimated 3% of the 525,000 men on maneuvers were expected to be ill. An epidemic might have caught 6,000 or more men.

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tured an *enemy* blimp when crafty doughboys held the ground crew captive . . . until the flyers gave up! And the 47th Infantry was referred to as *The Raiders* so frequently, that Colonel Gibson made the nickname official.

Wet weather brought back memories of tented life during November 1940. It also signaled the loss of old-timer Colonel Frank C. Mahin, who left the 60th Infantry for Camp Barkley, Texas. The well-liked leader soon rose to the rank of major general. But his brilliant career was cut short by a fatal airplane accident.

On Armistice Day of 1941, General Hoyle joyfully announced that the Ninth had received a man from Nevada—Private Francis Bozarth of Las Vegas. With this addition, the Ninth was now an *All-American* Division, having members from every state of the Union.

* * * *

AN hour before daybreak on November 17th, the Ninth Division broke camp and moved on the Pee Dee River. It was here that *frontline* action would take place. Two days later a great mass-attack of parachute troops dropped upon the Ninth and was repulsed. But the paratroopers proved that airborne attacks could be successful.

Thanksgiving Day was uneventful and cold. By the 28th maneuvers were declared officially at an end, and *Octofoil*-wearing GIs of the Ninth looked forward to a second observance of Thanksgiving—inside their own mess-halls. Almost everyone was

happy as the Division rolled back into Fort Bragg . . . especially the inductees who soon were to be discharged for age.

Men jammed the shower rooms, almost drinking in the good hot water. Fresh, clean clothing felt good upon their tired bodies. Some had heard that two new USO Clubs would open formally in Fayetteville around December 10th. And there was the confirmed rumor that the Ninth would become motorized.

December of 1941 began like any other month. Christmas furloughs were announced; the 39th Infantry dedicated its new Regimental Chapel; and Christmas packages began arriving at *APO 9*. General Hoyle disclosed that materiel was arriving daily for the motorization of the Division. Physical examinations were given 28-year-old soldiers, preparatory to their discharge. Mayor McFadyen of Fayetteville proclaimed that December 10th would be *Welcome Neighbor Day*.

On Saturday night, December 6, 1941, soldiers went to the movies, drank their beer, danced, and casually read newspaper items about apologetic Japanese envoys in Washington, D. C. The *over 28* men were dreaming of their release from the service on the following Monday. There were thoughts of furloughs at home and a quiet Christmas with the family.

If the morale of the Division had dropped slightly upon announcement that the draft law was extended, it was to rise sharply on Sunday. GIs were lounging around radios and enjoying normal off-duty

FROM THE BEGINNING . . . A "SHOW DIVISION"



RECALLED TO ARMS

bunk-fatigue. Then all of a sudden the program stopped, and an announcer bellowed forth the most stupendous news many ever would hear:

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have an important announcement to make. The Japanese have just bombed Pearl Harbor!

At first this explosive news was received with disbelief. But later newscasts confirmed the original announcement. By the time most of the listeners had regained their equilibrium, action was being taken by the Ninth Division. Among the most surprised individuals were those scheduled to be released the next day. Their orders were rescinded immediately.

It didn't take long for the Ninth to change over to wartime duties. By midnight of December 7th the infantry regiments were alerted and on the move. Led by the 39th, the Division guarded vital waterworks, bridges and war manufacturing plants. From now on all future movements of the Ninth were to be carried out with the utmost secrecy.

Welcome Neighbor Day went off on schedule in Fayetteville and huge crowds attended. To satisfy cool weather appetites, there was a gigantic barbecue. Thousands of girls drove in from outlying districts for the mammoth street dance. Besides a colorful parade, there was a chance to visit the new USO Clubs, which were holding open house. But the joy of the celebration was diminished slightly by the state of war. Soldiers did not have the same outlook as they did one week previous.

By the 11th the United States was at war with Japan, Germany and Italy. Blackout restrictions were in force around Fort Bragg. This was a strange experience for a nation brought up on bright lights, and many a minor accident occurred.

While some men were fortunate enough to obtain Christmas furloughs, most Ninthmen stayed in camp. On December 25th the Division ate its last Christmas dinner in the States for several years to come.

* * * *

A NOT too bright New Year of 1942 dawned upon the world. Over in the Philippine Islands, General Douglas MacArthur was leading a losing battle against overwhelming odds. The ever-lengthening

tentacles of Japanese aggression spread over Asia and toward Australia. British forces in the Middle East were doing well to hold their own. It definitely was possible that Germany would invade the South American continent via Vichy-controlled Dakar.

As the month of January became rooted more firmly, the Army ordered every one of its military personnel inoculated against Yellow Fever. Taking of *shots* shared the spotlight with a Division military tournament. Military skills were the basis of most contests, but the climax of the events was a greased pig chase. Contestants almost smothered the poor little porker who—like Calvin Coolidge—refused to run, and the final winner was determined by the toss of a coin.

Contests, regimental shows, non-com schools, intra-Divisional basketball and dry-run rail embarkations featured the remainder of January and early February. Snowfall failed to halt the training at Fort Bragg. Even the arrival of half-tracks and other vehicles did not stop until the Ninth Division was well motorized. As part of a novel experiment, the Division was pioneering the present-day armored infantry. The main idea seemed to be: *ride, jump out, fight.*

People also were in the contemporary spotlight. Sergeant Stanley Schmidt and Private Peter Metalios of the 39th Infantry Regiment were cited for quick action which saved an ammunition magazine from exploding. The Ninth's commanding general received his second star. Men of the 60th heard that their former executive officer, Colonel Charles L. Steel, was now leading the 31st (*America's Foreign Legion*) Regiment against the Japanese on Bataan. Lt. Colonel (Brig. Gen.) Edwin H. Randle had just returned from the Fort Leavenworth Command and Staff School, to take command of the 47th Infantry. And sculptor Private First Class Phillip C. Orlando was in the limelight with his excellent workmanship.

The bubble of motorization burst on March 1st when the Ninth became an amphibious division, attached to the 1st Amphibious Corps, Atlantic Fleet. Thus began a vigorous training program, destined to end only with a full-dress performance on the beaches of North Africa.

Since the enemy held most of the future battlefields of World War II, it was necessary that the

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY



McFADYEN'S POND

United States Army learn how to land upon unfriendly shores against a well-fortified foe. Mock-ups and a landing-net platform were built, the latter being situated on McFadyen's Pond. Training began in the vicinities of Norfolk, Virginia; Solomon's Island, Maryland; and New River, North Carolina . . . where wet and bewildered GIs found that this new type of warfare was an exact skill, requiring much practice. Falling into the water was easy, indeed.

During mid-March, two Ninth Division Colonels were appointed Brigadier Generals; they were Manton S. Eddy (then Assistant Division commander), and Stafford LeRoy Irwin (commanding Division Artillery). General Eddy had arrived one week earlier from Fort Lewis, Washington, whereas General Irwin had been commanding Divarty for many months. These two soldiers were to pilot the Ninth Division to fame in North Africa, the former becoming the Division's first combat commander and the latter leading a heralded 2000-man motor march to stop Rommel at Thala.

Change after change overtook the rosters of the Ninth, making the addition of new blood quite necessary. America's expanding Army needed experienced officers and men. It dipped deeply into the well-trained manpower of the Ninth Division, taking cadres to form such famous divisions as the 82nd and 88th—taking such leaders as Colonel (Major General) William R. Schmidt, the 39th's first commanding officer, who received his first star and a higher command. In addition the Ninth trained cadremen for the 78th Division and other units.

Approaching spring signaled the beginning of Easter furloughs. It was about this time that the Ninth Division demonstrated amphibious maneuvers for five major movie studios. And the 70th Tank Battalion, commanded by Major John P. Welborn, joined the Division. They drove the little *lightning buggies* which were to furnish the combat teams of the Ninth with armor during their invasion of North Africa.

A memorable time for the Division came at the end of March. Marine Colonel A. J. Drexel Biddle, con-

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sidered the world's outstanding authority on the art of bayonet fighting, instructed infantrymen in close-in fighting. What made these demonstrations more interesting was the fact that Colonel Biddle was then 67 years of age, and still spry.

Army Day of 1942 was the last such occasion for the Ninth Division as a combat unit within the confines of the United States. Appropriately, the Army Day program was one of amphibious exhibitions in the form of a competitive military tournament. There were eighteen events, the biggest of which was *swimming with full equipment*. The 60th Combat Team emerged as victors of the tournament.

* * * *

ON MAY 5th the gallant defenders of besieged Corregidor were overwhelmed. Lacking food, ammunition or hope of reinforcement, they surrendered. This news reached a saddened American public. Common opinion had been, "Oh, the Japs? We can lick them in a couple of weeks!" Now the American nation realized, as it did its military and naval leaders, that World War II was to be a long affair.

(It hit the Ninth, too, for thirty-five former Division officers had been captured at Bataan and Corregidor.)

Japan's sneak punch at Pearl Harbor had left the United States Army with but one alternative—maximum expansion in minimum time. As summer of 1942 approached, the fast-growing strength of this force was becoming very evident. It was not yet strong enough to launch large scale counter-offensives. However, it would be soon—very soon.

Part of this growing military might was exemplified by the Ninth Division. On May 22, 1942, Secretary of War Stimson visited the Division and viewed landing demonstrations made by the 47th Infantry at much-used McFadyen's Pond. The Secretary of War was well pleased. He wrote General Hoyle regarding the visit soon after:

"... it was a source of gratification to me to see the excellent condition of your men and their training, and to see how much progress they have made since my last inspection of Fort Bragg over a year ago.

worldwartwoveterans.org

THE 105's WERE READY



"I was particularly impressed by the aggressive attitude and technical training of the 47th Infantry Combat Team which made the landing demonstration."

At Fort Bragg, the Ninth Infantry Division continued its amphibious training and wondered what combat assignment was in store. Landings could be made against several enemy-held beaches—German or Japanese. A glance at the *big picture*, however, might have given inquisitive soldiers their answer. Two keys to world-wide operations were the Mediterranean Sea and the dark continent of Africa. The former linked the Atlantic and Pacific wars via the strategic Suez Canal and the Middle East. The latter was of grave concern to the United States, for Axis success in North Africa could well mean invasion of Brazil.

Russia at this time was in dire need of relief from mounting German pressure. Temporarily the Soviet Union had taken the initiative, freeing Moscow and the central front of immediate danger. But to the south a skillful Prussian-bred militarist, Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt was to hinder the Red Army for many months to come. Before the great Russian victory at Stalingrad could become possible, it was necessary that some sort of *second front* divert German manpower and supplies.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain, and America's President Franklin D. Roosevelt held a conference in Washington, D. C., during January of 1942. Military and naval experts were present to assist these great leaders, and a bold plan of action was tentatively agreed upon. The European Theater, because of its shorter lines of supply and possibilities for quicker victory, was given priority over the Pacific Theater.

Another meeting of the Allied leaders and their Combined Chiefs of Staff was held during the following June. At this time the efficient and well-supplied *Afrika Korps* of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was threatening Cairo, Alexandria and the Suez. By July British forces had fallen back upon positions near El Alamein. It was a dark hour for the sorely-tried Eighth Army. Plans were already in preparation by the Nazis for a military government in Egypt. Records and other important papers were set afire by the British in Cairo.

Alexandria, Cairo and El Alamein were more than just ordinary prizes of war. If these regions fell Rommel's *Korps* might sweep through the Middle East. The oil of Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia would go to feed Hitler's war machine . . . and India, fabulous crossroads of the world, would fall easy prey to the enemy. Germany and Japan then could link up at Calcutta or Bombay. Russia would be encircled; the treasures of the East lost to the Allies, and Australia open to full-scale invasion. China, thus cut off from all aid, would be forced to surrender.

The situation was far more serious than anyone then realized. For even if the Allies *were* able to stage a comeback, any initial delay could have proved disastrous. Additional time might have enabled Germany to perfect its atomic bomb first. With robot and rocket warfare, the atomic bomb, most of the world's raw materials, three-fourths of the world's population, and mastery of three inter-linking continents, Germany, Japan and Italy would stand invincible.

Ponderous shipments of tanks and artillery ammunition were rushed to Egypt by the United States. While a small, tired army and air force, composed of ANZACS, Scotsmen, Englishmen, empire troops and ATS girls (British Wacs), kept closed the gateway to Suez, Allied leaders agreed upon their strategy: A refitted and much stronger Eighth Army would launch a powerful counter-offensive from El Alamein. The United States would sweep down upon French-held possessions in Morocco and Algeria in a simultaneous assault. America's amphibious invasion forces would be mounted in the British Isles and the United States. Every effort would be made to win the French and native populations over to the Allied cause.

It was absolutely essential that the North African venture be a success. Much depended upon this first great offensive. Failure meant prolongation of the conflict—and perhaps loss of the war. But the Allies were willing to take this chance. D-Day was to be during late fall . . . on a date the Ninth Infantry Division would never forget.

* * * *

RECALLED TO ARMS



GENERAL HOYLE

THE Army's new pay raise was a big topic of conversation during June. At least it was to American soldiers. Under the new plan pay increases were given all enlisted ranks, with the last four grades obtaining something new—family allotments. Privates received the largest increase; their base salary now started at fifty dollars per month. Moreover, enactment of the Pay-Raise Bill enabled the War Department to draft thousands of men previously deferred for reason of dependency.

With the proposed invasion of North Africa only a few months off many Britons visited the Ninth Division. Among these was Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, head of the almost legendary British *Commandos*. The 47th Infantry conducted a demonstration in honor of the visitors. Live ammunition was used by the *Raiders* with overhead fire

supplied by the 84th Field Artillery Battalion. Few GIs then dreamed that they would be fighting shortly alongside other men in these same British uniforms.

During the summer one regiment was kept on amphibious maneuvers. The 39th Infantry returned from Solomon's Island, Maryland, on June 16th after fifteen days of landing exercises. Four days later the 47th Infantry left for its turn on maneuvers. These were the days of maddening *chigger* bites and the first mail censorship. Despite the hard work attached to such maneuvers, many soldiers preferred this type of training . . . especially during the heat of summer.

As the date of first combat steadily approached, more changes developed in the leadership of the Ninth Division. Major General R. E. D. Hoyle was ordered to Camp Roberts, California, on July 8th. General Irwin assumed command until the 24th. On that day Brigadier General (Lt. General) Manton S. Eddy was placed in command of the Ninth by the War Department. Within a short time (August 9th) he received his second star.

The new Division commander was a tall, fatherly-looking veteran of World War I, who had been wounded while serving with the original 39th Infantry in 1918. General Eddy was not a West Pointer, but he *was* a natural-born soldier. Ungiven to flashy showmanship, this new commanding general efficiently and inspiringly led the Ninth through Africa, Sicily, England and Normandy. When Major General Manton S. Eddy left for a higher command (to quote Thomas R. Henry in *The Saturday Evening Post*) he was written and spoken of as, ". . . the country's most brilliant division commander." The Ninth Infantry Division was considered by correspondents and military leaders as being one of the best combat units in the European Theater. Guiding the Division into this position was the mild-mannered leader, who though fearless himself, believed that victories should be won by sweat and surprise, rather than by blood and death. That the Division was better because of such leadership cannot be denied.

Rounding out its second year, the Ninth Division was a very much different kind of fighting force than the skeleton organization of 1940. For one thing the Division was now one of the most publicized in the

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United States. And it bristled with modern equipment, too. While personnel had changed, thousands of eager recruits melted into the team of men who wore the tri-colored *Octofoil* upon their sleeve. Morale was high and three newspapers were supported by the GIs, in addition to the Fort Bragg *POST*. These were the mimeographed regimental papers *The Falcon*, *The Raider* and *The Go-Devil*.

During this time able Brigadier General (Major General) Donald A. Stroh joined the Ninth as Assistant Division Commander, and the trio of commanders who were to lead the regiments into first combat was completed. Colonel (Brigadier General) Benjamin J. Caffey commanded the 39th Infantry, Colonel Edwin H. Randle, the 47th Infantry and Colonel Frederick J. De Rohan, the 60th Infantry.

Organization Day caught the Division in the midst of final training. Messages of congratulations poured in; speeches extolled the progress made during two years of reactivation. But real old-timers were hard to find amongst the husky men in khaki. These were mostly of the war crop, good soldiers whose main occupation was that of being a civilian.

General Eddy spoke over radio Station WPTF at Raleigh on August 1st. He stressed the great turnover in personnel. The list of those who left was long indeed; enlisted men and officers had gone to every theater of operations. Many had formed new divisions. Some were already famous in combat—some had passed on.

As the excitement of the anniversary wore off, a new addition was made to the infantry regiments . . . *Cannon Company*. Another change was the elimination of the automatic rifle squad assigned to each rifle platoon. In its place, one automatic rifle team was assigned to each rifle squad. This substitution greatly helped small unit actions, since the squads could count upon increased firepower.

* * * *

DRESS-REHEARSALS were coming to an end. The great show soon would begin. Troops received their cue during early September, when General Eddy called the Division together and issued a warning order. The 39th Infantry Regiment was selected for a *Special Mission* and would leave prior to the main group. Addressing all combat teams before

BRITISH LEADERS VISIT NINTH



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their departure dates, the Division commander informed the Ninth that, "The regiments of this division will soon have the opportunity to make history." He also stated that the Division would reassemble *somewhere* at the end of 1942.

After over two years of training as a Divisional team, the Ninth would now be broken up into regimental combat teams. These were to be attached to other commands—and sometimes would operate independently. This condition was to exist for many months to come. Nevertheless, the regiments of the Ninth Division still were to go into their first battle simultaneously, although over a far-flung front. Global warfare indeed was to be exemplified in the great area covered by the combat teams of the Ninth Infantry Division.

The usually upset stomach of Adolf Hitler might have taken a turn for the worse, if he had but known why the Ninth Division was getting ready to leave its comfortable Fort Bragg home. Leading the pack was the 39th Combat Team, those soldiers who proudly bore the title *The Fighting Falcons*. This was the regiment which had been the first invader to sit upon the banks of Germany's Rhine during World War I.

After the *Falcons* were alerted for shipment a movement outdoors began. Troops vacated their spotless barracks and settled in a nearby tented bivouac. Most GIs wondered as have soldiers for thousands of years, "Where do we go from here?" The answer to this question was to be obscured by censorship for the next two and one-half years. First destination of the travelers proved to be Fort Dix, New Jersey. Here, after routine checkups and inoculations, the 39th would sail overseas.

It was raining on September 17, 1942 . . . the day on which the *Falcons* bade *goodbye* to Fort Bragg and the remaining units of the Ninth. Memories of the past caused some men to have a lump in their throats. But for the most part, the rail movements (which began at 6 A.M.) occupied most of everyone's time and filled immediate thoughts. The last group of soldiers arrived at Fort Dix by 1 P.M. on the 18th. After leaving the train passengers had to walk about three miles to the staging area, and beds felt good to the somewhat tired men of the 39th Combat Team that night.

At Dix last minute affairs were straightened out, necessary issues of new clothing were obtained and records were checked—with some unpleased individuals feeling the inoculating needles of the medics as a result. By now all troops had the new *M-1* steel helmet, and mail censorship was in efficient operation, too. A few geniuses tried to beat this system through the use of prearranged codes and other devices, but Army censorship was a hard customer to buck!

With the hour of embarkation approaching, *Falcons* were instructed as to do's and don'ts of convoy travel. Chaplains held special services and last minute letters were written. New Yorkers longed to take a last visit home, and Westerners mused at the strange Army practice which sent men from California to Europe—and soldiers from the East to the West Coast.

The stay at Fort Dix was a short one. On September 24th the regiment began moving to Staten Island—where so many of Uncle Sam's fighting men were to embark for combat. This was part of the New York Port of Embarkation, that POE where masses of men and equipment shuttled past America's skyscrapers and the Statue of Liberty to carry war to Hitler's *Fortress Europa*.

By September 25th everyone was aboard the five vessels which would carry the 39th Combat Team overseas. These ships were the U.S. Naval Transports, *USS Leedstown*, *USS Chase*, *USS Thomas Stone*, *USS Almaack* and the *SS Exceller*, a commercial steamer *drafted* for the journey by the Navy.

Early on the dawn of September 26, 1942, the convoy of troopships and their escort silently slipped out of New York Harbor and headed for the open sea. Except for a few rumors, the destination beyond Halifax, Nova Scotia, was a mystery.

The mighty *USS Arkansas* guided the troop carriers into Halifax during the afternoon of September 28th. Here the destroyers refueled. By the following 3 A.M. the convoy was heading for the port of Belfast, Northern Ireland . . . accompanied by a flotilla of British and Canadian ships.

* * * *

LAND HO!" It was October 5, 1942, off the Irish coast and the 3,970-mile journey was about to end. The convoy dropped anchor in Belfast Harbor



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during the next afternoon, while doughs lined the rails and awaited their chance to land. Docking began on the morning of the 7th—and debarkation soon was underway.

The first Ninth Division unit to touch foreign soil was the 2nd Battalion, which debarked at 10 A.M. After riding to the railhead on *lorries*, the 2nd piled aboard a new type of transportation—the British railroad *carriage* . . . pulled by a small, powerful engine with a comical whistle. A couple of toots of that whistle and the Americans were headed for Down Patrick Base Camp.

As the wheels clicked along, the *Falcons* gazed at their new surroundings. For the next few days they would hear a different tongue, and view what folks back home called *The Old Country*.

Men from the 3rd Battalion began unloading at 2 P.M., and were enroute to Camp Laughermoor at Temple Patrick within an hour. After detraining the 3rd marched eight miles through a typical Irish fog, over the wet, hilly, green countryside to their camp.

Sunnyland Camp at Carrickfergus played host to the 1st Battalion. This was the self-same Carrickfergus, off whose shores John Paul Jones won a naval victory (with the *Ranger*) in 1778. But historical lore was not the reason that the *Falcons* visited Carrickfergus. Like the other 39th battalions, the 1st made several hardening marches and was back on board ship by October 15th.

Aboard the *USS Almaack*, the Regimental Service Company left the remainder of the 39th Combat Team at Belfast, sailing on to Scotland. The *Almaack* skimmed up the Clyde, passing Greenock, Gourock and famed Ben Lomond. She docked at Glasgow the following day. Sea-weary GIs debarked immediately and made a five-mile march through Glasgow to Bella-Houston Park, which was on the outskirts of this port and industrial city. Here they stayed until October 14, 1942.

October 17th found the entire combat team assembled at Inverary, Scotland. Amphibious operation training and forced marching was in order. Men of the 39th participated against units of the famous Scots *Black Watch* during this maneuver period, and training was conducted “in a downpour of rain and over wet, tough terrain.”

But the stay in Scotland quickly was ended. The Americans had had their small amount of sightseeing and visiting with America's allies on home ground. As a mass of ships formed outside the river Clyde, minds again pondered the old question . . . “WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?” That question also was pressing on the inquisitive nature of the other regiments of the Ninth!

* * * *

YES, back in the United States preparations were under way to implement the mounting of the African invasion on schedule. Actually, the date of the landings had been moved back from September to November 8, 1942, as a result of lack of shipping.

The amphibious command gathering in America was designated as the Western Task Force. Leading this portion of the *Operation Torch*, as the landings were termed in code, was the world's greatest proponent of armored warfare—Major General (General) George S. Patton, Jr. Naval commander was Rear Admiral (Admiral) Henry K. Hewitt.

On September 21st, when nobody yet knew his destination, most of the final training seemed as just some more experience. Great secrecy had enveloped the landing plans and code names gave no hint as to the intended area of attack. As a consequence, a lackadaisical atmosphere infected the amphibious exercises. Realistic General Patton dispatched a letter to all concerned . . . there was too much “maneuver complex” . . . this was a prelude to the real thing.

General Patton's command was divided into three sub-task forces. There was the *Northern* force, under Brigadier General (Lt. General) Lucien K. Truscott, Jr., who had been brought back from duty in the British Isles for this undertaking. His experience with the Dieppe Raid was influential in this assignment. The 60th Combat Team was to land with his group. The *Southern* force was commanded by Major General Ernest Harmon, an experienced tanker and tactician. A major part of General Harmon's force was the 47th Combat Team. Major General Jonathan W. Anderson had command of the *Center* force. The reserve for the invasion was placed in the 1st Provisional Corps under General Eddy. This group was composed of over 40,000 troops, and included those units of the Ninth Division not making the landings.

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At that time there was a great deal of anti-British feeling amongst the French in Africa. This was due partly to British attempts to smash the French fleet at Dakar and Oran. It was a sentiment which was fanned by pro-German propaganda, disseminated by the Vichy Government. Thus every effort was made to build up the invasion as an American endeavor. The United States flag was worn as an armband under the shoulder sleeve insignia of each invading soldier. American flags were to be carried by each battalion. (They were later actually flown from the stern of each landing craft . . . "like a yacht race.")

Not knowing the reasons behind such actions, many soldiers wondered as to the wisdom of such instructions: ". . . Officers and men entering battle will be careful to see that their shoulder patches and insignia are in place and visible." Troops going on board ship, however, temporarily covered all such patches and placed metal insignia inside their pockets. This was to eliminate the possibility of enemy submarines or aircraft spotting the identity of units being transported.

* * * * *

THE 47th and 60th Regiments were alerted and moved out of their warm barracks on September 26, 1942. A drizzling rain played down upon the *Raiders* and *Go-Devils*, as they headed for a temporary tented bivouac, which was off Chicken Road, several miles from the Ninth Division Area. Three days later the remainder of the Division (including the 34th Field Artillery Battalion) moved to the Motorized Area and occupied barracks formerly belonging to the 36th Engineers.

Fort Bragg days now were coming to a speedy end. The beer, dances, movies, USO troupes, PX supplies and girls would be rationed or non-existent where the Ninth was going. Non-essential items found their way home, and last letters hastily were written. Then orders arrived for the regiments to shove off for a POE . . . Fort Bragg days were done.

It was on October 14, 1942, that the 60th Combat Team moved to Norfolk, Virginia, and the 47th Combat Team followed on the 17th. Invasion exercises again were on the schedule. At Chesapeake Bay, in choppy seas and through cold winds, soldiers went up and down the nets and practiced landings.

Solomon's Island was a very familiar spot to the men of the Ninth, but new arrivals (to bolster the combat teams) needed every bit of additional training. Actual landing craft also were used, with many seasick doughboys resulting.

This was one of the first instances of large-scale operations involving both the Army and Navy. As was quite natural, many confusing situations developed—both during training and in the course of the invasion which followed.

A final drill was made at night during foul weather . . . now the training period was over. By October 21st the Task Force was back at Norfolk Navy Yard. Special rigs and booms protruded from the decks of troopships; every available bit of space was jam-packed. One of the most gigantic invasions of all times was about to get under way.

An excellent description of this large armada is given in a combat team report of 1942:

Battleships, aircraft carriers, heavy and light cruisers, destroyers, mine layers, submarines and special craft made a forest of masts across the harbor . . .

With all personnel and equipment safely stowed aboard, the various sub-task forces prepared to sail. They would meet again at an ocean rendezvous. On the 22nd the Western Task Force was ready to embark. Anchors were weighed and the heavily-laden vessels gathered up steam. As October 23, 1942, dawned upon the world, the troopships and their escorting naval craft headed for the open sea. They streamed through Hampton Roads, into the Atlantic . . . an almost never-ending grey chain of American might. They were on their way, beginning the 3,000-mile zig-zag across a submarine-infested Atlantic.

This then was the beginning. It was a recall to arms for the men of the 47th and 60th Combat Teams, and for the 39th in Scotland. Here *was* the *real thing*. And, seated upon uncomfortable wire bunks, leaning in on group gatherings, or gazing at the America they loved, which was slowly fading into the past, soldiers asked that same question . . . the one which fighting men have asked since time immemorial . . .

"WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?"



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Section III

D-Day...North Africa



OLD, grey steel and burning shell fragments invited Nazidom's *Afrika Korps* to retreat during the evening of October 23, 1942. A powerful and reorganized British Eighth Army was launching the military miracle of El Alamein.

With the eyes of the world focused upon General Montgomery's *Desert Rats*, American and British forces, effected a pincer-type series of landings upon French Morocco and Algeria. That was on November 8, 1942. The tide of war had changed . . . with a vengeance.

Behind this gigantic operation lies a tale of intrigue, deception, heroism and momentous planning. It is the story of the greatest long distance overseas invasion in the history of the world. It is the winning of a tremendous military gamble. To history this combined operation symbolizes the beginning of the end for the Axis. But to contemporary mankind, here was fuel for freedom.

Like every other major battle of World War II, the North African landings were not a victory of any single branch of service; each arm depended upon its comrades in uniform and upon the productive capacity of the home front. Modern warfare is successful only so long as all links in its complex chain are strong. Seldom was that fact evidenced more than by the invasion known as *Operation Torch*.

There never was an undertaking such as *Torch* in the manuals or military textbooks of the world. The planning originated with the Combined Chiefs of Staff of America and Britain. Military strategists of those two powers developed the finer points, and finishing touches were dabbed on by politically-chosen French leaders—who handled the delicate capitulations of certain garrisons and airports. There was also the Russian need of a *second front*, which dictated the immediate necessity for *Torch*.

The final D-Day plans were ambitious; they also were full of undeterminable factors. First there was Spain, the question mark hovering over North Africa. Would dictator Franco aid Nazism with a declaration of war . . . or would he continue to give moral and material support only? This was a problem of enormous importance, since Spanish territory flanked the entrance to the Mediterranean and possible lanes of invasion.

Operation Torch took all this into consideration—and followed the path of intrigue and gamble as a counterbalance. General Eisenhower sent his deputy, Major General (General) Mark W. Clark on an extremely dangerous secret mission to French North Africa. Here the tall American officer, assisted by a small group of experts, held a rendezvous

The Allied Team

Approximately 107,000 men comprised the invasion forces under Lt. General (General) Dwight D. Eisenhower. They were the

Western Task Force (Major General George S. Patton, Jr.)

47th and 60th Regimental Combat Teams (Ninth Infantry Division)

2nd Armored Division (one combat command and one armored battalion)

Central Task Force (Major General Lloyd Fredendall)

1st Infantry Division

Combat Command B, 1st Armored Division

1st Ranger Battalion

Corps Troops

Eastern Task Force (Major General C. W. Ryder, until after landings)

39th Regimental Combat Team (Ninth Infantry Division)

168th Regimental Combat Team (34th Infantry Division)

1st and 6th Battalions, *Commandos* (American and British troops)

11th and 36th Regimental Groups (British 78th Infantry Division)

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with pro-Allied French military leaders. The plans and capitulations which were obtained by General Clark and his party saved countless American and British lives.

More casualties were avoided because of other brave men. Intelligence sources discovered that General Francisco Franco of Spain was not prone to enter the war, and agents succeeded in mapping and plotting every landing area. This valuable knowledge was obtained cautiously . . . if one lone Vichy Frenchman had been approached or forewarned, all would have been lost.

Thus the invasion convoys sailed right under the watchful eyes of German observers in Spain and Spanish Morocco. The enemy thought the whole thing an effort to run supplies and reinforcements to the hard-pressed island of Malta, since all sorts of false rumors had been spread throughout Africa by American intelligence agents. So complete had been the deception that Germans and their French collaborators were led to believe that any attempted invasion would come via Dakar . . . their concentration of military and naval might was distributed accordingly. The Allies were able to land with full information; habits of leading citizens, customs of communities, systems of water, electric power and communications were studied in advance by expertly trained men. Deception and spying had reached a new zenith in military operations!

* * * *

BACK in the United States supplies and equipment were pouring forth in unbelievable quantities. Everything relating to the *Torch* affair was run on a coded system. Both strategy and supply were *top secret*—and then only a *very* select group knew the full plan. Fifteen weeks after the first meeting of the planners the invasion was launched. At that time an 850-ship convoy was ready, with over 700,000 different items stowed aboard.

Supply was but a part of the pre-invasion planning. Engineers secretly built models of landing zones. Thousands of maps were wrapped cautiously by GIs—who did not leave their workrooms until the amphibious operation was completed. Little was overlooked, from rail engines and freight cars to the delivery of mail at sea by naval destroyers and the

distribution of letters on beachheads after the landings.

Transports were staged at various ports and destinations kept *hush-hush*. But the most remarkable feature about this entire effort is that the four-million-ton invasion fleet and its massive pyramids of equipment were assembled secretly from scratch in four months' time!

* * * *

OPERATION TORCH was the western jaw in the pincers movement designed to crush Axis resistance in Africa. The eastern jaw was the British Eighth Army at El Alamein, where American tanks and guns had aided in building up an overwhelming superiority of materiel. With fresh Australian and New Zealand reinforcements, possessing an excellent deceptive plan devised by Wavell two years previously and with the will to win, the Eighth was like a well-constructed tool in the hands of master-mechanic General (Field Marshal) Sir Bernard Law Montgomery.

On the other hand, the invasion forces faced possible annihilation from enemy submarines, land-based aircraft and a forewarned enemy. General George C. Marshall, as American Chief of Staff, had this to say of the invasion situation in a report to the Secretary of War:

The singular relationship existing between the Vichy Government and Berlin, and with the French provinces in North Africa, together with the differences of religion and race and the deep-rooted hatreds of the heterogeneous populations of Algiers and Morocco, imposed a political problem of maximum complexity on General Eisenhower. At the moment his energies and direction had to be concentrated on the successful penetration of an 800-mile coastline and a vast hinterland by a force of but 107,000 men. To further complicate the situation he must be on guard against the possibility of an Axis stroke through Spain to sever our communications through the Straits of Gibraltar and interrupt by aerial bombardment the single railroad line from Casablanca through Fez to Oran.

D-DAY . . . NORTH AFRICA



There were other pressing problems, too. The Western Task Force would have to enter battle immediately after completing a 3,500-mile sea voyage. All task force landings were scheduled to take place during the darkness of early morning—on strange soil. The assaults were to be coordinated so as to occur within the space of an hour at three widely separated areas . . . and only a few of the 107,000 invaders had been in previous combat. That the Allied landings were successfully accomplished with so little loss of life is astounding.

As was expected, all did not happen as planned. A French uprising designed to assist the Western Task Force was nipped in the bud by a Vichy general. Attempts to take Algiers by frontal assault failed completely. The convoy carrying the 60th Combat Team to Port Lyautey was one hour and a half late; thus the element of surprise was gone. Furthermore, many landing craft were lost, foundered and smashed on the rocks near Fedala by inexperienced coxswains in foul weather.

On the credit side of the ledger was the precision operation conducted by the 47th Combat Team at Safi. The 39th Combat Team was in possession of its Algerian objectives soon after landing, and the 60th Combat Team waged a tremendous battle to overwhelm the most stubborn opposition in French

Morocco. Of the huge invasion fleet of 850 vessels only 16 were lost. More important, the American Army was started well on the road to victory.

* * * *

THE saga of the North African affair began its most colorful chapter when 850 giants of the sea set sail in October of 1942. It was then that the story of massive planning gave way to the tightly-woven tale of regimental combat teams. These *R.C.T.'s*, or *C.T.'s* (as they later were called) were the backbone of the invasion—the *chessmen* of the strategists. Through these teams of ground force soldiers the battles of World War II achieved their success or failure, their invasion or their repulsion. The story of the Ninth's widely separated combat teams forms, therefore, a most interesting account.

Slightly bewildered *Falcons* of the 39th C.T. bade farewell to the fog-covered scenery and friendly natives of the British Isles on October 26, 1942. Attached to the Eastern Assault Force they had become part of a large troopship convoy. Prior to sailing the five transports carrying the 39th had been beehives of activity. *Something* was happening of a momentous nature, but what it was remained a well guarded secret. Naval craft of all sizes and types dotted the Irish Sea, ready to give battle to any intruder at a moment's notice. Rumor-mongers and

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rigid censorship confused the situation—until the *I told you so boys* had the task force doing everything but flying. There certainly would have been a great deal more excitement, had the *Falcons* known that the Eastern Assault Force was but another name for *first landing wave of the Eastern Task Force!*

Final destination was unannounced as the vessels deployed toward the United States. By now the North Atlantic was having the roughest of weather. Seasickness was not uncommon, although the food served the 39th was fairly good—especially in comparison with that served on most troop transports. Then three days of tipsy sailing westward came to an abrupt ending, and the course was changed to due south.

As the grey transports and their escorting warships steamed southward, suspense increased regarding the possible terminus of the voyage. On Sunday, November 1st, the long awaited journey's end was announced, "Algiers . . . Sunday Morning . . . November 8th!"

Coupled with this exciting revelation was the release of invasion plans:

Three task forces were to launch a simultaneous invasion of French North Africa . . . the eastern prong was to consist of the 39th, the 168th C.T. and attached units . . . the *Falcons* were to land east of Algiers . . . the 168th west of the city . . . troops were not to fire unless fired upon . . . at the first sign of hostile action by the French, the coded signal *Play Ball* was to be given . . . this was to result in warning other units along the far-flung front that resistance had developed.

The scope of the objectives which were assigned to the Eastern Task Force included much more than the city of Algiers. After the initial landings, it was the plan of the Allied Supreme Command to *funnel* the embryo British First Army and American divisions through the area, eventually capturing all of Tunisia. Algiers was an important prize mainly because of its airfield facilities, which could form an advance base for the combined operations of the AAF and RAF.

Route of the huge armada comprising the eastern force cut through the enemy-infested waters of the Mediterranean. After passing England's fortress

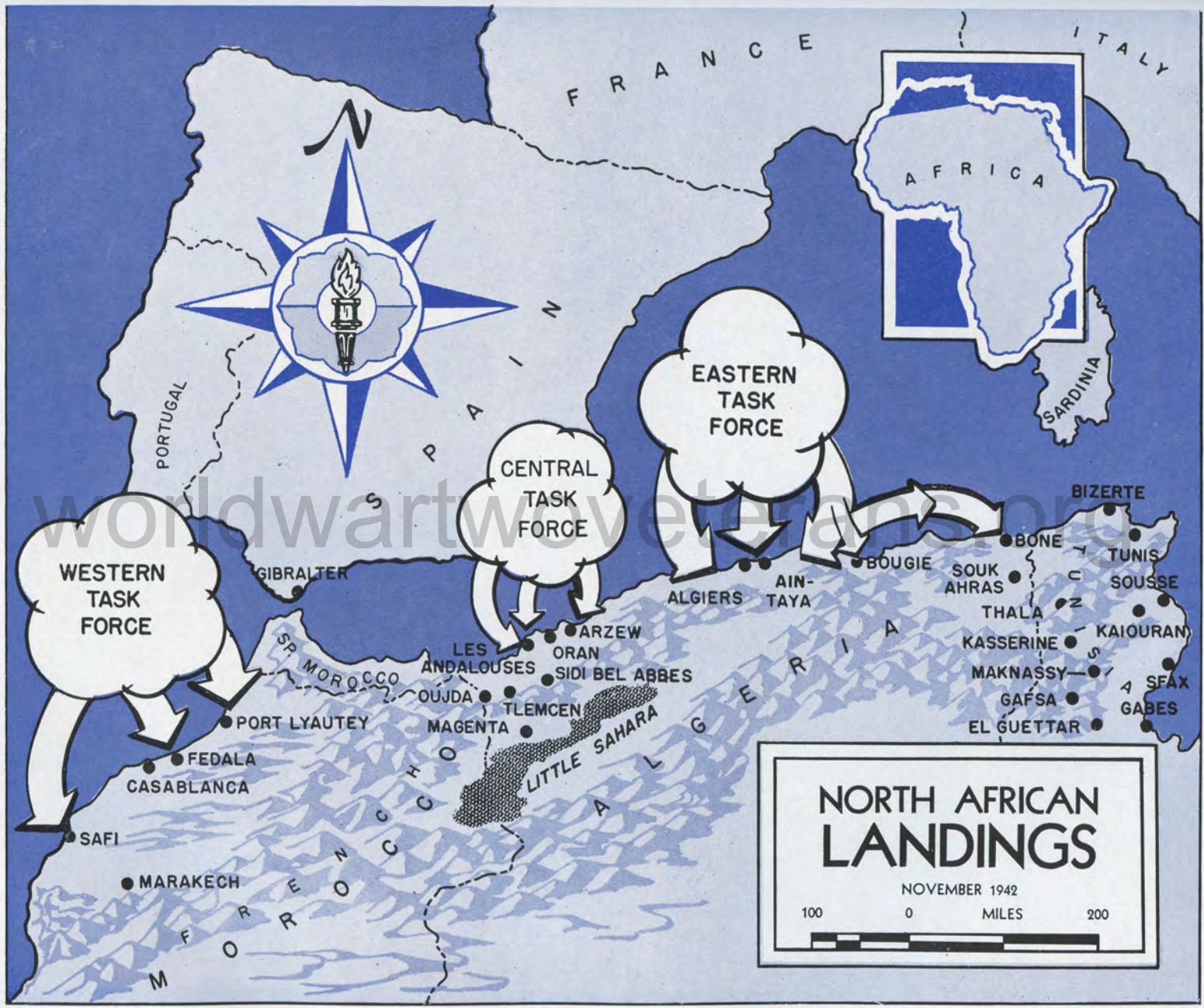
gate of Gibraltar, the trip meant a 400-mile course through the well-known convoy lanes. German submarines and land-based aircraft were expected to be very active and U-boats already had exacted a great toll of British shipping since the beginning of the war—along these very lanes.

Time was short on board the transports. One week remained for all landing troops to become familiarized with the myriad of intelligence bulletins and special maps which suddenly had seized the contemporary spotlight. Soldiers were oriented as to their duties, the terrain and what they could expect to find awaiting them. *Commando* and special reconnaissance units were instructed as to the descriptions of individuals who might be encountered, their mannerisms and dispositions. Special maps were studied down to the last detail; pieces of information were sought eagerly.

Throughout the invasion force life evolved itself into a constant grind of instruction, study and speculative conversation. The transports sailed in a semi-circular route on the Atlantic so as to kill time until the exact moment when the convoy was scheduled to enter and pass through the Straits of Gibraltar. On November 5, 1942, General Eisenhower and his staff arrived at Gibraltar. During the following day the skippers received their long-awaited signal and closed into a rendezvous. As the dark Atlantic shivered in its wake at 9 P.M., the fleet of ships slipped past the *Rock*, through the Mediterranean and on to Algeria.

German observers spotted the Allied convoys at Gibraltar. That was expected. The enemy rushed his information to higher headquarters. But the Allied strategy had been so clever and so secretive that the Nazis believed this to be an attempted running of supplies and manpower to the beleaguered isle of Malta. Already the Germans had fallen victim of another rumor: *the Allies were massing a large fleet off Dakar*. Sixty-three enemy submarines later were proved to have been off this west coast port, awaiting an attack which never came.

Now the Germans made an even greater error of judgment. To catch the convoy on its way to *Malta*, the enemy shifted every plane he could spare to his fields in Sicily, Sardinia and southern Italy. The



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EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY



Luftwaffe plan was to trap and smash the fleet as it entered the narrow straits between Sicily and North Africa—known as *Bomb Alley*.

Deceptively the vessels headed for Malta during daylight of the 7th, passing their target areas near Algiers and Oran. That night they pivoted to the right rear, with full speed ahead for the invasion coast of Algeria. Goering's *Luftwaffe* had been fooled. It would not be able to cause any damage for some time. Planes and supplies would have to be moved to fields nearer the new theater of operations before the *Stukas* and *Messerschmidts* could hinder the invasion forces. The convoys were safe—well, almost.

Almost? Yes, the war fast would be brought home to the men of the 2nd Battalion (Lt. Colonel Walter M. Oakes) of the 39th C.T.! It was during *General Quarters* on the morning of November 7, 1942, that near-tragedy struck at the *Falcons*. Men of the convoy column stared aghast at their first sight of war . . . explosions blazed forth from under the stern of the *USS Thomas Stone*. Water funneled into the air and the calm, blue Mediterranean reverberated to the shouts of, "We've been hit! . . . it's a torpedo . . . we've been hit!"

Indeed the *Stone* was hit—and badly. She was struck under the fantail in the after part of the hull. Her master cut the limping vessel out of the column, with smoke pouring forth from the torpedo wound.

The entire 2nd Battalion was aboard the *Stone*, and it was to have assaulted in the landing operation. Fortunately, Colonel Caffey had the 3rd Battalion acting as a floating reserve—for just such an emergency. Quick action was necessary. The *Stone* could not carry on without the aid of a tow . . . she was crippled. With but 24 hours remaining before H-Hour, the 3rd Battalion (Major Farrar O. Griggs) was substituted for the 2nd, and the convoy sailed on.

That left the *USS Thomas Stone* sitting in the dangerous Mediterranean . . . disabled, an easy mark for German or Italian patrol planes and submarines. Aboard was an entire battalion with "its precious equipment." It was 160 miles to the objective. The enemy now knew definitely of the convoy's presence, and the situation became more tense. With one full day of sailing left in these waters, the remainder of the skippers were on the alert.

Until this moment war had been a dreamy sort of nightmare; something to train for, to see in the newsreels or read about in the local journals. It was pretty terrible at second hand . . . now it was *horrible* at first hand. Those who knew of the torpedoing realized that this was no picnic . . . the enemy was playing for keeps! Many men of the 39th had buddies aboard the *Stone*. Now that transport was lying helpless in the middle of nowhere. Then came the usual question . . . "Who will be next?" An *unbelievable* event had transpired, as fantastic as the news of Pearl Harbor just eleven months prior. The bad news spread . . . "*They got the Stone . . . they got the Stone!*" War is like that.

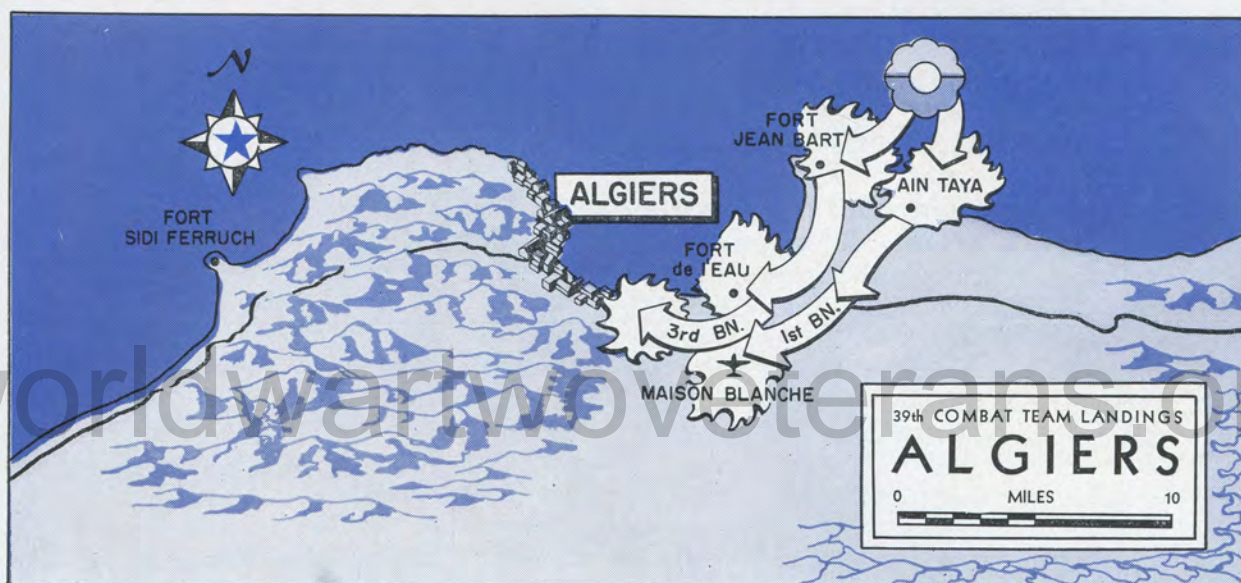
But the convoy did not stop, neither did it have any further incidents. At 5 P.M. the 39th passed its landing beach but continued on. Then during the black of night the great grey fleet rushed to a rendezvous close to the landing areas. A final checkup and *America* was ready. So was the 39th Combat Team!

* * * *

D-DAY . . . NORTH AFRICA

STRAINED faces were hidden behind the mask of early morning darkness as the 39th C.T. headed for the sandy shore. The past and future filled almost everyone's mind. At 1:30 A.M. the 1st Battalion (Lt. Colonel A. H. Rosenfeld) disembarked and raced ashore into the uncertain blackness. They landed at Ain-Taya, about 15 miles east of the city of Algiers. Fifteen minutes later the 3rd Battalion

overcome. Following the rapid victory at Maison Blanche and vicinity came a well remembered sight. British *Hurricanes* and *Spitfires*, which had left Gibraltar at dawn, were dropping out of the sky and landing upon the newly captured airstrip. This signified that one of the major missions of the eastern invasion group had been accomplished—that of capturing the huge airdrome. (The 39th's objective had



raced ashore in the vicinity of Fort Jean Bart, which is near Ain-Taya. They had been delayed for two hours by failure of electricity aboard the *Leedstown*, which temporarily stopped the lowering of landing craft. Assisting the *Falcons* was one battalion of British *Commandos*.

While French coastal batteries and Allied warships exchanged salvos during the remaining hours of darkness, the 1st Battalion pushed inland. Within five hours and fifteen minutes after landing—hindered by darkness and in hostile territory—the unit negotiated 12 miles on foot to arrive at the key Maison Blanche (White House) Airport. A sharp, short battle ensued. Although the French were using tanks, the 1st Battalion overcame all resistance by 8:30 A.M.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion moved inland to Fort de l'Eau. Here, too, opposition quickly was

been seizure of the airfield, which was accomplished by 6:15 A.M.)

* * * *

COINCIDENT with the landing of the 39th, a bold attempt was under way—aimed at seizure of Algiers by frontal assault. Just before H-Hour, two British destroyers loaded with American and British fighting men inched their way up to the boom protecting the harbor of Algiers. Their mission was to capture the dock area and prevent any sabotage. Detector devices picked up the presence of these warships almost immediately, however, and searchlights played upon the water with rays of artificial light. Coastal batteries opened fire and one destroyer was hit badly. It turned about, but the other craft broke through the boom and nosed toward the central dock area. The small warship moved safely underneath the coastal guns as a new menace appeared—shell

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

fire and machine-gun slugs. A landing was effected but resistance was too hot. At 9 A.M. the mauled vessel ran a gauntlet of fire from the coastal batteries and made the safety of the sea. Thus the attempt to take Algiers frontally failed.

In the area of Algiers, the 39th C.T. received another jolt from the sea. German raiders polished off the "Leedstown", which was lying off shore. From land, Lt. (Captain) Conrad V. Anderson could see the vessel ablaze and sinking. He swam out to the stricken transport, aided in evacuating personnel and saved the extremely valuable regimental kitchen equipment. The "Leedstown" had 500 aboard; however, only 12 men were lost (5 soldiers and 7 sailors).

But Algiers soon was surrounded. To the west the 168th C.T. had landed and received the surrender of Fort Sidi Ferruch, without a shot being fired. Against slight opposition the regiment made its way to the city limits. The 39th, meanwhile, had moved up to become part of the semi-circular development. By noon of the first day all objectives of the Eastern Assault Force either had been taken or were under fire.

Admiral Jean Darlan, Marshal Petain's self-chosen successor and commander in chief of all Vichy French Forces, happened to be visiting his sick son in Algiers at the time of the Allied landings. With Algiers encircled by land and sea—and with railroads, highways and airports in Allied hands, Darlan was ready to discuss the city's surrender with General Ryder. Both the Americans and the French awaited eagerly the result of these talks.

The logical happened: it was an armistice and would be followed by formal surrender. Occupation of Algiers would take place at 7 P.M. (Admiral Darlan was taken into "protective custody" and later proved useful in ordering other area leaders to issue the *cease fire* command). So less than twenty-four hours after the landings, the eastern prong of the invasion could report: *occupying key city and all objectives!*

* * * *

AS THEIR comrades were making history on the beaches of Algeria, the 2nd Battalion of the 39th was writing a colorful sidelight to the saga of invasion. Their actions prove a previous statement

ALGIERS



D-DAY . . . NORTH AFRICA

made in this text: *There never was such an undertaking as "Torch" in the manuals or military textbooks of the world.*

When the remainder of the convoy had steamed past, Colonel Oakes decided that he would try to join the fight. He loaded 700 men and provisions aboard the landing craft which were being carried by the *USS Thomas Stone* for the invasion. Led by a British corvette, the Colonel planned to sail these tiny LCVP's the remaining 160 miles to Ain-Taya . . . through enemy-infested waters and into battle. The match-wood fleet set sail as darkness began to cover the Mediterranean—destination beachhead!

But these were flimsy craft not fitted to long-range sailing. They became unseaworthy during the course of the evening and proceeded to break apart. As a landing craft became unfit for travel, its men and equipment were hoisted aboard the corvette. So badly did these craft leak, however, it was decided finally to reload the entire battalion upon the diminutive corvette. Then the latter's guns sank the LCVP's which remained, so that the landings in Algeria would not become compromised.

The corvette was drawing a great deal of water when she docked on the morning of November 9th, loaded to the navigation bridge with the worn-out men of the 2nd Battalion. A few days later the wounded *Stone* was towed into port . . . in one piece. During the course of this remarkable gesture on the part of the 2nd Battalion, not one man or one piece of equipment had been lost. More important, the eager troops of the *Stone* had honorably discharged a duty to their comrades in arms—despite the initial terror of being disabled at sea.

* * * *

WHILE the Eastern and Central Task Forces invaded Algeria, an equally spectacular and more strongly resisted landing was being staged upon the beaches of French Morocco. Here intrigue and capitulation back-fired at the final moment; and here, the 47th and 60th C.T.'s of the Ninth Division tangled with the ever-legendary French Foreign Legion. Assaulting French Morocco was the Western Task Force. They were launching the ambitiously-con-

ceived and boldly-executed plan which would free South America of any invasion threats.

It was October 24, 1942, and a rendezvous was in progress. The watery wastes of the Atlantic Ocean never before had witnessed such a vast assemblage. Transports stretched for miles and miles, protected by massive dreadnaughts and sleek destroyers—which darted about like farm dogs herding a flock of fat geese. Admiral Hewitt and his staff were taking temporary charge of the Western Task Force, the military thunderbolt which would unleash itself shortly upon French Morocco. From various inlets, ports and harbors came the convoys of men and equipment, food and ammunition, tanks and guns. Once assembled, the most stupendous overseas undertaking of all times would begin.

As in the invasion convoys mounted in the British Isles, rumors and bewilderment dwelt overtime with the men of the Western Task Force—particularly regarding possible areas of landing. And no wonder! This was a big-time operation, if size meant anything. The Southern Attack Group had joined the oceanic meeting with ninety-nine vessels of all types; fifty-four ships made up the northern landing force. The Atlantic was sprinkled with grey hulls, smoke-bellowing stacks, sturdy masts and raised booms. Sometimes the men on board the transports counted fifty or more craft upon the horizon.

Led by the flagship of the escorting naval fleet the *USS Augusta*, the task force zig-zagged northeast, west, northeast and finally southeast toward Africa. Bright moonlight nights, punctuated by a few squalls, kept illness at a minimum. Transports were heavily-loaded, however, and space was at a premium. Men slept on wire-spring or canvas bunks—usually four tiers high. Some slept on the decks . . . when the weather was good. During daylight hours a place to sit upon the bare deck was prized highly. Most GIs ate standing, with waits of one hour and more (for serving) not uncommon. After being stationed at the largest artillery post in the world, the *Raiders* and *Go-Devils* were conserving room! Landing craft and a hundred and one other items stowed on the



EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

open decks, furthermore, gave daily reminder that *this was not a pleasure cruise!*

Two days at sea passed . . . then the inquisitive soldiers aboard the vessels of the convoy learned of their amazing destinations. For the 47th C.T. it was to be Safi, French Morocco. Their landing would begin with one of the finest pieces of naval deception of the war; it would end with a smashing victory. The plan of action is told best by the man who led the 47th, Colonel (Brigadier General) Edwin H. Randle:

"*The Southern Attack Group . . . consisting of the 47th Regimental Combat Team (reinforced) . . . and one Combat Command (less one battalion) from the 2nd Armored Division, supported by the Auxiliary Aircraft Carrier Santee, the battleship New York, the cruiser Philadelphia and three destroyers, was to land at Safi, 130 miles south of Casablanca, establish a beachhead under cover of which the medium tanks could be unloaded at the docks, and prevent the French garrison at Marrakech from reinforcing Casablanca. General Harmon was to move north with his armor and assist in the capture of Casablanca by attacking it from the south, leaving the 47th RCT to hold Safi.*"

An additional objective for the Southern Attack Group was the capture of the Safi Airport, in line with the mission of the invasion.

Accompanying the 47th C.T. was a majority of General Patton's armor—aboard the sea train *Lakehurst*. This cargo was of enormous importance to the conduct of the invasion. To carry out the mission of the Western Task Force it was necessary that the tanks be unloaded as soon as possible. Safi was to be seized quickly, so as to afford initial protection for landing these armored vehicles on the docks.

The mission assigned the Western Task Force was: *Attack western Morocco; seize and secure the port of Casablanca as a base for future operations to the north and northeast; eliminate or cripple the enemy air force and secure by dark of D-Day at least one airfield as a base for land-based planes.*

To carry out these orders General Patton desired to effect landings and capture three primary objectives—Safi, Port Lyautey and Fedala.

Two destroyers, each carrying a rifle company of the 47th, were to be used in accomplishing the difficult task of capturing the harbor. The remainder of the team traveled aboard the transports *Harris*, *Dix* and *Lyons*—all except a special mission, that is, which consisted of Second Lieutenant William G. Duckworth and five enlisted men who crossed the Atlantic on a submarine. Theirs was a secret task—one which might have originated from the pen of Jules Verne or H. G. Wells.

But whether his was a special or routine assignment, each member of the combat team immediately set to work to prepare for the occasion. Continuous night classes were held for officers and non-coms; daytime lectures instructed troops on the terrain; accurately prepared maps and aerial photos completed the picture. Pamphlets of information on North African customs, taboos, monetary systems, the complex political situation and variant topography were issued to all troops. It seemed as if very little had been overlooked by the Army—even Arabic interpreters, in the persons of Staff Sergeant George E. Shalhoup and Pfc. John S. Simon were assigned to the *Raider* regiment. The natives, however, mostly spoke Berber.

* * * *

PART of the deception of the Safi landing was gained from the use of two destroyers, which were disguised to resemble French vessels. Initially, 20 men and 2 officers from Company *K* and a similar number from Company *L* were aboard these warships, the *Bernadou* and the *Cole*. On November 7, 1942, at 2 P.M., the remaining members of the two companies boarded the destroyers at sea. That evening, with first combat just hours away, every preparation was rushed to completion. The last meals were served—steak, chicken, turkey. To some, this was like eating a condemned man's meal. But gripes were absent in the tense and stuffy holds.

Disembarkation rendezvous was reached at 11:30 P.M. The convoy was just eight miles off the shore of Safi. All minds now turned to one thought—INVASION! Battle-equipped GIs began streaming up the passageways and onto the main deck. Here they stood . . . awaiting the command to go over the side, down the nets and into landing craft. On their left arms, below the Ninth Division insignia



PRE-INVASION SERVICES

was an armband bearing a replica of the American flag. Each man carried two canteens of water and a full day's rations. Armament variations consisted of a *Springfield* or *M-1* Rifle, or a *Thompson* Sub-Machine gun, plus grenades, ammunition, entrenching tools, combat knives, bayonets, good luck charms, the new *M-1* helmet—and the ever-present and cumbersome gas mask.

Minutes ticked by and the first wave was straining at the leash. Landing craft were lowered into the calm sea; nets rolled down over the shells of the transports. Below in the electric atmosphere of the holds were the waves of *Raiders* who would follow.

They played cards, joked, thought of home and waited—waited for *their* turn. It now was November 8, 1942 . . . D-Day! Twelve-thirty . . . twelve forty-five . . . one o'clock . . . the shrill voice systems of the convoy bade the first wave go over the side! Human cargo filled the nets . . . the landing boats quickly became loaded . . . grim-faced and wide-eyed doughboys were ready. Equally wide-eyed coxswains steered the craft toward Safi; and the eight miles to shore shortened to seven . . . six . . . five . . . four and one-half. On swept the amphibious fleet, into the misty black night. It was as if the *Charge of the Light Brigade* had taken to the sea—for flying

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

from the stern mast of each invasion boat was *Old Glory* . . . defiantly waving in the breeze!

* * * *

A RECEPTION party was preparing to meet the 47th Combat Team on the shores of Safi . . . with loaded arms. Forewarned by the successful and well-timed landings in Algeria, and by the capture of certain pro-American leaders (who had tried to arrange capitulations), the French were rushing to offer resistance. Excerpts from the battle notes of Moroccan headquarters give the Vichy French version:

A solemn obligation had been undertaken to defend our Empire against all comers. It was the only means to prevent the Germans from assuming that defense themselves and occupying the whole of France and her Empire . . . on the night of November 7-8, General Nogues (Resident General of Morocco) was warned that the debarkation of American troops could be considered imminent, and that certain factions intended to seize control of the government in Morocco . . . General Nogues immediately issued the *Alert* order.

The Safi garrison had been warned to action by its parent organization the division at Marrakech (97 miles southeast of Safi). About 450 officers and men were getting into position as the landings occurred. In addition, shore batteries made ready to render the harbor uncomfortable for any invader. But the Americans had a *secret weapon*!

Shortly before H-Hour, an American submarine slipped unnoticed within the range of Cape Safi coastal batteries. The underseas craft rose noise-

Safi

The very nature of Safi gives an initial advantage to the defender. Captain (Lt. Col.) Randall H. Bryant, Intelligence Officer of the 47th Combat Team correctly summarized the area three weeks prior to the invasion:

This port lies in a natural curving indentation of the coast south of Cape Safi. It is sheltered to the north by Tower Point. High cliffs overhanging the north shore, shelter the port against northerly trade winds. The harbor is formed by two moles, the Jetee Principal (315 feet wide) and the Jetee Transversale (159 yards long and used for phosphate loading). With strong westerly winds, the anchorage off Safi is untenable.

...

lessly to the surface, and her water-tight conning tower was unbuttoned to the sky. This was the naval *transport* of Lt. Duckworth and his five assistants. Their mission soon would be accomplished. A rubber boat was lowered into the rippling water . . . and the gallant sextette cautiously toed its way on board. They headed for the long jetty of Safi Harbor. When the objective was reached the little tube affair bobbed to a halt. With precision and haste the invaders got into position and held an *infra-red* lamp near the end of the mole. It would remain unseen by all, except those aboard destroyers which carried special equipment.

Cutting through the Atlantic toward the harbor were the destroyers *Cole* and *Bernadou*. Guided by the *invisible light*, the warships nosed into the port entrance at 4:28 A.M. As they entered, machine guns and rifle fire opened up on them. On the cliffs overlooking the harbor gate were two fixed 75mm harbor guns, which blasted out a challenge to determine the nationality of the vessels. But deception again played an important role.

The *Bernadou* and *Cole* had been disguised as French men-of-war at Bermuda. In the dimness of early morning it hardly was possible that they could be distinguished visually from friendly warships. The destroyer captains cleverly manipulated their way under the fixed batteries. The *Bernadou* returned the same signal as challenged them, using her three-inch guns for the reply. Temporarily confused, the French gun crews allowed the American ships to get inside the line of fire.

However, the *Bernadou* had gone too near the shore. She ran aground on a sand spit inside the harbor at 4:30 A.M. The jolt was terrific, and as the initial excitement reached its peak, a hostile 25mm anti-tank gun was knocked out by the destroyer's guns. All during this time, Company *K* (Captain Gordon Sympson) was below deck.

There was a reason that the men were not above when the *Bernadou* grounded. The regimental commander believed that fire from machine guns on the jetty would injure anyone on the open decks. He had specified that all troops would remain under cover while entering the harbor. As the vibrating hull nosed into the sand an ominous feeling per-



SAFI HARBOR

vaded the holds below. Men huddling inside were under the impression, since it was dark outside and blacked out on board, that shell fire had destroyed their ship. But it had not . . . not by a long-shot!

After the grounding, plucky Captain Sympton yelled below, "Anybody hurt?" . . . nobody was . . . "Well, let's get the hell out of here!" urged the company commander.

A single rope net was slung over the bow. One-by-one the men filed on deck and made their way forward . . . over the side. The soldiers streamed onto the beach and out of sight. The time was 4:35 A.M.; the day was Sunday. Thus began the invasion of Safi, with the landing of Company K.

* * * *

IN HER docking the *Cole* was more fortunate. She safely passed through the port and rammed the merchandise pier, pulling up for a landing. Company L (Captain Thomas Wilson) began its invasion at 4:45 A.M.

Meanwhile, the destroyer *Mervine* had countered the fire of the harbor battery, knocking out these guns just as the *Bernadou* was unloading her troops. Company K quickly cleared the waterfront area of

the enemy and turned its efforts southward, establishing a roadblock on the highway to Mogador. Company L, having disembarked from the *Cole*, took charge of the harbor vicinity, protecting the valuable docks against sabotage. Acting under previous plans, Captain Wilson dispatched one platoon to capture the Shell Oil Company installation—300 yards from the waterfront—which was taken against heavy machine-gun fire. All during this time rifle fire had been coming from the jetty and mixed weapons were blasting out death from the hills.

When the initial firing had commenced, four 130mm rifles of the coastal batteries on Pointe-de-la-Tour (Tower Point) had opened fire on the transports. Heavy guns of the battleship *New York* and the cruiser *Philadelphia* replied with their convincing power. The *New York* knocked the control tower out of action with the second salvo of her 14-inch guns. This ricocheting shellfire killed the occupants (including the French naval officer in charge) and destroyed the director. The battery continued to fire in an independent manner, not hitting any vessels. Finally, the gun crews were forced to flee under the withering bombardment of the two capital

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

ships in the bay. The knockout came at 4:45 A.M.

LCVP's followed the destroyers ashore and at 5 A.M. elements of the 70th Tank Battalion (1st Platoon, Co. B) and the 47th Infantry Reconnaissance Platoon hit the beach near the grounded *Bernadou*. One-half of the Recon unit moved southward into Safi . . . seizing the telephone and telegraph exchanges . . . taking care of the French 25mm anti-tank gun and crew across the street from the Post Office Building. A platoon of Company B (47th) worked its way up the north hill and occupied the battery of guns which were put out of action by the *New York*. The Americans capped their seizure with the hoisting of the Stars and Stripes!

Opposing the landings were the legendary troops of the storied French Foreign Legion.

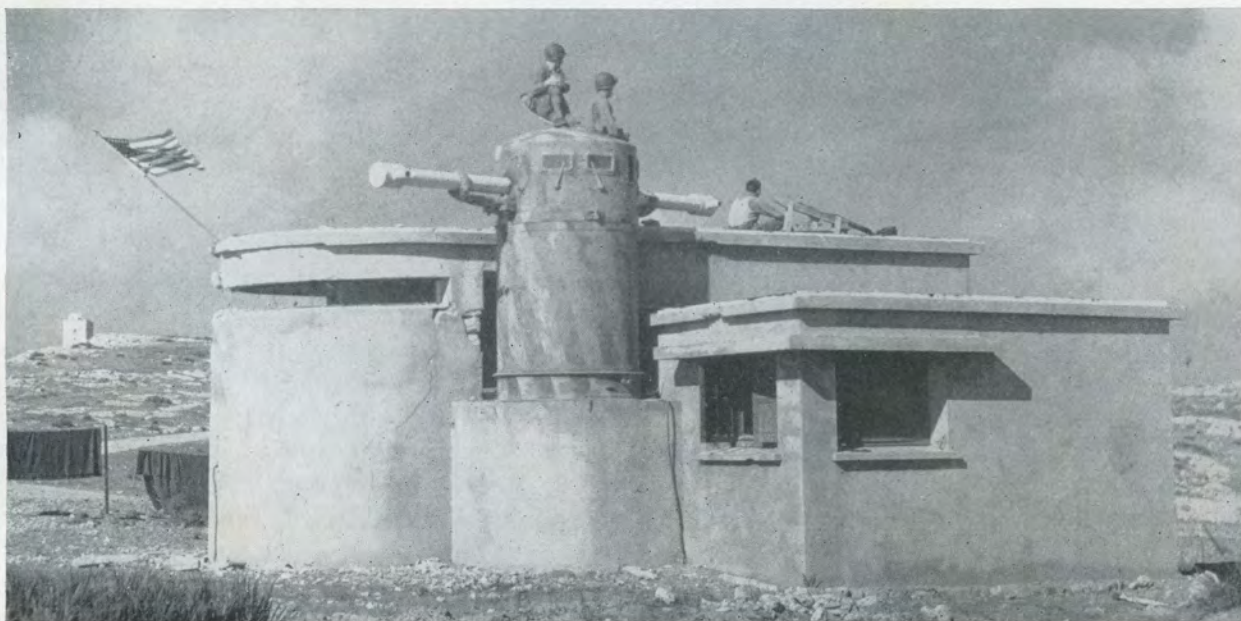
The first assault waves ashore brought the 1st Battalion Landing Team (Major Frederick C. Feil). These amphibious invaders were met by artillery, rifle and machine-gun fire from the high ground north and northeast of the harbor. For over one hour the 1st was held up . . . then a crushing advance began. *Raiders* scaled a 300-foot cliff after cross-

ing the beaches under fire. They pushed on, capturing, destroying or driving out all semblance of resistance. On drove the 1st Battalion . . . until its doughboys had organized their beachhead objectives.

It was daybreak before the 2nd Battalion (Major Louis Gershenow) landed. Despite an explosion and fire at sea, however, the battalion was putting ashore at Yellow Beach (8 miles south of Safi) by 9:30. As this unit was turning north, other elements of the 47th C.T. were completing their landings. The 3rd Battalion (Major John B. Evans), minus Companies K and L, was debarking near the center of the town; and the 84th Field Artillery Battalion was rolling onto land as well—notwithstanding the soft sand and rough coastal terrain.

Safi still resounded to the fire of the invasion. Company K had been fighting against rifle and machine-gun fire at the French barracks since 7:30 A.M., and assistance was needed. When the remainder of the 3rd Battalion landed, Major Evans dispatched Companies I and M to aid in capturing the Caserne. Company I was halted to the north by fire, while K received an attack from three *Renault* light tanks. At a temporary loss as to the proper

NEW TENANTS SCAN HORIZON FROM POINTE-DE-LA-TOUR CONTROL TOWER



D-DAY . . . NORTH AFRICA

usage of their newly-issued rocket launchers (*Bazookas*), doughboys instinctively fired their less complicated rifle grenades at the armor. These shots were dramatically successful. The vehicles were knocked out. The ingenious Americans then quickly turned them around and fired back at the besieged barracks with French weapons!

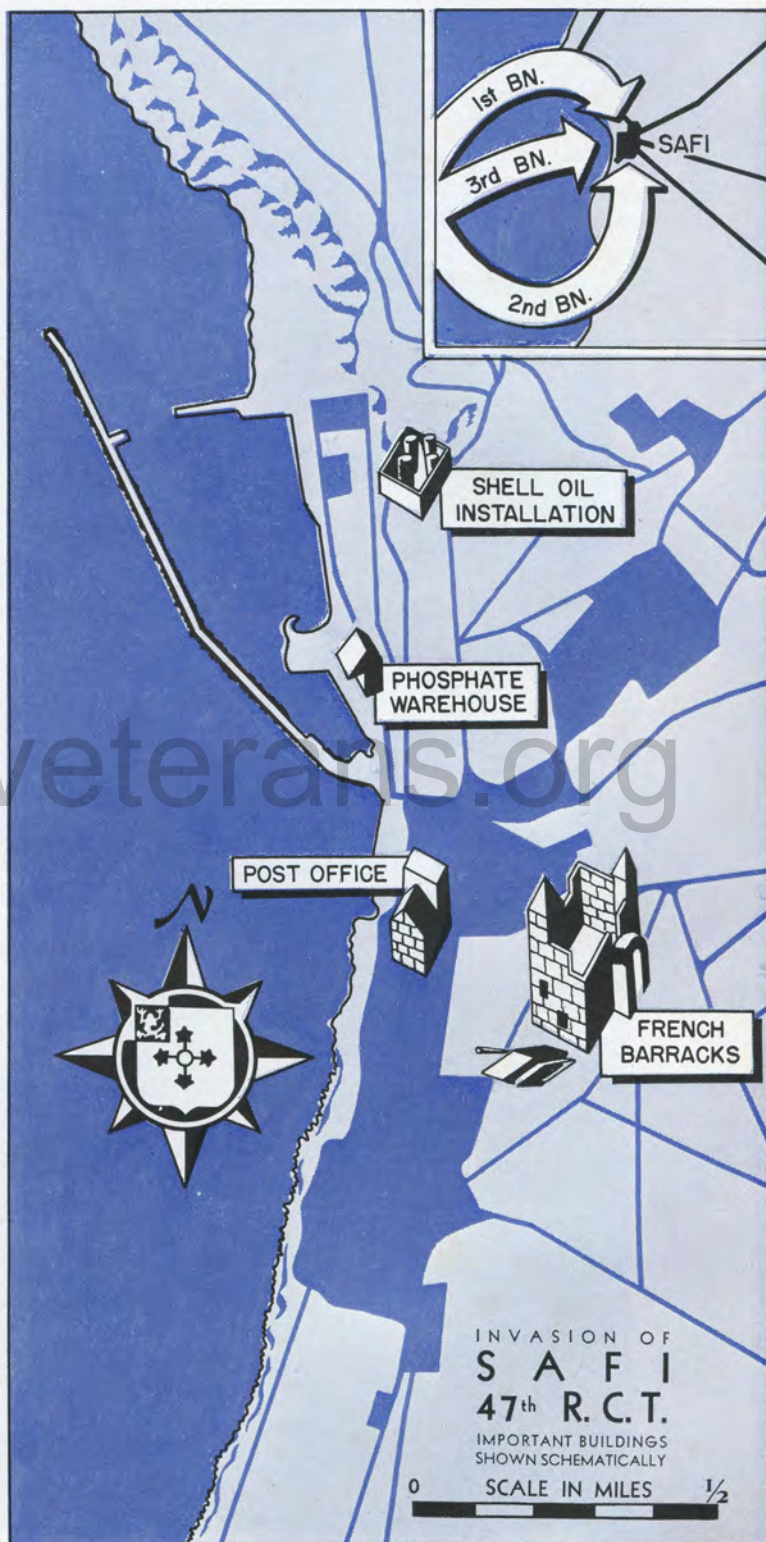
Heavy weapons now came upon the scene with the arrival of Company *M* (Captain James J. Johnston). The bombardment was terrific, as mortar crews had a field day lobbing-in deadly 81mm high explosive shells at a steady rate. The defenders had had enough and surrendered at 3:30 P.M. French officers later stated that they had wanted to give up one hour earlier, but that the heavy fire had prevented their doing so!

General Harmon began to move his armor ashore at noon—commencing with the light tanks. Mediums were unloaded from the sea train *Lakehurst* three hours later. A few light tanks were dispatched on reconnaissance twelve miles south along the Marrakech highway, with the mission of forestalling any attack by the strong Marrakech garrison. Other tankers assembled for the final drive the 2nd Armored was to make on Casablanca.

Inside Safi itself, opposition had melted away to sniping. By 4 P.M. the 47th C.T. had reached all of its objectives and was holding a 10,000-yard beach-head! The last big guns had stopped firing, too; for the 64th Foreign Legion's rifles south of Safi had been abandoned with the approach of the 2nd Battalion. With November 8th drawing to a close, positions were consolidated and a regimental command post was opened inside the Phosphate Building offices (on the docks). Colonel Randle was appointed commander of Military District No. 5, and the first area occupation by elements of the Ninth Division overseas began.

By evening there were approximately 300 prisoners-of-war—ironically enclosed within their own barracks. The French view is told best by their battle notes:

Safi, attacked by vastly superior forces and having very limited means of defense, fell but the Americans did not spread out from it.



EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

After the second day events happened at a rapid pace. Naval observation planes flashed a report that an armored column was moving on Safi from the direction of Marrakech. Aircraft from the auxiliary carrier *Santee* immediately took to the air. (Fortunately, the French commander of the Marrakech airfield was pro-American and halted all Moroccan aircraft from leaving the ground). U.S. Navy flyers, with armored infantry and tanks of the 2nd Armored destroyed the motorized infantry spearheads of the column. After the late-afternoon skirmish ended, the French decided to halt any further counter-offensives beyond the hills outside of Safi.

As the smoke and destruction of the column began to settle, the American tankers were withdrawn for the 130-mile march upon Casablanca. While the 47th C.T. held the Safi area, expecting an offensive against its thinly-held beachhead, the *blitz-buggies* of General Harmon made a spectacular thrust to the port of Mazagan—which was enroute to the main objective. Mazagan was surrounded by tanks and the French garrison surrendered without firing a shot. The road to Casablanca was open with the removal of this final barrier. Destroyers loaded with fuel and supplies had followed the armored spearheads up the coast; they now berthed at Mazagan harbor, while the French troops aided in unloading necessary cargoes. Refueled, the 2nd Armored turned

tracks northward—General Patton was calling urgently for armor.

* * * *

HISTORY definitely was made during the morning of November 11, 1942 when a group of four French officers from the Marrakech garrison called upon Colonel Randle. They were carrying a flag of truce, as well as written instructions from General Nogues to cease firing and remain in position pending peace negotiations. The 47th's commander had not received any such information. But he told the envoys that he would order his troops to hold their fire—so long as their opponents remained in place. The Colonel immediately radioed for confirmation. From Western Task Force Headquarters came the order to agree to a suspension of hostilities. On the following day another French group approached under flag of truce to say that hostilities were terminated. There was a delay while Colonel Randle radioed for confirmation once again—it came . . . the armistice was official.

For the 47th C.T. on the southernmost flank of the entire invasion this meant both peace and, later, a new ally . . . their former foe. But the real story of the armistice had its colorful transpiration in another area—to the north. Here other landings had taken place. Rough battles marked these beachheads . . . one, the scene of the most bitterly-resisted

DOWNED FRENCH PLANES AT MAZAGAN



D-DAY . . . NORTH AFRICA



ENROUTE TO INVASION

advance of the Ninth Division's combat teams. Colonel de Rohan once related the details to the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It is an exciting story which began at sea.

* * * *

ACTUALLY there isn't any glory in combat . . . at least there isn't for the men who do the fighting. War is a dirty, grimy, nerve-wracking, wearisome nightmare of *kill or be killed*. Sometimes, out of this wretched existence can be pieced together a story of self-sacrificing heroism or humorous remembrance. Occasionally, the constant recounting of a battle's finer points reveals a really colorful saga. The fighting for Port Lyautey and the fabled Kasba forms just such a vivid chapter of *Operation Torch*. And it all began at sea!

The 60th Regimental Combat Team rode to war and adventure in eight transports and one destroyer.

It wasn't an excursion cruise, as any of the *sardine-packed* GIs would have admitted. But the Atlantic was fairly calm and (maybe) some voyagers even enjoyed the trip. At any rate, after five days at sea the convoy was agog, speculating about the recently announced invasion objective for the 60th in North Africa . . . Port Lyautey. Few of the passengers on board had heard of their beachhead area prior to this announcement. All they had known upon boarding the gangplank was that they were part of Sub-Task Force *Goalpost*.

Goalpost was the code name for the Northern Attack Group, smallest operational command of Patton's Western Task Force. In addition to the 60th C. T., the diminutive force was composed of a landing battalion of the 2nd Armored Division and several attached units. Supporting firepower for the assault was to be furnished by the battleship *Texas*,

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the cruiser *Savannah* and several destroyers, including the *USS Dallas*, which carried a special raider party from the 60th Infantry.

A great deal of interest centered around the photos and special maps of invasion beaches. Many soldiers were surprised, however, to discover that the operation hinged upon speedy initial capture of an ancient fort . . . the Kasba (citadel). Prior to seeing these maps, *Kasba* (or *Kasbah*) had reminded most Americans of movie star Charles Boyer making love to captivating Hedy Lamarr within the confines of an Algerian native village. One point was certain, *this* Kasba did not look too much like that of the contemporary film *Algiers*, and *Pepe Le Moco* probably would turn out to be a myth!

*** PORT LYAU-

TEY, the second most important anchorage of French Morocco, lies about six miles inland—on the Oued (River) Sebou. The city is approximately 80 miles to the northeast of Casablanca,

120 miles southwest of Gibraltar and a short jaunt to the military headquarters town of Rabat.

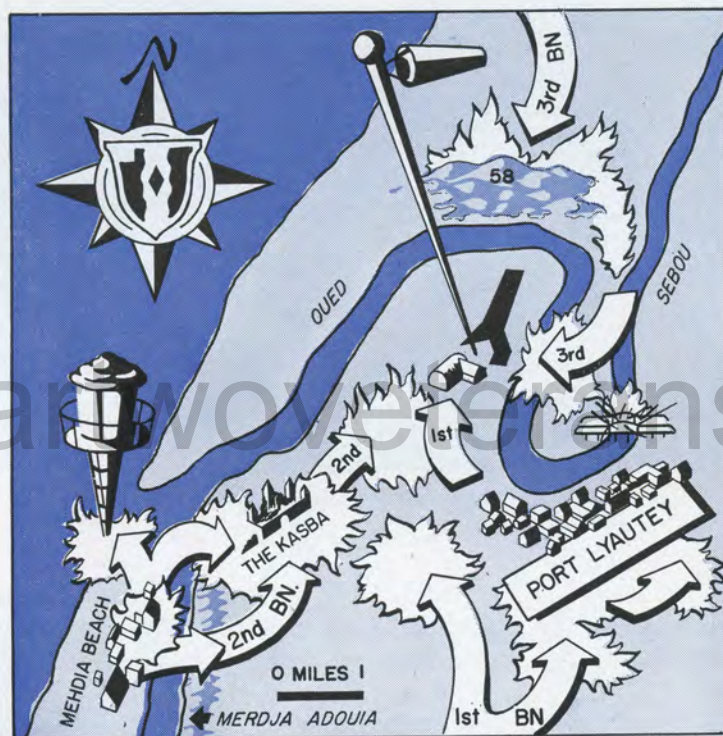
The Oued Sebou forms an inverted U (horseshoe) bend just before it empties into the Atlantic. At the western tip of the bend is the picturesque Kasba, once heavily fortified by the French and witness to some of the bitterest engagements of the invasion. To the southwest of the Kasba is a summer resort on the Atlantic shore—Plage de Mehdiya (Mehdiya Beach). Sitting on the eastern end of the horseshoe is Port Lyautey. Slightly north of the city—say four miles north on the top of the river's bend—is

an excellent airport. This field was the primary objective of the landing force.

Cliffs, rocks and hills dot and cover the coastal regions, and man-made escarpments help to make the terrain bounding Port Lyautey a source of concern to any invader. After an assaulting force leaves Mehdiya Plage it must climb a series of rises and proceed upward to a long ridge. This ridgeline forms the western bank of a romantic looking lagoon (Merdja Adouia); the latter separates the beach from Ly-
autey for quite some distance. Merdja Adouia follows a straight line from the Kasba-Mehdiya area to the southwest. To make matters more difficult (for an invader) the eastern bank of the lagoon is a very steep ridgeline, which hinders the carrying on of modern mechanized warfare beyond the Merdja Adouia.

A route then lay to the north through the fortified Kasba-Mehdiya region. The only other possibilities of approach to the Port were to come in from the south on land or the north by water. The entire strategy of the invasion rested upon the commanding position of the Kasba; it controlled the entrance of the Oued Sebou . . . it blocked the roads to the airport and Port Lyautey. With the capture of this old citadel the remainder of the operation would prove fairly simple. There was but one catch . . . the French had drawn the same conclusions as the Americans and had planned accordingly!

Goalpost's scheme of attack looked well—on paper. The mission of the northern force was to capture



D-DAY . . . NORTH AFRICA



TENSE GIs HEADING FOR FIRST COMBAT

Port Lyautey and its airport, then turn south and seize the airdrome at Sale (20 miles south). This did not appear to be too much of an undertaking for General Truscott's force—especially if the French could be taken by surprise. It was assured if any of the proposed capitulations succeeded. To aid in these operations, the *Dallas* was scheduled to steam up the river and land her raider party at the airport. Yes, it all looked well on paper, but the hand of fate soon would wreck these well laid plans!

* * * *

IN RENDEZVOUS—off Mehdia Plage—lay the trembling grey hulls of Sub-Task Force *Goalpost* . . . (the 60th was aboard the *Clymer*, *Susan B. Anthony*, *Florence Nightingale*, *Allen* and *Algarab*.)

The weather was excellent for an invasion. It was a black, moonless night and the sea was calm. November 7, 1942, was ticking off its last fleeting minutes . . . a new day, D-Day shortly would be at hand. But the convoy was behind schedule . . . it had arrived forty minutes late . . . and an additional sixty minutes were wasted through confusion and loss of formation. Those were precious minutes . . . life-saving minutes, and they were lost. With this time gone the hours of disembarkation and landing were moved up; the assault would take place at 5:30 A.M. rather than 4 A.M., a fatal move.

If the vessels had been on time much grief and loss of life would have been spared—for the invasion was to coincide with an historic appeal by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which was broadcast in

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French via shortwave radio to the people of North Africa . . .

"Mes Amis (My Friends) . . . we have come among you to repulse the cruel invaders . . . Have faith in our words . . . Help us where you are able. Vive la France eternelle!"

Even as this message was being broadcast General Nogues had alerted the Moroccan Coast. Surprise was known to be lost when a fleet of five French steamers, lights ablaze, cut across the bows of the leading convoy ships. The destroyer *Allen* received a message from one—"Be warned . . . alert on shore for 5 A.M.!" To the first landing waves that terse warning meant that little cover could be gained by darkness . . . no surprise would accompany the invasion . . . the enemy was alerted . . . he would be awaiting the *Go-Devils* with fire and steel . . . at best, this would be a rough battle!

It was slightly after 4:30 A.M. . . . the first three waves of infantrymen were clambering over the sides of their transports, down the landing nets and into thin-shelled and uncomfortable LCVP's. "Shove off!" It was a tense moment . . . heading for Morocco! GIs grasped their rifles a bit harder . . . officers tried to set a good example . . . and down in the bottom of the bouncing landing craft crouched the lot . . . American soldiers, about to earn their birth-right.

The LCVP's sped toward shore. When the first waves were about 700 yards distant, searchlights from the beach picked up one of the Navy scout boats and a warning red flare burst above the mouth of the Sebou—signaling that the invasion had begun. Then a roaring thunder of shellfire broke loose from the coastal batteries, aimed at the warships and their brood of landing craft. Salvos from the destroyer *Roe* silenced the French guns, and other warships joined in shelling the coast.

American feet began hitting the shore when the 2nd Battalion (Major John H. Dilley) came in at 5:40 A.M. There was no initial resistance—then French aircraft suddenly swooped down to strafe the beach. Men began to fall . . . the 60th's first casualties.

To the south doughboys of the 1st Battalion (Major Percy D. McCarley, Jr.) rode in on the surf and landed 2,800 yards north of their assigned beach. Inexperienced coxswains, confusion and shelling had altered their course. But there were no casualties for the 1st and it moved quickly on toward the lagoon.

Further north more coxswains had overshot their mark, and the 3rd Battalion (Lt. Colonel John J. Toffey, Jr.) was on the spot. Troops might not make the safety of land if time were wasted. Already, two of the battalion's landing boats had been upset by near-misses of aerial bombs. The battalion commander ordered his men put ashore immediately, believing this wiser than to risk retracing the shoreline to their assigned beach—which was five miles south. At 6:30 A.M. the 3rd piled ashore—an intermingled mass of companies, squads and men. Four French planes now appeared upon the scene, strafing. But the pilots met accurate fire from the 692nd CAAA Battalion, which knocked two ships out of the sky and chased the others homeward.

Daylight and French armor found the 1st Battalion reorganizing in the low ground west of the lagoon. During the noon hour four light tanks and two motorcycles attacked Company *A*. Thus began a day of tank sorties and clashes with Foreign Legion cavalry, which was active along the edge of picturesque Mamora Cork Forest. These blows were beaten off with 37mm anti-tank guns, grenades, bazookas and a steady hail of lead from the machine guns of Company *D*.

* * * *

AT DAYBREAK, French coastal batteries had begun hammering at the transports off Mehdiya Plage. The vessels were forced to reassemble 15 miles out in the safety of the open sea. Heavy surfs had hindered the landing of artillery and supplies, and this new development meant a delay in restocking the fighting men with food and ammunition. Of all units affected by this shortage, hardest hit was the 2nd Battalion Landing Team.

No Allied unit met stiffer opposition than that which the 2nd Battalion encountered near the Kasba-Mehdiya area. American ship-to-shore communica-



THE KASBA (LEFT) AND VICINITY

tions were severed, eliminating naval gun support for the greatly outnumbered battalion. Artillery was not available to counter the French 75's, which bombarded the attackers during much of the day. *Renault* tanks added their bit toward making the positions untenable. And Company *E* was destined to lose five of its six officers, several of whom were awarded posthumous *D.S.C.'s*.

It all began during the early hours of morning. The 2nd had worked its way around (and over) the lagoon by a diverse route, a movement necessitated by American naval fire which was falling upon the more logical route of advance. Part of Company *F* crossed the lagoon on rubber boats after clearing Mehdia Plage.

In semi-darkness and under two fires complete reorganization would have been a miracle, so the 2nd Battalion pushed forward quickly. The infantrymen advanced against three main objectives: the lighthouse on the point, the Kasba and the coastal batteries. First on the list was the lighthouse; this

was a strong position and stopped the battalion in its tracks.

Heroic action was needed and it came from Company *E*. Second Lieutenant Charles Dushane, Corporal (1st Sgt.) Frank L. Czar, Pfc. Theodore R. Bratkowitz and an unidentified private stormed the position. Crossing barbed wire entanglements under heavy fire the quartette charged the lighthouse and got inside. Shots rang out . . . then all was silent. A moment's wait . . . out walked the brave four with twelve prisoners.

The French retreated from the lighthouse and Companies *E* and *F* teamed up to clear the trench system which connected this strongpoint and the Kasba. Fifty prisoners already had been captured and many casualties inflicted. But the forces of the 2nd Battalion were a thinly spread line, dodging shells from both the foe and the Navy.

Afternoon overtook morning and the 2nd was fighting in the Cactus Village (a native village) east of the Kasba, where enemy superiority in armor and

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artillery was beginning to tell. The French were driving the battalion out of the Cactus Village, out of the lighthouse position and into the woods. As the troops began to withdraw under a mounting counterattack, Lt. Dushane and Corporal Czar rushed to meet the French thrust. It was an armored attack supported by infantry and the Americans had no anti-tank guns or artillery . . . not even a grenade!

Standing near the intrepid pair was a captured anti-tank gun. Its breech had been removed partly before being abandoned by the French. But that deficiency did not stop the two *Go-Devils*. Although the weapon was in full view of the approaching enemy Dushane and Czar manned it; Czar aimed the piece at the advancing armor, while Lt. Dushane set off the shells by firing at the base of each projectile with his *Tommy* gun. Continuing to fire they destroyed one tank and halted the attack. Corporal Czar miraculously escaped without injury, but Lt. Dushane died while operating the gun.

The hastily reorganized battalion now launched a swift counterattack. Another tank was knocked out and the French forces fled. Many were cut off within the Cactus Village and surrendered. The foe had left his dead and wounded where they had fallen, retiring to the protection of the Kasba . . . pouring out lead and shellfire to stem the 2nd's advance.

It was at this point that Pfc. Clarence L. Mohler and John R. Fisher sprang into action. The two GIs climbed the fortress walls after approaching the Kasba under fire. From atop hazardous perches they emptied their automatic rifles into the French defenders, diverting their attention. Meanwhile, the 2nd Battalion peppered the main gate of the citadel with fire, while attacking infantrymen slipped inside and captured many surprised defenders. With these prisoners the 2nd withdrew to the forest and began to dig in and reorganize for the night. More troops were landing on the beach at this time and these were rushed to the front—to aid in forestalling and halting any counterassault by the reinforced and still-growing French garrison.

A high escarpment blocked the speedy unloading of heavy weapons on the north beach. All vehicles and half-tracks landed the first day, but cannon and

artillery could not negotiate beyond this shore until November 9th.

The 3rd Battalion did not reorganize on the north beach but proceeded en masse to its first objective—Hill 58. This position was reached by 10 A.M. and it immediately was evident that the excellent observation from that height could assist in bringing concentrations upon French batteries and installations across the river. Within a short time the *Texas* and *Kearney* were contacted and possible targets came under the rain of naval explosives for the remainder of the day.

Unfortunately, the 3rd Battalion had assumed that the Kasba already was in American hands. Consequently, its route was altered, by-passing the high ground from which the battalion was to have supported the 2nd Battalion by fire. This additional onslaught would have assisted the attackers of Kasba-Mehdia greatly.

The situation at the end of the first day was not wholly favorable. The tides had made it difficult to land supplies; communications were inadequate; many invasion boats were beached in the heavy surf. There were high sand dunes and scrub growth between the lagoon and the beach where the 1st Battalion landed. This terrain was delaying the entry of light tanks and full-tracks into battle; thus the armor of *Goalpost* would not disembark until Monday the 9th.

There is another side of the story, the French version. It is told in their battle notes:

Mobile groups were formed and during the eighth counter-attacks executed aimed to confine the invader and reduce the bridgeheads attained . . . In the Port Lyautey area, after having gained a foothold at several points on the coast, the Americans were pushed back and confined within the limits of Mehdyia. The opening bombardments and first air battles had put 50% of our aviation out of combat.

So ended D-Day, 1942!

* * * *

ENGLISHMEN stop for tea, Americans stop for coffee and Frenchmen stop for the night. The first night of combat for the 60th C.T. was quiet.

D-DAY . . . NORTH AFRICA

Dawn brought a dull morning and heralded the continuation of see-saw warfare. Armored columns and howitzers were active throughout the day. And, while the airport was the primary mission of the *Go-Devils*, the battle for the mystic Kasba became priority by necessity. Here the *Heroic Second Battalion* hurled itself against reinforced French and Moroccan units; while the 1st Battalion assisted from the south by placing pressure to the rear of the French line.

Opposition to the 1st Battalion mounted and then abated slowly; for against each counterattack, the battalion blasted replies with machine guns, mortars, tanks and supporting naval batteries. At 4 P.M. ten light tanks and two howitzers reinforced the 1st Battalion . . . the Americans were ready to drive on the airport. But any advance planned by this combination was ended sharply, as accurate French artillery churned up the route.

French bid the 2nd Battalion *good morning* with a punching drive into the left flank and bitter resistance near the battle-scarred lighthouse. The 2nd stuck back, hitting at the Kasba several times unsuccessfully; for the French had built up their defenses during the black hours of night. Then mortar and artillery concentrations became so intense around the lighthouse that the *Go-Devils* were forced to withdraw. Good news reached the hard-pressed 2nd Battalion finally . . . it soon would be supported by self-propelled 105mm howitzers. With this additional striking power the battalion could launch a victorious final assault and overrun the Kasba!

When American weapons failed to operate during action, Second Lieutenant William J. Voller instructed soldiers of the 60th in use and operation of captured enemy rifles. This field expedient enabled many units to continue the fight.

Frenchmen may stop for the night but they put up a pretty terrific defense during the hours of daylight. In the 3rd Battalion sector, north of the Sebou, Battery C (60th F.A.) had begun an artillery duel with the French airport batteries. At the same

time the infantry was preparing to launch a river crossing under fire. Several bold attempts were made to span the Oued Sebou on rubber boats, but these failed. Later in the day a new strategy was tried. While a diversionary attack was launched by Companies K and M, Company I (modern version of the company which had crossed the *impossible* Meuse in 1918) negotiated the river.

Many heroic attempts were made upon a heavily mined and fortified bridge by K and M. They were backed up by Battery C and the shell-spitting turrets of the *USS Kearney*. Meanwhile, infantrymen

of Company I waded, slipped and slogged through the muddy banks of the Sebou, crawled into rubber boats and headed for the airport. By 9 P.M. the company had a muddy foothold on the far shore. In the deep mire, rain and blackness, advancing was so difficult that Company I dug in for the night. Few of the slime-covered and weary-boned GIs would have considered it too important at the time, but they were the first company of the Ninth Division to effect

a river crossing by assault!

At the end of the second day future strategy was clearly evident. All efforts would be directed toward immediate capture of the dominating Kasba positions. After this, Colonel de Rohan's 60th C.T. would turn upon the airport. Other facts also were evident: by now the Americans had become battle-wise, and the French did not know where the triangular American drive would strike next.

Nights seldom are made for slumber on the line and this was, indeed, a slumberless night. The cursed beating of rain upon the helmets of tired GIs struck out a muffled *ping . . . ping . . . ping*. *Go-Devils* were running out of supplies and their equipment needed repair. The average soldier was cold, wet and unshaven. But the end shortly would be in sight!

During this black night of November 9-10, the 1st Battalion jumped off in the rain. Direction was hard to keep and soon was lost. In trying to regain its correct bearings the battalion ran into a machine-



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gun ambush and was split into three groups, each of which was forced to operate individually in the woods.

At dawn the command group was met by a troop of Foreign Legion cavalry under the command of a French colonel. Neither side opened fire for the French leader had words to this effect, "Haven't you heard, there is an armistice! I suggest that we return to our respective commanders and prevail upon them to draw up terms." The Americans agreed and both sides retired.

But there was no armistice as yet! Further down the road the 1st Battalion commander and his staff ran into a battalion of Foreign Legion infantry which was not at all in a *cease fire* mood. The Americans were taken prisoner at about 10 A.M. and the Legionnaires headed east. At 4 P.M. their captors stopped to eat. Major McCarley, the battalion C.O., saw his chance to escape and took it. He dashed into the woods, running most of the night back toward the American lines, where he arrived the next morning.

McCarley's battalion, meanwhile, was entering the southern end of Port Lyautey and capturing *truckloads* of prisoners. In the beginning of this action the American units were mostly small patrols but the French were fooled completely. 1st Battalion men captured a cafe full of enemy troops, then withdrew quickly and reappeared in another location. The *Go-Devils* had made the city believe itself surrounded and the port commander surrendered!

Upon receiving the surrender of Port Lyautey the battalion pressed on toward the airport. Here the 1st Moroccan Regiment waged a fierce battle . . . until its French colonel and his staff capitulated and ordered all troops in the vicinity to cease fighting. Before long the small units of the 1st Battalion were herding prisoners in numbers far exceeding their own, a fact which indicated speedy conclusion of hostilities.

At midnight, sensing the overwhelming defeat of French arms as inevitable, General Truscott instructed the commander of Company "D" to contact the French area commander and arrange for a meeting of the two generals for purposes of discussing an armistice.

Dawn of November 10th brought an all-out foray upon the Kasba. Infantry of the 2nd Battalion jumped off with two self-propelled 105's in support and by 9:30 A.M. the foe had withdrawn to the protection of the Kasba. On his heels, the 2nd tried to assault the main entrance to the fort—without success. The Kasba still was strong within its walls.

But the Americans were stronger. Navy dive-bombers and cannon blew open the gates and blasted paths through the walls. These devastating blows were followed by a 2nd Battalion onslaught which flooded the Kasba with a mad, surging rush of infantrymen, yelling and firing as they charged. The citadel gave up . . . there was little else to do. The 2nd counted its losses—they had been heavy that morning . . . 215 casualties!

Most of the 3rd Battalion had withdrawn to positions on Hill 58. During the 10th, however, in coordination with the *Dallas'* raider party, it moved on the airport and contacted the 1st Battalion. The latter had masses of prisoners caged in the field's hangars.

Surrender of the Kasba and the airport convinced the French of the desirability of laying down their arms. General Mathenet, commanding the Rabat and Port Lyautey regions, dispatched emissaries during the night of November 10th to arrange a truce. General Truscott immediately was informed of this offer and the two generals arranged a meeting for the following morning at 8 A.M. The spot chosen for the historic conference was the blooded Kasba, scene of the invasion's bitterest fighting. All hostilities ceased during the talks and both sides agreed not to change their positions. The result was an armistice . . . and the end of fighting between American and Frenchmen.

The capitulation of General Mathenet, moreover, was only a small portion of the joyous news that November 11, 1942. With the overwhelming victory of American arms assured, General Nogues had sent word to the American authorities that he desired a meeting with General Patton. The Western Task Force commander, barely halting a devastating attack planned to bring Casablanca to its knees, consented to discuss terms with the French commander.

At the same time, word was received that Hitler



THE AMERICAN KASBA CEMETERY

had sent his armies into the unoccupied (Vichy) zone of France. Admiral Darlan immediately assumed command of French North Africa in the name of Marshal Petain and called upon the defending army, navy and air force to cease all resistance. With these developments French and Moroccan opposition crumbled, and an armistice was proclaimed throughout France's African Empire. Thus twenty-four years to the day after the Allies had crushed Germany in another war, Armistice Day was celebrated again.

* * * *

PEACE with the French did not bring an end to war in North Africa. But the majority of the Ninth Division's far-flung combat teams were able to gain some measure of rest and recuperation before seeing further action. In the American custom, first priority after the cessation of hostilities was the proper burial of the dead.

At Safi the 47th Regimental Combat Team laid its comrades to final rest in the European Cemetery. In a special memorial service, Colonel Randle's entire command turned out as a last tribute to these fallen *Raiders*.

Just north of the beach at Port Lyautey, on the

high ground overlooking the bitterly-contested Kasba, is an old French cemetery. It holds the remains of French Empire troops who died winning this same ground in 1911. Work was begun on an American plot adjacent to this cemetery, under the direction of the 60th's chaplains, particularly Chaplain Irving Tepper. When the plot was completed it was enclosed within a white picket fence and a simple sign was placed over the entrance—in French, English and Arabic: *U.S.A. Cemetery*.

On the day of the armistice the 39th C.T. was centered around Maison Carree, about 10 miles (over the hills) from the city of Algiers. Safi was home to the 47th C.T. while the badly-mauled 60th C.T. had its headquarters at Mehdia Plage.

The tremendous importance of the victory in North Africa was as outstanding a fact to the Axis as it was to the Allies. The plans of Messrs. Adolf, Benito and Tojo heretofore had been strong factors in the fate of the globe. Now the picture was changing. Montgomery's forces were driving all Axis opposition out of Libya and into Tripolitania. With the exception of Tunisia, all of French North Africa had been brought into Allied hands *within four days!* The enemy was faced with a two-front war

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in Africa and his flanks were exposed in the Mediterranean. For the first time during World War II, the Allies were on the offensive.

Equally important, this victory meant that Germany would have to divert some of her manpower from the Russian front. With the loss of initiative in Russia, Hitler would complete his fantastic duplication of Napoleon's blunder. Thus the Soviets were able, at last, to begin their famous Stalingrad winter offensive, the decisive campaign which turned back the Nazi tide. Insuring success of this drive even further was the safety from any Japanese-German linkup in the Middle East.

Deception, valor, gambling and detailed planning had paid off in big dividends for the Allies. The

tide had turned . . . and the spark of freedom was rekindled . . . rekindled by an operation known as *Torch*. But another battle was in the making . . . and another . . . and still another. The *Luftwaffe* was landing German troops in Tunisia at the rate of 1,500 per day. Concentration camps in Germany still were murdering thousands of tortured innocents daily. There was a lot to be done. This victory was simply a foundation upon which more would be built.

With the rest of the American Army, the combat teams of the Ninth Infantry Division now turned to the east . . . toward Von Arnim and the vaunted *Afrika Korps* of Marshal Rommel. A battle was finished, yes . . . but there was a war to be won!



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Section IV

Safari In O. D.

I—Southern Tunisia



DESERT victory was not complete with the fall of Morocco and Algeria. Hitler's veteran campaigners would not give up a continent without a struggle, especially when Africa was so important to Germany's scheme of the moment.

As soon as Allied strategy became apparent, and it did within a few hours following the North African invasion, the enemy countered with a master stroke. German airborne and amphibious units were dispatched to Tunisia—with the blessing of the Vichy Government. Upward of 1,500 men landed daily, and these spread out from the fine airfield at Tunis and the important harbors along the coast to form a skeletonized front.

When the legions of Nazism invaded the unoccupied zone of France on November 11, 1942, their collaborating Laval-Pétain regime promptly issued instructions that French possessions should resist invasion by the Allies but not by the Germans. Two days previously Marshal Pétain had handed the American Ambassador his passport and, in retaliation for the *Torch* affair, had asked him to leave France. Next the aged marshal dispatched orders to Admiral Esteva, the French Resident General of Tunisia, which were equally antagonistic toward the Allied cause.

Whereas Darlan had sent word (under pressure) to halt any German invasion, Vichy had countered with orders to allow the Nazi forces entrance. Esteva chose the latter course, an action which helped the enemy to such an extent as to delay the invasion of Sicily by six months. He forced pro-Allied General Barre and his troops to evacuate their positions protecting Tunis, thus leaving the city without an organized means of repelling invasion. Actually, a regiment or two of infantry and a battalion of anti-aircraft artillery could have stopped the German entry into Tunisia. French officers at the Tunis airport

saw German transports flying overhead and circling the field, an easy target . . . but no one hindered their landings.

Rommel was staging a series of strategic defensive battles in the desert of Tripolitania at this time, falling back before the sledge-hammer drive of a revitalized Eighth Army. The enemy's first Tunisian plan was to establish a well tied-in bridgehead, expand this foothold, and force an eventual linkup with Rommel's retreating *Afrika Korps* in the southern part of the province. Together, behind a natural mountain barrier, the *Afrika Korps* and the men of General Jurgin von Arnim planned to delay Allied victory for some time. Axis success in Tunisia meant knocking off schedule any proposed invasions of southern Europe, as well as giving the *Fatherland* more time to prepare.

For these same reasons it was imperative that the Allies clear Tunisia quickly. But moving an army to counter the German threat in Tunisia was a large order. In the first place, it seemed entirely possible that the enemy might march through neutral Spain, span the Straits of Gibraltar to Spanish Morocco and flank the Americans to the south—in this case the Ninth and 3rd Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Armored Division.

There was a threat, too, of action by Generalissimo Franco's army of 130,000 Spanish and Moroccan desert soldiers facing southward from the Moroccan border. Remembering the Italian *stab in the back* at a weakened France in 1940, it appeared feasible that Hitler might compel his satellite dictator friend to aid the Axis with blood as well as espionage.

Observers who saw the Ninth Division in action in the Mediterranean considered it probably the crack U.S. Army unit in the North African theater.

—Tom Wolfe (NEA)

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

The railroads were few and in poor condition in North Africa. On the score of shorter supply lines the enemy was far ahead; his last base was only 100 miles from the excellent ports of Tunis and Bizerte. German airfields in Sardinia, Sicily, Southern Italy and the Balkans were all-weather, permanent installations. And the initial advantage of well-trained and newly-equipped troops lay with the Germans.

In comparison, *Fighting French* forces in the desert could resist only with ancient rifles and inferior artillery . . . at least until they were withdrawn from action and re-equipped by the American Army. Allied airpower was forced to operate from muddy and hastily-constructed air strips. There were inadequate supplies of fuel and parts—little protection from the elements. Moreover, food and equipment were difficult to transport, since it was a 560-mile ride from the port of Algiers to Tunis. Despite these hindrances, a steady trickle of troops rolled eastward in an attempt to win the race with the Germans to Tunisia.

* * * * *

THE combat teams of the Ninth Infantry Division were operating as separate commands on November 11, 1942. Two teams, however, the 47th and 60th were to return shortly to Division control and participate in the border war of nerves with Spanish Morocco.

With the ending of their short, sharp engagement, French and American units became allies. Simultaneously, German radio propagandists broadcast in Arabic that the *Luftwaffe* would bomb locations where American troops were stationed. This form of psychological warfare was designed to stir dissension amongst the local citizenry. But the Americans were exceedingly careful not to hinder the formation or keeping of any friendship which might have existed between the native population and their new neighbors.

In the area of Safi, where the forces of Military District #5 (47th C.T.) held sway, GIs were given their first rules of conduct in a foreign country . . . and checked as to their proper usage. Specifically, MP's received instructions to keep traffic moving and to see that soldiers *did not*:

Enter, smoke, sit, loiter or stop in front of mosques; Make noise or stare while Moslems were praying; Drink liquor in front of Moslems; Make fun of the natives; Show disrespect to Moroccans; Wear uniform improperly.

These were but a few of the regulations; many more were to be found on the pages of official guide books. Such pamphlets, nonetheless, did not give several explanations which later were to be found out by personal and actual experience.

We had been in Safi only three days when, swinging down the street, came an Arab urchin in ragged clothes selling peanuts in tiny containers made of newspaper . . . "Peanuts! Peanuts!" he shouted, "Best Goddam peanuts in Safi!"

—Harold T. O'Hara

During November the 39th C.T. foot-slogged the ten hilly miles from Maison Carree to Algiers and opened its C.P. within that mystic port. Algiers then was the North African Theater Headquarters city, and a center of transportation and supply as well. It was from this area that Company L had embarked with a unit of Rangers aboard a destroyer for Bone as the armistice was being signed. And it was from here that the *Falcons* and their attachments were to operate for several months as a separate command, protecting lines of communications and receiving a taste of occupational duties.

The 60th C.T. was located within the confines of the beautiful Mamora Cork Forest at this time, guarding the Spanish border and sipping an occasional glass of *vin rouge* (*vino* to many GIs). This duty and this pleasure were to be shared shortly by the 47th C.T., which had been alerted for movement north by foot from Safi.

For sheer stamina, the foot march which began on December 1st and took the 47th C.T. from Safi via Casablanca to Port Lyautey had few equals. The route was anything but conducive to leisurely hiking and the distance was 238 miles—the longest foot march undertaken by American soldiers in North Africa. Major Gershenow and his 2nd Battalion had been left behind, to take charge of Military District #5. The rest of the combat team proceeded up the Moroccan coast, sweating by day and shivering



CASABLANCA CEREMONY: RAIDERS WALKED SOME MORE

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by night. Aching feet hit the road pavement to the vocal rhythm of *I Don't Want to Walk Without You Baby*, a popular tune of the day . . . even the motorized 84th Field Artillery walked, as their vehicles transported equipment.

The long journey halted temporarily as the regiment stepped into Casablanca, to enable the 47th to march in a French-American parade. It was the afternoon of December 13, 1942; there were many great names present, and it was important that the Americans make an excellent showing. The crowd was so enthusiastic that police were unable to restrain them. Shouting was not all for the Americans, however, for the French were showing off their famous *Tirailleurs Marocains* and colorful *Spahis*.

That day, after the tumult and parading died down, there was a football game between the erstwhile adversaries, with proceeds going to the benefit of wounded Americans and Frenchmen. And, if anyone had been so inclined, he could have glanced through the local newspaper and seen an advertisement asking for men to join the new Corps *Franc d'Afrique*, later to figure prominently with the Ninth Division in both Northern Tunisia and Sicily.

Completion of this long march heralded the re-assembling of the Ninth Infantry Division into one unit, for Division headquarters was on the high seas heading for the port of Casablanca, as were Divarty and the remainder of regimental and attached troops which had been left in the United States.

* * * *

HEADQUARTERS of the 60th Infantry had been moved into the Mamora Cork Forest from Mehdia Beach on December 16th. The 47th joined the *Go-Devils* a few days later, and men of the two regiments swapped experiences. It was learned about this time that the Division commander had arrived in the city of Casablanca with part of his staff, and it was rumored that the balance of Division headquarters and those units which had not participated in the landings were Africa-bound.

These rumors proved to be true, for most of the remaining organizations of the Ninth Infantry Division began docking at Casablanca on Christmas

eve, going immediately into a bivouac area about two miles from the city. This landing was followed by an intense enemy air raid—the first on Casablanca.

Christmas passed without too much celebration, and the new year of 1943 brought increased responsibility and work for the men of the Ninth. Some of the newly-landed units were shuttled by rail to Port Lyautey, others stayed behind to do stevedore duty at the busy Casablanca docks. Early January found the Ninth together once again—except for the 39th C.T. in Algeria and a few units yet to arrive from America. With this reassembly of the Division came establishment of two working headquarters, one for the Ninth itself and the other for the 1st Military District. General Eddy had command of both. Port Lyautey was an important link in the North African chain of supply, and this factor—added to the constant threat of Spanish intervention—made the commanding general and his staff have military nightmares.

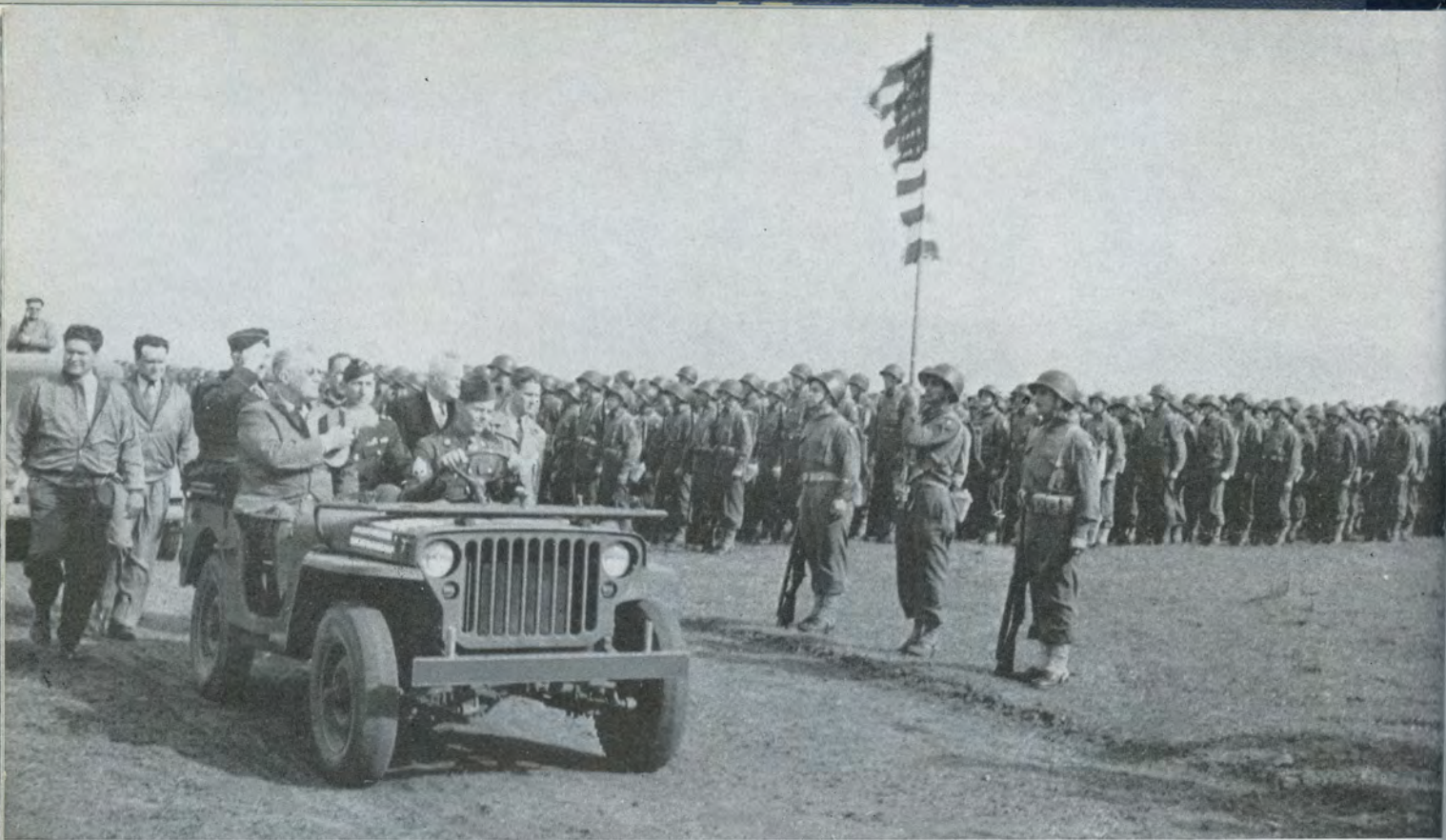
The United States Army was concerned greatly about the 130,000 troops (native and Spanish) still stationed along the border. Francisco Franco had pledged his neutrality, but pro-Axis as he was, the Allies could ill-afford chancing another *Pearl Harbor*. Therefore the 60th and 47th Infantries took up the job of patrolling the Spanish Moroccan frontier, with various battalions rotating on this duty. Franco thus was immobilizing almost a corps (counting divisions to the south) of American troops by his reputation.

On January 25, 1943, the remaining units of the Ninth arrived aboard the Swedish Liner "*Kungsholm*." These organizations had left in December with Division headquarters. However, their first ship the "*George W. Goethels*" broke down in a storm and was forced to return to Staten Island.

Weeks which followed were a monotonous succession of guard duty, training and reorganization . . . changed only by an occasional pass, a bottle of the local red wine, the very infrequent sight of a European girl, sessions of learning the necessary words in Arabic and French, trading cigarets and money for eggs or *du pain* (bread), reading the daily bulletin, writing letters home and drinking another swig from that swarthy bottle of *vin*.







PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT REVIEWS THE NINTH

worldwartwoveterans.org

Cheery-eyed Major Ross Wilson, Special Services Officer, broke the dull air finally with an announcement that real entertainment was coming the way of the Ninth Division. It turned out to be the vibrant Martha Raye, comedienne and singing star of radio and screen. Miss Raye and her troupe had arrived to perform the first of the Division's too infrequent *live shows*, and Martha brought down the house . . . which was seated in the open air of the race track at Port Lyautey.

Air raids were few and far between and, perhaps, it appeared as though the Ninth Infantry Division was being neglected so far as concerned the *fighting war* over in Tunisia. *That* war seemed far off as guard duty continued, supplies rolled on through the port and life went on like the sinister calm before a storm.

Preparations were being made around this time for the visit of a very high-ranking personage. All General Eddy could find out was that the individual was an "Army commander." It seemed rather strange, however, that such great precautions should

be taken for an Army general. Then when Secret Service men came to inspect the area the Ninth's commander knew who was coming. It was the President of the United States, about to attend the famed *Casablanca Conference*.

President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met in the city of Casablanca for one of their historic conferences during January 1943. It was at this time that future plans and strategy regarding the invasion of Sicily, Italy and Western Europe were discussed.

On the 22nd the Commander in Chief and his party arrived at Port Lyautey to visit the Ninth Division. A composite combat team consisting of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 60th Infantry, the 3rd Battalion of the 47th and a company of the 70th Tank Battalion staged a review at Mehdiya for the wartime President, who viewed the proceedings from his jeep. Acting as guard of honor for the Chief Executive was the I. & R. Platoon of the 47th Infantry.

SAFARI IN O.D.

After the parade was over, Mr. Roosevelt and his party were escorted to the Kasba-Mehdia region, where Colonel de Rohan explained the movements of the 60th C.T. during the North African landings. F. D. R. then left the Ninth Division, his famed naval cape flowing in the breeze . . . a smile upon his face. It was the last time most members of the Division would see him again.

* * * *

THE race to Tunisia was won by the Germans.

They did it by a narrow margin and against roving bands of Allied resistance. If *Torch* was battle by deception, the scramble for this eastern possession was battle by wits. A strange type of warfare was conducted by the Allies over the wastes and hills of Tunisia's no man's land. Colorful patrols of the French Camel Corps, elements of the British 78th Division, roving patrols of American paratroopers, Rangers, and a skeletonized American II Corps ranged over the massive battlefields, attempting to destroy the enemy before his strength was too great.

If the Allies had launched any sort of full-scale attack they would have been defeated in detail . . . cut apart by superior numbers of the foe. Actually, in the southern part of Tunisia there were but a few

hundred Americans and Frenchmen. Their mission was to cover a 100-mile front, racing up and down, striking sharply at the Nazis . . . making them believe that there was an entire division to their front.

With the many seaports and airfields of Tunisia at their command, as well as air supremacy and a growing superiority in effective manpower, the Germans soon held an almost solid line from Cape Serrat south. By January Allied personnel fighting the battle for Tunisia were battered and worn out. For instance, Combat Command *B* of the 1st Armored Division had effected a withdrawal during a severe rain storm and that unit was unable to extricate a major portion of its tanks and artillery from the quagmires of mud. These were hard losses for the lightly equipped Americans. British battalions were operating at one-third strength and bad weather had forced the Allies to go on the defensive in order to build up troops and supplies.

Axis forces had their foothold and a lot more. That was the first phase of the campaign. Now came the second phase, the German offensive.

A majority of Americans have grown up believing that Africa is divided into two portions, the huge desert wastes of *Beau Geste* and *Beau Sabeur* to

CASABLANCA HARBOR WAS BUSY





THE TERRAIN OF NORTH AFRICA SURPRISED MANY

the north and the jungle land of Frank Buck to the south. That is not entirely true. North Africa, for example, is not all sandy desert country. On the contrary, it is more like the western part of the United States or some sections of Old Mexico.

A glance at a map of Tunisia, followed by a study of German plans reveals that Von Arnim had evolved his strategy so as to parallel closely the peculiar nature of Africa's variant terrain.

Tunisia is a land which can be divided into two main sections, each with its own variety of climate and topography. To the north there is the great Tunis Plain, protected and surrounded by a rugged mass of mountains (djebels) and hills to the south and west—as if it were an African *Shangri La*. This ring of djebels forms a barrier which can be held against attack by a few well-fortified defenders, since there are relatively few passes—and these are narrow. The mass joins a range of hills (which rings Bizerte) to the north of Tunis.

Part of the plain is the port city of Tunis, well-equipped, modern and easily accessible to Sicily, Sardinia and the Mediterranean coast. This expanse enters into another coastal plain to the south at the gateway towns of Zaghuan, Pont du Fahs and Enfidaville. Running south of Pont du Fahs is the rugged Tunisian eastern dorsal (high mountain range), a group of towering peaks which reach southward for about 150 miles and pivot at Maknassy. From Maknassy the range rolls to the southwest for a final 50 miles. Just 20 miles south of El Guettar the dorsal ends. But here it connects with another barrier, the salt lakes (chotts) . . . great, impassable bodies of salt, slime and dust. These stretch eastward toward the port of Gabes.

Within the Grande Dorsale Range and chott regions lies the great mesa which begins at Zaghuan and Pont du Fahs. The area is 180 miles long, ending just south of Gabes at a town called Mareth. Since the dorsal has only four main passes to the

SAFARI IN O.D.

west, Fondouk, Faïd, Maknassy and El Guettar, and is bordered by the chotts to the south, the plain is a naturally protected fortress. The 20-mile-wide lane through Mareth and Gabes then held the key to the south and the canyon-like passes were the gateways in the west. Since the region could be well supplied from the sea, it presented Von Arnim with an excellent foothold on the continent of Africa.

Beyond the eastern ring of passes lay a secondary group to the west . . . Kasserine, Thala, Sbiba and Derna. These could form an outer ring of defense for the Germans and aid in their harassing any invasion of Tunisia from Algeria.

The enemy plan was to have Rommel and Von Arnim join forces within the great plains fortress. Djebels, dorsals, chotts and hills would form the protective wall . . . the passes and defiles would be well-fortified and mined. Axis patrols would attack into the outer ring as soon as possible, and a strong line would be formed around Mareth, to plug the southern gap.

At that time of year rain and cold were on the side of the Germans. Tunisia has few roads and these are narrow—with soft shoulders and bumpy surfaces. Such conditions made GI trucks and artillery pieces leave the roads or sink into quagmires of Tunisian mud. Highways which were paved with hard dirt cracked during dry weather and turned into a sea of sticky clay during the rains. Moreover, these roads often could be rendered unusable by mines, blocking passage for miles around. For the winter months, passes and defiles were to play an all-important role in the Allied conquest of Southern Tunisia . . . since they could be defended by a minimum of men against an army.

* * * *

FIRST of the Ninth Division's combat teams to have any of its units participate in the fight against German troops was the 39th C.T., which had been left at Algiers and then ordered spread throughout the length and breadth of the Algerian province. During December 1942, Cannon Company had been attached to the ill-fated Combat Command *B* of the 1st Armored Division and joined that command on the Tunisian front.

Late January found the 39th's 2nd Battalion moving over the treacherous and narrow Atlas Mountain roads from Bermandres and occupying the towns of Palestro, Menerville, Rouiba, Souk el Haad, Thiers and Bouira. This was all part of the combat team mission which, after its assignment to the British First Army, was to guard the Allied lines of communications from Algiers to Tunisia—a most important task which had been assigned by Allied Force Headquarters.

On February 1st the Anti-Tank Company of the *Falcon* regiment made a 266-mile motor jaunt in cold, windy weather to guard the airport and communications in the vicinity of Biskra . . . they soon would see action. Also would the 3rd Battalion, which had moved to the vicinity of Souk Ahras. With its 1st Battalion at Bougie, the 39th now encompassed an area of over 300 miles.

Days of guarding the Moroccan border and drinking *vin rouge* by the sea were to end for the Division units at Port Lyautey. They shortly were to re-enter combat and began by heading eastward. The journey to Tunisia was accomplished in several commonplace—even monotonous—stages . . . but the positions of the Ninth during February were to affect greatly the strategy of defeating a rampaging Rommel.

At the end of January the 60th Infantry displaced toward Tlemcen, Algeria. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions did not stop long, however, and continued on toward Oran—for guard duty until February 18th. Regimental headquarters and the 1st Battalion rolled into an olive grove between Montagnac and Layayssiere, Algeria, where they set up bivouac and kept watchful eyes on a nearby airport.

Secret instructions fetched the 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry, to Port Lyautey from Safi at the beginning of February. With this reattachment the *Raiders* headed for Oran via Tlemcen, where orders were received to shuttle the regiment to Tunisia. The 47th arrived at its temporary home near Asis Ben Okba (eight miles from Oran) on the 12th after completing a 482-mile journey from Port Lyautey in uncomfortable *40 and 8's*. Thirty or more men and their accompanying barracks bags had

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been jammed into each freight car with little room left to sleep properly . . . and the rail convoy's slow speed exaggerated the already distasteful conditions. There followed a shuttle movement east and finally the regiment was motorized with 100 trucks.

Division headquarters completed its movement to Tlemcen by the 12th, following Divarty whose General Irwin had acted as Division commander until this headquarters arrived. From Tlemcen the Ninth would jump off to Tunisia, and from this quiet location one of the greatest artillery marches in history would begin.

* * * *

MEANWHILE, a storm was brewing in the east. Rommel had linked up with enemy forces to the north commanded by General Jurgin von Arnim, Germany's greatest *Panzer* expert. The German-Italian effort now was ready, and Rommel decided to strike telling blows before the Allies could bring strength to bear in force. Southward the Mareth line was being formed; to the north the front was stable; in the weakened center the picture was different. Here small units of Americans, French and British held the passes . . . and tanks and artillery were worth their weight in gold.

French positions were hit the hardest when the enemy offensive rolled into high gear. Poorly equipped and lacking armor, the French were unable to halt a breakthrough at Faid Pass and fell back on Sidi bou Zid. The situation was dangerous and the 1st Armored Division dispatched units to assist in holding the area.

By this time the British Eighth Army had captured the port of Tripoli, following a spectacular 1,400-mile-drive which had strained supply lines and supporting arms to capacity. The *Desert Rats* were forced to stop, replenish, rebuild and reorganize. Their halt stretched to eight weeks, which allowed Rommel time to concentrate his support with Von Arnim rather than to man fully the Mareth line.

While Montgomery was building his forces for a knockout punch at Mareth, Rommel and Von Arnim pooled 200,000 desert veterans, all the Axis armor, artillery and air support and set the day. Weather was in their favor. They decided to launch a sweeping lunge, break out of the last ring of mountain

passes, chop up the comparatively weak American II Corps (along the central front) in detail, then flank the entire Allied Tunisian line—thus compelling the Anglo-American forces to withdraw into Algeria. The hour was dark for those units which stood in Rommel's way.

The enemy struck during the early hours of February 14, 1943. He hit with armor, motorized infantry, artillery, *Stukas* (those dive-bombing hell-planes which wracked the nerves of green troops), fighter planes and success. Through Faid Pass and toward Kasserine rolled the *Afrika Korps* . . . Rommel was launching a three-column drive to the center and an armored attack slightly south.

There are many versions of the battle for Kasserine Pass. All accounts, if truthful, must admit one fact: the Axis defeated the Allies for the first six days . . . almost outflanked the Allied line. Rommel was stopped dramatically at Thala by a small composite British force and the Ninth Division Artillery, fortunately; for otherwise he would have had a clear field to the rear of the British First Army to the north. A few engineers, a Ranger battalion and some tankers of the 1st Armored Division performed a similar feat before Tebessa.

Rommel's main drive, as stated previously, was three-pronged. One column attacked along the Faid-Sbeitla Road and another the town of Sidi bou Zid and the Faid Road, cutting off the 34th Division's 168th C.T. (which had made the Algerian landing with the 39th C.T.). The third and largest column enveloped the left flank of the 168th, threatening the regiment with encirclement. An armored battalion was rushed to aid the hard hit combat team, but this rescuing force ran into a tank ambush and was forced to limp off a poor second. Although the 1st Armored attacked on the following day to relieve the 168th, relief was impossible . . . the 168th C.T. was left to its fate . . . Sidi bou Zid and the regiment were overrun. Among the units lost at Sidi bou Zid was the 39th Infantry's Cannon Company, which had been attached to the armored relief force.

More tanks were lost by the out-numbered 1st Armored as the day wore on, and the badly-mauled Americans fell back toward Sbeitla and Kasserine. *Panzer* forces attacked Gafsa and, since this position

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was held only lightly, it fell. Feriana and Thelepte, the two fighter plane bases, were quickly enveloped and soon lost—as the Allied line hurriedly was changed to conform with these withdrawals.

The objective of the enemy appeared to be Tebessa, Algeria, for his greatest pressure was directed against the pass of Kasserine. Diversionary attacks were launched to the north and south of the pass by the Germans in order to stop the Kasserine area from being reinforced. Then the Axis attack got up steam. The 1st Armored withdrew along the Sbeitla-Kasserine Road, covered by Combat Command *B* which had rushed in from Maktar. Part of this covering force was the 3rd Battalion and the Anti-Tank Company of the 39th Infantry, about to engage in their first recorded large-scale action against the Germans in World War II.

It was at Kasserine Pass that the 3rd Battalion and Anti-Tank Company were hit by an overwhelming force—including two *Panzer* divisions. Rommel had made a smashing drive into the pass on the 19th. Having infiltrated past the American forces and punched through with tanks, artillery and planes the Germans pressed their advantage the following day. It was an unequal battle . . . watching from their positions above the valley, infantrymen could see the gigantic tank struggle and the inevitable result . . . one combat command against approximately two divisions!

Axis forces overran all positions; they poured into the valley and up the roads. The 3rd Battalion was overrun completely; the Anti-Tank Company had few casualties but lost all of its guns. Both outfits were routed and infiltrated back to Souk Ahras—Americans had attempted to hold at all costs and failed. (Combat Command *B* was able to extricate a portion of its men and equipment and later made a gallant and successful stand before Tebessa).

It was now clear that Rommel's entire thrust (which already had covered fifty miles!) was directed against Tebessa—supply base and air center of the Allied Tunisian command—and toward Thala to the north. At first the powerful Axis drive smashed up the road toward Thala, the entrance through which Rommel planned to drive a huge concentration of armor and flank the Allied Line.

This was the area, too, through which he hoped to flank Tebessa. If the *wily desert fox* could get by Thala he would have the Allies where he wanted them.

There did not seem to be anything to stop the Germans except a few hastily dispatched British tanks, infantry and artillery . . . the kind of outfit Kipling would have sent to conquer a native village of India . . . a small task force . . . rushed to meet the strength of the whole attack. The British were waiting for the Germans on a ridge just beyond Kasserine Pass on the road to Thala. It was a suicidal mission and the *Tommys* must have known it . . . but this group sacrificed itself and temporarily stopped the enemy. Although most of the rear guard and its tanks were wiped out, these gallant soldiers had delayed Rommel's advance . . . for one day.

A portion of the British 26th Armoured Regiment now moved forward into Thala, its light tanks no match for the Axis armor. With this group came a few more infantrymen—to establish a line about three miles south of the town. On the night of February 20th the entire Allied situation was glum. Only massed heavy artillery or overwhelming tank superiority could halt the enemy combination and no such help was in sight.

But aid was coming . . . it was aid which even Rommel could not foresee!

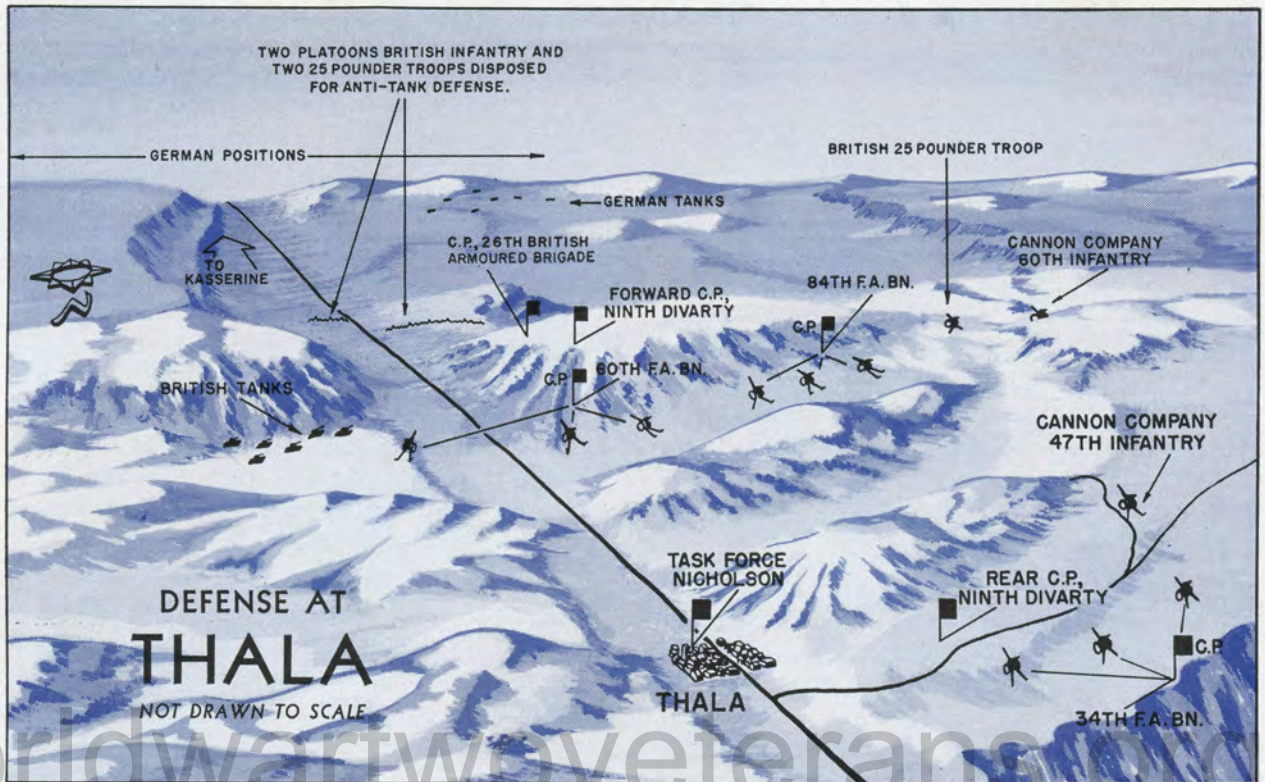
* * * *

TLEMCCEN lies southwest of Oran and is about 800 miles distant from the passes of Faid and Kasserine . . . 800 miles of winding, narrow, congested, slippery and precipitous mountain roads. With winter's rains and frost, travel to the front from Tlemcen could have taken as much as two or three weeks.

On February 14th the Ninth Division Artillery (less the 26th and 84th F.A. Bns.) was preparing to hold maneuvers in the desert south of Tlemcen. Battalion commanders were on reconnaissance, and the following day was to have seen the opening of a school for French officers.

At about 10:30 on Wednesday morning, February 17th, orders were received at Division headquarters to dispatch—without delay—all available artillery

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and cannon by forced march to the vicinity of Tebessa, on the Tunisian-Algerian border. The artillery and cannon companies at Tlemcen were given a three-hour alert. Brigadier General S. LeRoy Irwin, the Divarty commander, was to lead the expedition.

At 4 P.M. the caravan was rolling out of the eastern edge of Tlemcen. Snow lay upon the ground and rain beat a muffled patter upon vehicles and weapons. Leading, was the 34th Field Artillery followed by the 60th Field, the 60th Cannon Company and Headquarters Battery of Divarty. They would pick up the 84th Field Artillery and the 47th Cannon Company near L'Arba. (These units had been proceeding leisurely toward Algiers as part of the 47th Combat Team when they received the alert.)

With little sleep, and stopping only for food, fuel and an occasional forty winks, the column began a

777-mile march along slippery mountain curves. The trucks and their bouncing tow of lethal weapons roared on . . . on through Sidi bel Abbas (Foreign Legion Hqs.), Orleansville, Affreville, Blida ("here comes the 84th"), L'Arba, Setif, Ain-M'lila and into Ain Beida.

On the morning of February 21st the column was halted by British Traffic Control at Ain Beida . . . and a mass of rumors began hitting the ears of the column's troops. Those rumors reported Tebessa likely to fall at any moment . . . and there was a steady stream of air force personnel, supplies and service units going to the rear. Tebessa was an important supply and aviation center; it was being evacuated . . . and the road was crowded with this retrograde movement.

At noon the orders were *ON THROUGH TEBESSA!* A few hours later the column of artillery

and cannon was rolling through the town of Tebessa, dodging traffic, to get into Thala. Ambulances, supply trains, troops and everything imaginable clogged the narrow roads . . . and here, once more, the column was informed of the hopelessness of its task . . . and told to "get while the getting was good" by men who were returning from the front.

The road to Thala was maddening. It was winding, narrow, slippery, and jammed with traffic of all kinds, through which . . . drivers had literally to fight their way . . . It was learned later what General Irwin's orders had been. He was to command a mixed group of British and American Artillery in supporting 'some elements of the British 26th Rifle Brigade' in holding the Thala defile "at all costs!"

—Combat Report (60th F.A. Bn.)

Through snow and rain and over treacherous mountain roads, the column had made its way . . . and now it came to a halt . . . at Thala. Divarty and its cannon company attachments had arrived in the nick of time—on the night of February 21st. It was an amazing march the column had completed . . . it was unbelievable that 2,170 men and officers plus their 411 vehicles had navigated this 777-mile journey in less than 100 hours. Icy and precipitous roads had caused weapons of some batteries to slide off the steep mountain heights. But these losses and the soft-shoulders of mud and the rivers of rain had failed to halt General Irwin's task force . . . and now they were in position . . . after having completed one of the greatest artillery marches in military history. The artillerymen and cannoneers of the Ninth were about to stop Rommel!

With amazing dexterity the artillery battalions rolled into position during the closing hours of February 21st and awaited the *Panzer* cyclone which was due to come from the direction of Kasserine. To their front was but a handful of British infantry . . . said to be three platoons, but about the equivalent of one American platoon. The story goes that these weary souls kept running up and down their line of positions, firing and making the enemy believe that there was much more opposition than existed actually.

The Axis armored spearhead had nearly three battalions of infantry against the three threadbare

platoons of His Majesty's Lestershire Yeomanry. About 40 powerful tanks opposed the 24 British *Mark IV's*, which were too small to give battle and so were kept in reserve. Only in artillery were the two sides equal, and that the result of the arrival of the Ninth's reinforcements.

Days and nights of steady and miserable rainfall were now at an end and the dull, cloudy morning of February 22, 1943, yawned awake. The Germans opened a tremendous tank attack up the Thala defile at 7 A.M., aided by artillery and dive-bombers. At this time the Americans and British were only three miles south of Thala, perched upon the last defenses before that town. The enemy was but 2,500 yards distant, making it necessary to fire at almost point-blank range. As a matter of fact, British artillery, defiladed on the forward slopes, actually did lower its

Distinguished Unit Citation

. . . 9th Infantry Division Artillery, is cited for conspicuous gallantry and heroism in battle on 21, 22, and 23 February 1943, in repelling an attack by vastly superior forces, which were attempting to break through the Allied lines in the vicinity of Thala, Tunisia . . . 9th Infantry Division Artillery, completed a 100-hour forced march from Tlemcen, Algeria, covering a distance of 735 miles in bitter weather over tortuous and almost impassable mountain roads on the night of 21 February 1943. Without prior reconnaissance or adequate maps, harassed by enemy fire, and forced to maneuver through a congested narrow road, nevertheless . . . occupied battle positions, set up communications, established observation posts, and was ready to deliver fire by daylight. Although enemy forces were entrenched only 2,500 yards distant and there were only three platoons of friendly infantry in front of the artillery, the unit maintained constant and steady fire with such deadly effect that enemy tank units were dispersed and driven back. The cool and determined manner in which . . . 9th Division Artillery entered into battle, after an almost incredible forced march contributed in great measure to the defeat of the enemy's attempt to break through the Thala defile. The gallant entry into battle and the heroism with which the volume of fire was maintained, despite terrific enemy fire, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the American military service.

(Note: This is a consolidated citation of the awards given Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Ninth Division Artillery; 34th, 60th and 84th Field Artillery Battalions and the 47th and 60th Cannon Companies.—The Author)

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muzzles and fire what amounted to flat-trajectory fire. Guns of the 84th Field Artillery did the same.

For three hours past dawn the battle raged. German *Stukas* attempted to silence the Ninth Divarty's guns but could not. Battery C, 84th F.A., was dispatched forward to an anti-tank position as the enemy approached. Its 105's were lowered and fired point-blank at oncoming tanks to stop the armored threat. Two guns were hit badly but the battery continued to fire, accomplishing its mission.

Rommel's forces tried to break through to Thala all day. But the combined efforts of Rommel, Goering, Mussolini, Himmler or even Hitler himself behind the enemy soldiers could not have aided the Germans and Italians. The enemy simply could not advance against the rapidly-firing artillerymen, who sought out *Panzer* tanks with 105 and 155 shells for a most devastating and memorable effect.

The drive out of Kasserine Pass was halted. It was halted by the artillery, cannon and gumption of the force that "couldn't arrive in time" . . . but did!

Taking advantage of the enemy's stunning defeat, infantry and aircraft launched a counterattack from the area southwest of Thala. Battered Combat Command B readied itself for retaliation and struck. Rommel went into headlong retreat. The *B-17's* bombed his columns . . . and back through Kasserine hobbled the remnants of his once-proud 21st *Panzer* Division . . . and his last chance in the west. On the 24th, CCB was reported within one mile of Kasserine . . . and Nazi vehicles were fairly rolling over each other in an effort to leave the pass.

On February 25th, while Italians and *Teller* mines covered their withdrawal, the Germans fled to the east and succeeded in disengaging from their American pursuers. All that remained of the Axis' erstwhile fifty-mile gain was control of Gafsa.

In men and equipment, both sides had suffered staggering losses. During two days alone the 1st Armored Division lost 100 tanks, and at least 2,000 Americans of all organizations were prisoners of the Axis. Rommel, on the other hand, lost a large portion of his armor, and more important, the initiative in the west.

For the Ninth Infantry Division, this battle meant the virtual elimination of an infantry battalion and two supporting companies of the 39th Infantry. However, the gallant stand of Divarty and its cannon company support overshadowed any losses which the Division might have had. Never before in the history of modern warfare had artillery alone stopped the combined assaults of tanks, motorized infantry, dive-bombers—and dueled enemy artillery as well!

* * * *

TWO days after the Ninth Division Artillery and cannon companies left Tlemcen, the balance of the Ninth pulled up its well-worn stakes and hastened to the Tunisian front. As the Division pulled into the border town of Bou Chebka, however, Rommel's unsuccessful *Panzers* were withdrawing east beyond Kasserine. All that remained for the Ninth Division was a vast litter-strewn battleground . . . grim reminder of what had transpired.

Yet despite indications of a passive sector, the lengthy front was likely to explode again, and strong precautionary measures were taken. The 1st Infantry Division, which was relieved by the Ninth, had been holding Kasserine Pass with its 16th C.T. Upon arrival of the Ninth Division, this regiment was attached to the Ninth and remained in place while a defensive line was established. At El ma el Abiod Pass, near the Tunisian-Algerian border, the 47th C.T. dug in, having the mission of holding that natural gateway *at all costs*. Concurrently, the 60th C.T. opened for business at Bou Chebka, using first the border customs house and later a nearby farmhouse as its C.P.

For the next few weeks, life consisted of holding what had been regained. The air generally was peaceful—punctured only by an occasional gunshot or bursting aerial bomb. Then, during the early days of March, another change of positions occurred. The *Raiders*—followed by the big guns of the 34th Field Artillery—made an epic displacement to the left, shuttling by truck at night from the extreme right of the extended front to the extreme left, in what amounted to a forced march, and replaced the



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16th C.T. at Kasserine by daylight. Thelepte and Feriana airports were hosts to a steady stream of *Go-Devils*, who moved in to guard those vital landing strips. And the 39th C.T. completed a 396-mile journey through the treacherous Atlas Mountains to rejoin the Ninth at Bou Chebka. Most of the Division's detachments now had returned to the *fold*, as well as a new attachment, the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Covering a 52-mile front extended greatly the Ninth Division's lines of communications. Without the distinguished service performed by the Ninth Signal Company and the Ninth Reconnaissance Troop, such a lengthy line of defense would have suffered serious gaps. But these two units were equal to a difficult task. Signalmen covered an area which normally would require ten times the available personnel and equipment. Recon troopers patrolled this enormous sector along the front and as far south as Gafsa, where they kept contact with a cagey enemy and displayed both thoroughness and speed.

It was early in March that General Patton assumed command of the II Corps. A different type of strategy was quickly evident . . . the use of infantry to open a path through which armor could race. At this time the American forces in Tunisia consisted of the 34th Infantry Division—which was aiding the British to the north—with the Ninth and 1st Infantry Divisions, the 1st Armored Division and special units to the south.

On St. Patrick's Day the 1st Infantry Division captured Gafsa, while the 1st Armored by-passed that town and pushed slowly toward Sened. This movement was part of a master plan for the Allies in North Africa and began on March 16th with a II Corps drive. Montgomery by now had strong forces opposing the Axis on the Mareth Line, where he was ready to signal his next huge offensive.

* * * *

THE Allied plan of action has been compared to the operation of a piston. If we consider the protectorate of Tunisia as such a mechanical device it helps to clarify the strategy. Capping the piston was the Mediterranean; the right wall was the coast from Bizerte southward. To the west were the British First Army (on the north) and the American II

Corps (on the south), forming the left wall and attacking as necessary to maintain their holding power. At the bottom were Montgomery's *Desert Rats*—acting as the piston arm. They were to push the *Afrika Korps* steadily north while the remainder of the Allied forces occupied the enemy along the west wall.

Naturally the piston had a *spark*. This turned out to be the II Corps, displacing north and making its final drive on Mateur and Bizerte. In effect, the Axis was to be exploded out of North Africa. But the action of the *spark* would come later; first it was necessary to push the enemy north.

While the British drove up the coast, it was to be the task of the Americans to engage every bit of Axis armor and infantry as far as possible. Such a diversionary attack would focus a great deal of attention upon the enemy's western front and serve to tie up a large number of tanks with which Rommel could oppose the Eighth Army to the south.

The mission of the II Corps included securing Maknassy during the coordinated attack, then breaking the battle-tested 1st Armored through El Guettar Pass. If the tankers could enter the great coastal plains region there seemed an excellent chance that the Americans might cut off the rear of the enemy.

Part of the Axis strategy was to use the natural fortress formed by the Grande Dorsale Range and the sea, where reinforcements and supplies could be rushed across the coastal plateau to block any threatened point. But this advantage was turning into a dilemma for the enemy. If Rommel were forced to retreat, Von Arnim and his troops facing the Americans would be faced with destruction; if El Guettar or Maknassy passes were opened, Rommel would have to retreat or be cut off from the rear.

* * * *

AS the drive continued, El Guettar—a mountain pass village along the Gafsa-Gabes road—was captured by the 1st Infantry Division. Its former occupants were rapidly fleeing Italians who left nothing behind. Greater resistance was encountered to the north, on the other hand, where the veteran 21st *Panzer* Division obstructed the path of the 1st Armored from Gafsa to Maknassy and its pass. Thus

began the *Twenty Days of Maknassy*, a tale of infantry and armor.

During mid-March, the 60th C.T. had been motorized fully, temporarily detached from the Ninth Division and dispatched to aid the 1st Armored advance. March 18th found the 60th at Zannouch Station, about to enter its first action against the Axis. Less than two days later the *Go-Devils* were rolling cross-country—objective Djebel Goussa. This hill mass dominated the rail line which ran to the sea and was near Station de Sened—"The place everybody fought for and nobody wanted."

The 60th launched its opening attack at night and was singularly successful. Although Axis positions were well-entrenched and well-fortified on Goussa, the combat team was able to maneuver onto the high ground to the enemy's rear. *Go-Devil* flanking reaped a rich harvest, for the djebel fell, and the outwitted defenders retreated from the valley south of the objective. Colonel de Rohan's men had won their first contest with the Axis.

Bombing and strafing by German planes demonstrated, nonetheless, that the foe still was full of fight. And while part of his belligerency was brushed aside late on the evening of the 20th when the 1st Armored ground into Station de Sened, the tankers did not turn south. Six miles in that direction lay Sened. The town was held by the enemy, and he had a small arsenal of artillery emplaced there which kept up a steady tempo of shellfire upon troop movements over the Gafsa-Station de Sened road, causing a great deal of annoyance.

With one successful fight under its belt, the 60th moved during the night of March 21st to the open ground southeast of Djebel Goussa . . . about 1 mile north of the station. Here the regiment was split into three groups. Its 3rd Battalion was detached from the regiment and attached to Combat Command C, while the remainder of the team motored from the station to an assembly area four miles west of Maknassy—all except Company G, that is, which was left at Station de Sened for policing.

The 3rd Battalion began an attack on March 21st which continued several days. Just before midnight the unit jumped off toward Djebel Naemia—a mountain mass about 5½ miles east of Maknassy. For

Company "G" at Station de Sened

As the 60th moved toward Maknassy on March 22, 1943, it left behind Company G under Captain Willard H. Barnwell. The mission of this unit was to *police* the area around Station de Sened. Enemy artillery was causing a great deal of disturbance from the direction of Sened, however, and Company G decided to do something about it.

A company has only about 200 men under normal conditions and G was low in strength . . . but that did not stop these infantrymen. Captain Barnwell, accompanied by the *one man army of Tunisia*, a colorful character of the outfit . . . one Private *Molotov* (Karl Warner), delivered an ultimatum to the enemy garrison at Sened: *Surrender or be wiped out!*

The enemy ignored this demand so the doughboys with artillery support from the 1st Armored, attacked Sened. It was a bold move and the garrison gave up . . . 542 Italians surrendered. Among the booty captured were armored cars, field artillery pieces, vehicles, and all sorts of weapons and supplies.

By audacity and quick action Company G had killed or captured nearly a battalion of the enemy and its supporting arms. With the hills around Sened cleared, the happy group of Americans rejoined their battalion, moving via trucks, to Maknassy. They arrived on March 24th and immediately were placed in action . . . since their *policing* was finished!

the most part, Naemia's well-protected defenders were Germans supported by excellent artillery of many calibers—including 210mm field guns. American troops were outnumbered and outpositioned—unable to take the strongpoint. Chattering machine guns and burping mortars covered every crack and draw . . . an almost certain *purple heart* for invaders.

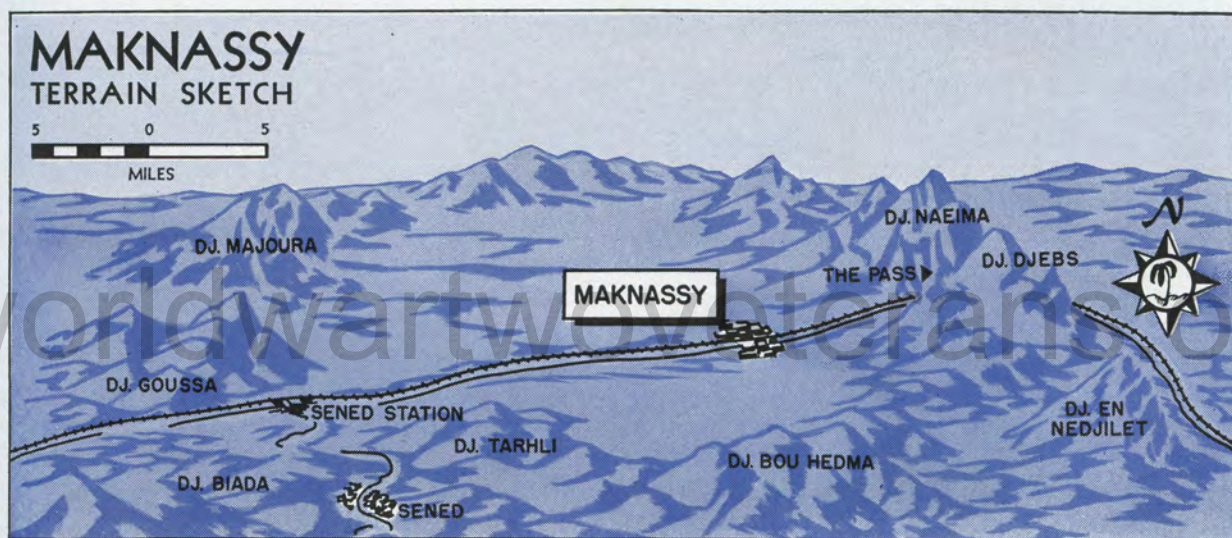
Things seemed to go wrong for the 3rd Battalion from the very beginning, when Companies K (Captain Robert H. Rucker) and L (Captain Robert S. DeGurse) hit land mines and booby traps in the attack. Further advance was not feasible and their positions were dangerous, especially since machine-gun fire was falling upon the attackers from the south slope of their objective.

Captain Rucker was wounded severely by an anti-personnel mine while leading his company and Lt. McFayden (a medic), Major Dilley and two aid men were guided by Private Byrd in an attempt at

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finding Rucker and giving him aid. As luck would have it, the group ran into an enemy patrol and Byrd fired upon the latter with his sub-machine gun, an action which alerted Axis forces along the entire front. A shower of fire sprayed down upon the battalion from all parts of the hills, surprising the would-be surprisers and causing them to scatter. Quick-thinking Major Dilley was able to get a line of riflemen established upon the djebel and Company M (Captain Gail H. Brown) brought up its machine

guns against the pass. The line extended generally north to south—from Djebel Naemia to Djebel Bou Dousou. Actions encountered between March 28th and April 8th consisted of local attacks by both the Americans and their adversaries, since the enemy was well-entrenched and wanted to stay that way. Despite that condition Axis forces suffered severe losses in both men and materiel during that time . . . losses they could ill afford. Recruits for the fight against Hitlerism, on the other hand, began arriving



guns and dug in. But from then on it was rough going. Even the tanks of the 1st Armored were of no assistance in taking the hill positions.

Troops attacking Maknassy were more fortunate as that town was captured on the 22nd. Then Djebel Bou Dousou and the ranges beyond fell to the advancing infantrymen of the *Go-Devil* regiment. Nevertheless, the 1st Armored could not penetrate the stubborn defenses of Maknassy Pass. After March 24th, the 60th commenced guarding this pass which led from Maknassy, through the mountains and to the east . . . encountering but scant opposition along the outposts, yet unable to capture the pass itself.

Gradually the battle at Maknassy evolved itself into holding what had been gained and driving

on April 2nd and 3rd when 247 replacements joined the 60th. They were new . . . crisp . . . fresh-looking . . . and very welcome.

By now the main effort of the II Corps was under way at El Guettar—all other American efforts were secondary, although important. The British were pushing the piston arm up from the south and Von Arnim was giving thought to retreating. One favorite trick of the enemy was to stage a false attack to cover his withdrawal. During the night of April 4-5 the Axis tried to break through the 1st Battalion and was thrown back with heavy losses. True to their pattern, the defenders began departing the following day. Not long afterward outposts of the 60th were able to watch the British Eighth making

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contact with units of the 1st Armored beyond Maknassy Pass.

When the Axis completed its withdrawal from Djebels Dribica and Naemia on the night of April 8th, 1st Armored tanks left the sector and entered into a chase while the 60th C.T. remained to organize the high ground east of Maknassy. Early on the afternoon of the 9th, the *Go-Devils* moved onto the former Axis djebel strongholds, remaining in the vicinity until they rejoined the Ninth Division at Bou Chebka on April 13th. At that time the Ninth's other units had an equally exciting story to swap with the *Go-Devils* . . . the sagā of El Guettar.

* * * *

AS BATTLES go, El Guettar was not the biggest, but it was one of the toughest operations in the Ninth's long history. While many consider this the first time the Division operated as a unit in combat, it is only partly true, since the 60th C.T. was fighting the battle of Maknassy many miles away and the Ninth had to perform a divisional job with only six—and for several days five—infantry battalions. Yet El Guettar and the simultaneous clash at Maknassy provided the three combat teams of the Ninth with their first opportunities to fight as entities against the Axis. Of greater importance, these brief encounters taught the Ninth Infantry Division more about combat than could be learned from a library of books.

El Guettar Pass might be considered as a valve in that gigantic Tunisian piston mentioned previously. So long as the Allies kept the left piston wall in place and tricked German armor and infantry over to this opening, the compression stroke of the Eighth Army stood a much better chance of success.

There were many difficulties connected with engaging the enemy at El Guettar. First of all it had been planned originally that the Ninth would attack far to the north. When revised orders were received, most of General Eddy's staff was on advance party reconnaissance many miles from this new objective. To complicate matters further, only two days' notice was furnished the Division of its impending attack. As the campaign progressed, it seemed as if every conceivable obstacle had fallen into the path of the Ninth Division. The Division

commander was injured in a serious auto mishap and, with one hand crushed and both legs injured, had to hobble about on crutches during the entire ten-day battle. Five of the six infantry battalion commanders became casualties during the fight as well. Furthermore, both air superiority and the best terrain were in the possession of the enemy and he made superb use of his advantage. One soldier, a combat veteran of two wars, describes the action well, "It was hellish . . . they were looking down at our throats all the time . . . worst I was ever in!"

The map situation was almost hopeless. Accurate prints were unobtainable and American forces had to rely upon blurred copies of antiquated French originals. Hills of less than 200 meters were not shown, and each two miles of ground covered only about five-eighths of an inch on paper . . . hardly enough room for a *dime*! Thus the Division operated under severe handicap regarding location and direction. Regiments found these maps practically useless and companies had little to guide their attacks.

It follows that, when maps are faulty, intelligence sources also are likely to be inaccurate. These passes of the Grande Dorsale Range were masterfully prepared for defense by the enemy; he had spent months digging into the rocky alpine tracts. And, as stated previously, a small group of well-fortified individuals could hold almost any Tunisian pass against an army. But appearances indicated that the pass of El Guettar was held lightly . . . and that was the intelligence report sent the Ninth Division.

* * * *

EL GUETTAR Pass (sometimes called Guetaria) begins about ten to thirteen miles southeast of the village of El Guettar. A fairly good highway, the Gafsa-Gabes road, runs through the pass and is the main motor route of the area. To the south of Guetaria rises a mountainous wall, the outstanding part of which is Djebel Berda. On the north side of the canyon are other djebels, most important of which is Djebel Chemsī—at that time in the 1st Infantry Division zone. Between the pass and the village stretches a flat desert plain, *sans* vegetation and pitted with wadis (dried stream beds). Combat conditions necessitated approaching the pass under cover of darkness—because of the featureless waste-



THE VILLAGE OF EL GUETTAR

land which could be viewed for miles by the enemy.

Axis forces held great initial advantages. Entrenched in a mountain wilderness the enemy was almost inaccessible. A mumbo-jumbo mass of steep, rugged hills and gorges—which were eroded and difficult to traverse—made barren Guettaria a difficult objective for an infantry attack. Scaling its rises was so utterly fatiguing that it left an individual with little incentive to pitch into a death struggle. Enemy strategy was based upon nature's own fortress. The Axis was concentrated only at the passes . . . the gateways which were *natural avenues of approach*.

On March 25th Colonel George B. Barth was appointed Division chief of staff, relieving old-timer Colonel Samuel A. Gibson, who had at one time commanded the 47th Infantry.

General Patton had received his instructions from the 18th Army Group (General Sir Harold Alexander); they were explicit and they were important. The Ninth and 1st Divisions were to launch an attack on the Gafsa-Gabes axis, so as to open El Guettar Pass north of Hill 369, thus allowing the 1st Armored to roll through the pass. In simple

terms, that meant the two infantry divisions were to seize opposite sides of the canyon, insuring that American tanks would not encounter flanking opposition as they drove through and into the inner plain.

The attack was ordered in three phases. Initially the road junction north of Djebel Berda and the hills bordering this junction would be secured. Next, the infantry divisions would advance as far forward as a pass which fell between Djebels Chemsis and Ben Krier. When the second phase was completed, the way would be opened for the 1st Armored Division vehicles to break through to Djebel Tebaga Fatnassa. It was somewhat like a well-planned football play . . . with the line opening a hole for the backfield. The final phase of this plan was tied in with the movement of the Eighth Army to the north, and would be executed only upon orders of the 18th Army Group. The third phase was the *touchdown drive* . . . the movement of the 1st Armored to its objective, where it would begin operations against German lines of communications.

America's portion of the conflict was scheduled to begin on March 27th or 28th, depending upon the state of readiness of the units involved. The latter date was final choice and *Field Order No. 16*, the

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Ninth's first Divisional attack directive was issued . . . H-Hour would fall at 6 A.M.!

* * * *

THE Ninth had a plan which seemed as good as any could be. It took into consideration the fact that a frontal attack over the open plains would be courting military suicide. Consequently, the Division was to assemble at the eastern base of Djebel Berda by a series of night movements. Then the 47th Infantry would work east along the northern base of Berda. One battalion would proceed via Debjel El Kreroua, and one via Djebel Lettouchi, effecting capture of Hill 369 from the west in a two-pronged attack. As insurance of success, the 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry was to follow the 47th C.T., being committed only when the Ninth deemed its aid necessary. The remainder of the *Falcons* would stay in Division reserve . . . motorized for rapid displacement. Divarty was reinforced by the 17th Field Artillery (also trained at Fort Bragg) and their combined big-gunpower was to begin hammering the enemy at the stroke of H-Hour. That was the strategy; it seemed simple and fairly foolproof.

But the terrain intervened to change the situation. Off to one side of the Ninth Division zone was Hill 772, a djebel which furnished the area's dominating position. From that lofty mount a defender could render all else untenable for miles around. *Darby's Rangers* had been in possession of this strongpoint when the 1st Division held both sides of the pass, but when the 1st displaced north the *Rangers* went along. Word of this did not reach the Ninth Division, unfortunately, until just prior to the engagement, and in the interim Axis forces had hastily reoccupied Hill 772. Since the Ninth's entire plan of attack had been formulated and was in the process of execution, all that could be done was to continue with a slightly revised plan—one which gave a battalion of the 39th Infantry the sole mission of taking the hill. Had 772 remained in American hands the Division's drive would have stood a much greater chance of earlier success; now the presumption of a quick victory slowly melted away.

El Guettar was going to be a longer engagement than most of the participants then realized. The

skeleton size of the Division, and Axis possession of Hill 772 told the story adequately and well.

At H-Hour the 47th was just one mile west of El Hamra Ridge, which it had reached by successive night movements. Because of darkness and poor maps this was thought to be Hill 369, the objective. Artillery boomed and the *Raiders* went into their attack. The 1st Battalion, leading, was stopped by fire from the ridge . . . it deployed and returned the morning greetings while the 3rd Battalion, following, slipped around to the south. El Hamra fell quickly, the first of many German positions to be captured by the *Raiders* during World War II . . . so far, so good!

Just before daybreak, the 2nd Battalion had been sent on a wide flanking movement far to the south . . . into the impossible gullies and hills near Djebels Kreroua and Lettouchi. This battalion was not as fortunate as the other two of the 47th. Had the maneuver worked, Hill 369 might have been taken sooner; however, misfortune intervened and the entire unit became caught in a pocket of murderous fire while it was still dark. For almost two days the whereabouts of a large portion of the 2nd Battalion was not known by the Ninth.

Company *E* had been leading when the 2nd Battalion was hit by cross-fire of machine guns. Company *G* tried immediately to outflank the enemy and stop his stream of death . . . to no avail. The defenders had strong positions, and Companies *F*, *G* and *H* were forced to withdraw to the nearest cover. Although these units took up the fire fight, Company *E* was hit too badly to continue the engagement. The greatest loss to the battalion that morning, however, was in personnel captured, among whom were:

Lt. Col. Louis Gershenow, Battalion C.O.

1st Lt. Willard G. Duckworth, Battalion S-2

2nd Lt. Sidney A. Thal, Battalion Communications Officer

Captain Ben K. Humphrey and 175 men of Company *E*

Captain Francis M. Smith and six soldiers of Company *F*

One officer and 30 men of Company *G*

Captain Horace M. Spaulding, C.O. of Company *H*

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Lt. Crane Campbell, Aide-de-Camp to General Eisenhower

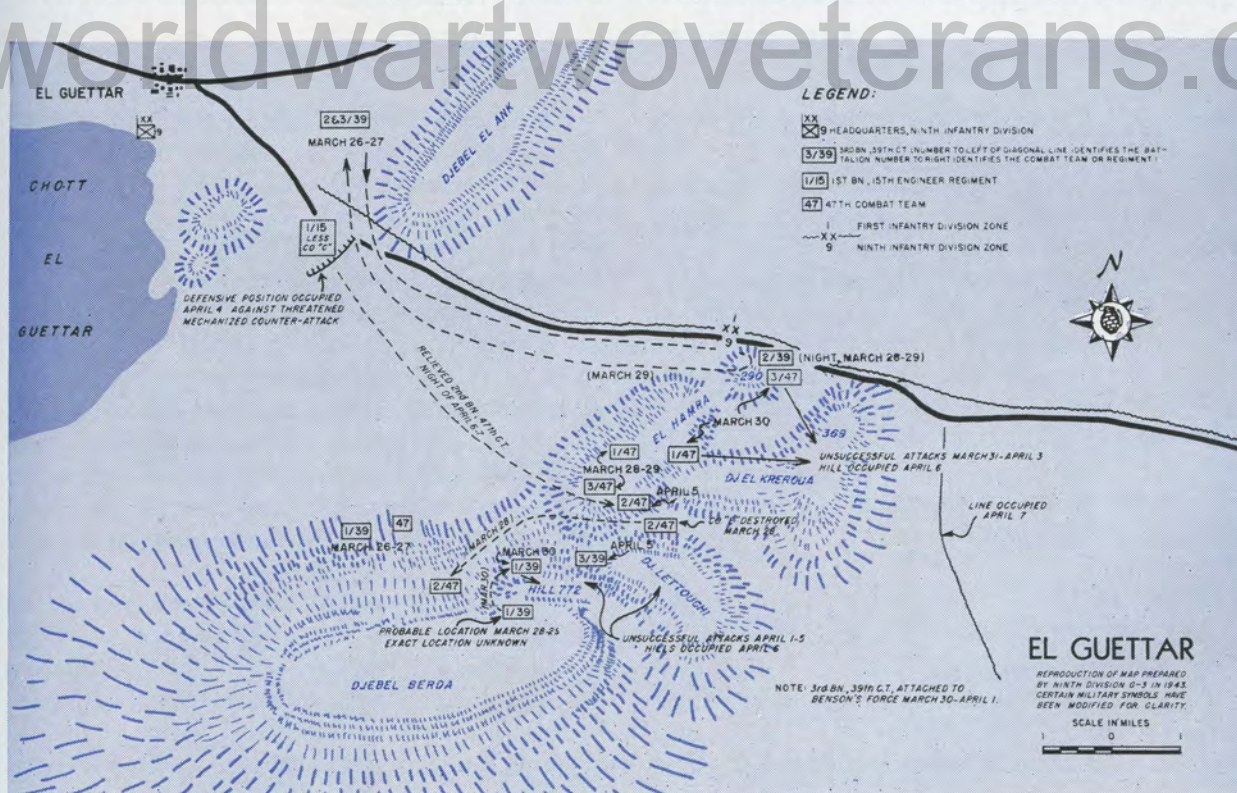
With this setback the 1st Battalion of the 39th was committed by the Ninth . . . having the mission of extending the southern envelopment. But this unit became lost in the maze of djebels as well and did not see action the first day. That night the Ninth's tactics had to take into consideration the fact that one of its six battalions was lost, another badly mauled . . . and the enemy retained the heights.

The first night on the line was not only cold . . . it was miserable. But most of the nights which followed were to be equally distasteful, for as one captain remarked later, "El Guettar was thought to be a one-day operation . . . no blankets . . . no coats were taken along!"

At the close of day, casualties were removed to the rear by the medics and members of the Division Band . . . as they would be for the next ten nights. These hard-working and gallant dealers in mercy soon were to discover that the enemy paid little at-

tention to Red Cross litters, marked vehicles or armbands. Often he showered such insignia with artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire.

Disregarding initial losses, the Division continued to attack toward its objective. The 2nd Battalion of the 39th left its reserve positions to assault Hill 369 from the north under the cover of pre-dawn darkness. Cool night air breezed through the heavily-laden trucks as the *Falcons* drove southwest along the Gafsa-Gabes highway. But they had gotten off their course—due to maps or other reasons—and the column ran smack into Hill 290 (which was not shown on the map). Here a withering rain of German and Italian ammunition peppered the vehicles and the ground around them. Badly demoralized, the 2nd was forced to withdraw with heavy losses to its original positions. As the battalion retired, it left behind its gallant commander, Lt. Colonel Walter M. Oakes and a handful of equally determined soldiers who tried to carry out their mission notwithstanding the odds. As might be ex-



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FALCON SWITCHBOARD . . . EL GUETTAR

pected most of these individuals were either killed or captured, despite their bravery.

With Hill 369 remaining in Axis hands, the attack bogged down. Contrary to preliminary briefing, these were not ordinary positions, but rather a rocky fortress, protected by barbed wire and mutually supporting fires. Part of the enemy's growing resistance could be explained by the fact that he was strengthening the pass area with fresh troops from the south. And while that was good news in one sense—since it meant that the mission of the II Corps was being accomplished—reinforcements for the defenders meant a tougher time in store for foot soldiers of the Ninth Division.

* * * *

A REORGANIZED Ninth met the foe on March 30th. The *lost battalion* was back with the Division, although slightly the worse for wear, and sights were fixed to the east. But obstacles continued to trip the Ninth. One of these was a faulty map which led a battalion to report that it had captured Hill 369 when it had taken nearby Hill 290—the

djebel not shown on available maps—and this information was forwarded to General Patton. Closer examination during the following day disclosed that 290 could not possibly be the objective, and a red-faced Division notified II Corps of its error.

Corps ordered the drive continued and for the next five days the struggle for Hills 369 and 772 was carried on unabated. At first Hill 369 bore the brunt of the Ninth's attack; then it was realized that the objective could be taken *only* by first gaining the dominating heights of Hill 772. The latter djebel had been by-passed and was holding up the entire Corps advance. All-out efforts made against both strongpoints continued to meet a military stonewall.

These attacks were coordinated with several attempts of *Benson's Force*—an armored task force to which the 3rd Battalion of the 39th was attached for several days—to break through the pass. Pushed back several times by well-placed 88mm gunfire and opposing tanks, Benson finally broke through—only to be forced back again. Von Arnim's men realized

fully the value of their positions and held on stubbornly, repulsing all drives.

The effect of strenuous fighting was beginning to show on face after face, and each advancing day of combat weighed down more heavily upon the men up front. They were becoming weary of their mountain battlefield . . . of nights and days with interrupted snatches of sleep . . . of wearing the same clothing until it assumed a laminated appearance. During the day the hot dry air was filled with gusts of sand and dust . . . at night the temperature dropped to the other extreme, causing teeth to chatter and bones to ache. And then there was the 'round-the-clock enemy air activity, designed to keep the Americans on edge. *Stukas*, *Messerschmidts* and *Focke-Wolfes* roared over daily from their all-weather fields, while heavy winds often kept the AAF grounded on its temporary landing strips. In addition to other discomforts, men on the line were tired of these enemy air attacks . . . just plain tired!

Nonetheless, the dorsal-pass fighting continued. Corps had called the second phase of the attack, in spite of Axis opposition (on Hills 369 and 772) which kept the Division from complying. It appeared as if large numbers of tanks were being dispatched by the enemy to aid his defenses of El Guettar and Maknassy passes, meaning that the Axis was being tricked into the left wall *valve*. Although such actions evinced little contemporary joy from the men who had to oppose them, armor, guns and planes taken from the southern front and sent to Guettaria meant earlier realization of Montgomery's compression stroke.

Many of these tanks were destroyed by the 26th Field Artillery, and *Spitfires* caught a huge flight of attacking German planes, downing fourteen and causing the remainder to scatter. On March 31st, 100 Italians surrendered to a single artilleryman of the 34th F.A. Thus the overall plan was working—and working well for the Allies!

Success of the piston-like operation called for tenacious warfare—the type which allowed little grass to grow under the restive feet of Allied spearheads. Appropriately, before the battle at El Guettar entered its finale, Corps received a directive from the 18th Army Group to the effect that as soon as the

Eighth Army broke through the Akarit position, the Ninth Infantry Division was to move north to the left flank of the British V Corps. There the Ninth would take over a lengthy front extending to the blue Mediterranean . . . and climaxing the final phase with a spark which was destined to explode the Axis out of North Africa.

* * * *

ONE point was glaringly evident after the first week of fighting at Guettaria. While much of the trouble experienced by the Ninth could be traced to faulty intelligence, rugged terrain and inaccurate maps, a majority of the difficulty stemmed from the Division itself. Despite their assault landings against the French, this was the first stiff encounter for the 39th and 47th C.T.'s. For the most part the Ninth Division's leaders were inexperienced and its troops were green. It would be unfair to place the blame entirely—or conveniently—upon someone or something else.

Fortunately, after its initial setbacks the Division emerged as a going concern. It had made mistakes . . . and would make many more before the war ended. Nobody is perfect. But as an efficient fighting machine the Ninth was fast becoming of age. Witness of this fact was a vast group of men who daily were doing much more than ordinarily could be expected of soldiers. Society prefers to know them as *heroes*, but since every man who serves in combat might be termed a hero, a better designation might be *outstanding soldiers*.

There were so many of these men in North Africa that the Division had a set quota—with only the most *outstanding soldiers* obtaining recognition by medal. One of these was Corporal William J. McCoy who charged an enemy machine-gun nest, destroyed the weapon and was instrumental in capturing forty prisoners. Another outstanding corporal was Nicholas E. Miller. Corporal Miller rushed out under fire and gallantly rescued wounded Corporal Patrick J. Talbot and Private Ray Thornton from the battlefield, getting them into a position of safety. Much-decorated Captain Guy E. Carr earned a *D.S.C.* while leading his company over flat open ground—in the fact of machine-gun fire. After his unit was pinned down, Carr stood up and advanced alone—

EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY

firing directly into the machine-gun position, knocking out one gun and forcing the gun crew to surrender.

Sergeant Earll E. Wells, Corporal Lenard J. Mazzotti and Private Audry G. Morris had an excuse to draw back to a covered position, since they were under enemy observation and fire. These GIs chose to remain at their posts, however, keeping communications open from the attacking units to their C.P. And there are few witnesses who will forget the deeds of First Lieutenant (Chaplain) Earl E. Ray. Under heavy enemy fire he made his way to an advanced aid station, gave first aid, assisted in administering plasma, acted as a litter bearer, gave immediate psychotherapy and supervised the feeding and comfort of the wounded before they were evacuated to the rear.

These are just a few of the names, chosen at random without regard to regiment or company from a huge roster which never will be completed accurately. There were many more *outstanding soldiers* who sparked the Ninth at El Guettar . . . men from every branch of the service and from all walks of life. Mentioning a combat team or division in battle means a good bit more than infantry, for there is a great deal of inter-dependence on the field of combat. Banded together, these soldiers become a team capable of things its members would not dream possible.

Such was the team which now was growing out of a green Division. Men of the Ninth did not want to be there fighting at El Guettar . . . not really. A million other places would have been much better. But there was a job to be done and getting it over with seemed like a good idea. The enemy also had ideas . . . big schemes hatched by well-trained military minds.

* * * *

VON ARNIM was up to something; a blanket of artillery shells was falling fast and furiously from his well-emplaced batteries. It was April 4th and II Corps had received a report that there might be a mechanized attack in the offing. To halt any such thrust the 15th Engineers became *infantry* and occupied positions before El Guettar at 8 P.M.

This had been a day of armored activity on the part of the 10th *Panzer* Division, with five of its tanks destroyed by *tankbusters* of the 26th F.A. In

The Ninth Infantry Division, operating for the first time as a Division, had entered the Battle of El Guettar severely handicapped. Despite this fact, and despite the fact that the Division was guilty of the mistakes expected of a unit in its initial engagement with the enemy, the operation proved to be an eventual success. The conduct of the individual soldier was reassuring and gratifying. Opposing crafty and veteran soldiers, our troops showed courage and ability. With one battle behind them, they were now ready to enter the next operation a wiser and more able fighting unit.

—Major General Manton S. Eddy.

the airways enemy bombing and strafing missions had diminished . . . and that was indicative of something, too. Listening to captured Italian prisoners might have given the truthful answer. The P.W.'s were unanimous in stating that their troops were afraid to fight, but that Nazi officers and non-coms still held control . . . forcing them into battle. That looked as if part of the Axis had consumed its fill of war.

Nevertheless, higher headquarters intelligence reports continued to dribble in . . . claiming that the Germans were being reinforced greatly and might counterattack. Consequently, the American attack planned for April 5th was called off and the Ninth held all troops in readiness for any eventuality.

Then April 6th—Army Day—dawned. Instead of attacking, however, the enemy now showed every indication of a withdrawal. Once more the piston strategy demonstrated its soundness, as the 1st and Ninth Divisions were ordered to complete phase two of the master plan. One-half of the 15th Engineer Battalion relieved the 2nd Battalion of the 47th Infantry on El Hamra, and the *Raiders* prepared to press ahead. At 5:45 P.M. the 47th was directed into the attack by Colonel Randle, who exhorted his company commanders to . . . "Get your companies on the objective. Use your mortars on their machine guns. Do not allow one machine gun or mortar to hold up your advance!"

Those were bold words to tell somebody else . . . but the intrepid colonel was right up front himself. On one occasion he led a squad up to the heights held by the enemy. That was the spirit of *the chase* which had taken hold of the 39th and 47th C.T.'s, and Djebel Lettouchi fell . . . blood-bathed Hill 772

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fell . . . only Hill 369 remained to block the Division's advance.

Aerial observation, patrolling and reconnaissance disclosed that the enemy withdrawal had begun in earnest. By April 7th Djebel Berda was believed to be evacuated completely and the Axis forces were reported in general retreat. That was accurate information, for Von Arnim was extricating his hold-outs and heading north—where the enemy would make another *last stand*. With the *Falcons* and the *Raiders* pursuing the retreating defenders of El Guettar, the Ninth Division shortly was able to report Hill 369 *definitely* captured. Soon afterward the final objective line was reached and the exhilarating grasp of victory felt good in the hands of a near-exhausted Ninth.

At 5:05 P.M. *Benson's Force* contacted the British Eighth Army coming up from the south . . . the Allies were joined and the Battle of El Guettar was over, finished, a memory to forget or brag about. The enemy had withstood over two million rounds

of every conceivable type of ammunition . . . now he was retreating. *Jerry*, too, would have memories of El Guettar!

When the Ninth Infantry Division reached its objective, it was ordered by 18th Army Group to leave for another area via Bou Chebka. So ten days after the opening of its first big battle, the Division commenced movement back to that border town. Here it occupied the same positions that it had previously . . . a wiser, more tired unit . . . happier than ever before to enjoy peace and quiet. The greatest lesson it had learned was that in warfare it is important to capture the high ground first, and *that* one truth proved the basis of all future Ninth Division operations.

Rest, recuperation, replacement and letter-writing were the new order of business. This gratifying breather was short-lived, however . . . there was work to be done to the north. Somebody had to spark the compression stroke, and the Ninth was a part of that somebody!

II—Northern Tunisia

The country in which the 9th Division is expected to operate in the near future is completely different from that near El Guettar. Although hilly, it will be found that the hills are covered with trees and scrub, both of which are very thick in places and render observation difficult. The valleys are generally swampy and tank action is mainly confined to or near the roads . . .

—*Ninth Division Training Memo.*

MORE trouble and another battle lay to the north. A decisive and concluding engagement between the growing strength of the Allies and the veteran campaigners of the Axis loomed into view. For that struggle the rapidly diminishing legions of Rommel, Von Arnim and Italian Marshal Messe had withdrawn into the natural fortress area before Bizerte and Tunis. Although short of artillery and armor, the Axis was sitting astride one of the finest defensive sectors on the dark continent of Africa. Nature had provided the enemy with a region well-suited to small unit

delaying action; and holding this initial advantage, fanatical Nazi warlords believed a lengthy resistance possible.

Had it been possible to walk through the center of the enemy lines—all the way around from Cape Serrat to Enfidaville—an almost impenetrable combination of cultivated valleys, jungle, djebels and desert would have been disclosed . . . all the hindrances of nature which characterize North Africa. The Axis had suffered a stunning defeat at Wadi Akarit to the south and had retreated from Maknassy and El Guettar. Nonetheless, this new defensive *utopia* offered the oft-reprieved aggressors yet another chance.

Considering all the facts, one almost is inclined to believe that the piston strategy now would bog down. But it did not. One good reason was the swift and secret displacement of the American II Corps—from the very bottom to the very top of the Tunisian front—before the enemy realized what had transpired. Making possible this movement was a newly attained

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mastery of the air which rested securely in the grasp of the AAF and RAF. Military ingenuity did the rest.

To understand this maneuver a little better, it might be well to explain a few of the reasons behind it; for they were not all dictates of strategy or whim. Throughout the Tunisian campaign the American Army in Africa had grown to a strength of 500,000 men. II Corps had expanded correspondingly . . . until its manpower count numbered 100,000 by the time of El Guettar.

Initially, the British-run 18th Army Group had been using the steady trickle of U.S. Army units to augment its strength. Even after reaching *adulthood*, the II Corps often split beyond recognition. General Patton (and later General Bradley) had insisted that the American II Corps be given an important objective—one which would grant full recognition to the U.S. Army for the part it was playing in the Tunisian campaign. It was desired, furthermore, that all American troops be under U.S. Army leadership. As a result, II Corps was informed that its next major objective would be Bizerte . . . a mission which called for unusual rapidity in displacement if the battle were to be joined in time.

Campaigning in the north necessitated the transfer of 100,000 soldiers, their equipment and supplies an average of 150 miles . . . within the short space of a few days. This was accomplished skillfully by traveling across the lines of communications of the British First Army, which then was engaging the enemy.

By far the longest and most difficult displacement was that of the Ninth Infantry Division, which motored from the southernmost to the northernmost sector of Tunisia . . . arriving first on line. That was a safari of over 200 miles for the Ninth. The jaunt began at Bou Chebka, rolled to and through Tebessa, then on to Roum es Souk. From here the Ninth was to carry on a campaign against the strong Ainchouna-Jefna defenses already begun by the British 46th Infantry Division. Jefna was a keystone of Axis power in the north. Its protecting gateway—the

famous Green-Bald Hill positions—had been assaulted unsuccessfully by the British three times, now the men of the *Octofoil* were going to have a try.

Led by the *Raiders* who were first into position, the Ninth carried out its relief of the British. Crisp morning air enveloped the area as the 47th effected its changeover with the battle-wary 138th Brigade at 2 A.M. on the 13th. Twenty-six hours later the Ninth Reconnaissance Troop replaced the 46th

Reconnaissance Squadron near Bazina. More of the Division continued to arrive in the vicinity; and, by April 16th, the 39th C.T. was just south of Sedjenane Valley—occupying the former positions of the 1st Parachute Brigade. Leading elements of the 60th C.T., meanwhile, had reached Roum es Souk under the direction of

General Stroh. Since secrecy was desired the *Go-Devils* were held in a concealed rear position near Djebel Abiod until April 19th.

When the II Corps arrived on line, Major General (General) Omar N. Bradley, former deputy under General Patton, was the new Corps commander. General Bradley was not a bombshell of publicity, but rather a quiet, efficient, likable military strategist. Until the end of the war, and with little break, the Ninth was to serve under this distinguished and able soldier . . . in his corps, his army and his army group. He generally has been considered as an honorary, if not actual member of the Ninth.

America's II Corps had not as yet assumed command of the area when the Ninth relieved the British. For a short time, the Division was attached to the V Corps of the British Army. Then on April 18th, II Corps took command of its new sector, completing an efficient and difficult displacement.

Not only General Bradley's command, but the entire Allied military machine had followed closely at the heels of a retreating enemy. For once the *Desert Fox* was not allowed time to reinforce and build up a complete ring of fortifications. Marshal Rommel must have sensed defeat, for he soon deserted his sinking *Afrika Korps* and fled to Nazidom and the *Fuehrer*. There a medal and a new



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command awaited the man who had tried to imitate *Stonewall* Jackson.

At this time the defenders were holding a line which ran through Enfidaville-Bou Arada-Medjez el Bab-Sedjenane-Cape Serrat. Opposing the enemy at Enfidaville was the Eighth Army. It was to act as a holding force, halting any escape of the foe into the Cape Bon Peninsula. Concurrently, the British First Army in the center was to launch the main attack down the Medjerda and Miliane Valleys, ending inside the great Tunisian coastal plain. Northward were the II Corps and its attached Corps Franc d'Afrique. Attaining their objectives meant slicing through a mountainous belt some twenty miles deep, pouring onto the high ground southeast of Mateur and driving past either side of Chouigui. At the same time, the djebel region north of Jefna, the Jefna position and the area west of Garaet (Lake) Achkel were to be taken. That would place the U.S. Army in command of Mateur—an important communications and road center—and open the way to Bizerte, the final objective.

Using the parlance of football once again, the ball was being carried through the center while the ends drew off the enemy. Once the Axis was thrown off balance, the Allies simultaneously would power-drive through the center and around the ends.

* * * *

COMBINED air-ground activity seldom was more coordinated than at the beginning of this last great Tunisian offensive. Great quantities of Axis supplies and reinforcements never reached the front . . . having been knocked out of the air by the expanding AAF and RAF. Doughboys appreciated such assistance even more during the latter part of April, when the skies were practically free of enemy aircraft. The dreaded 'round-the-clock bombing and strafing had ended!

Allied generals appreciated this mastery of the air, too. Their plans often had gone wrong in the past because of the enemy's *eyes in the sky*. At least now, when the Allies faced their most rugged terrain, much precious information would be denied the Axis.

But winning the battle overhead did not rid the Allies of all their headaches. Final victory required solving the problem of variant topography as well.

Whereas the southern flank of II Corps was greatly similar to the terrain found at El Guettar, that to the far north was a jungle-like continuation of hills. A few valleys wound through this dense alpine undergrowth of brush and scrub—they were the canyon pathways for rivers, railroads and highways. On the other hand, these valleys were also enemy lanes of fire . . . for Axis troops were entrenched on the heights, awaiting an opportunity to spray bullets and drop shells upon any intruder.

This northern sector was the zone of the Ninth Division. Whereas the other three divisions of the American sector together covered a thirteen-mile front, the Ninth was burdened with a twenty-eight mile line—including the Jefna position . . . a concrete emplaced pillbox of nature. Actually this engagement was almost a separate one from the other II Corps operations, although it was one which had a most definite bearing upon the entire offensive.

Important objectives assigned the Division included the Jefna (Green-Bald Hill) position and the heights to its rear—which were astride and guarded the only decent road in the north leading to Mateur and Bizerte. Coincidentally, the Ninth was to drive against the road junction just west of Garaet Achkel which dominated the northern approaches to Mateur. Success meant cutting off the enemy in the north and simultaneously forcing him to retreat along the entire front.

Waiting and seemingly ready, the Axis was astride three main approaches to the east: Jefna, the high ground commanding the head of the Sedjenane Valley (Djebels Ainchouna and Dardyss), and a secondary road to the north (at Djebel Touro and Ac es Zapa).

* * * *

WHEN a fighting force is confronted by an obstacle of fifteen to twenty miles of mountains . . . irregular, hazardous, jungle-like . . . it is likely to use valleys or roads for an approach. The enemy calculated that the Americans would do just this. But that was an incorrect supposition, one which worked nicely into the plans of the Ninth Division.

General Eddy had decided that the only way to take the Jefna stumbling block was to flank it. The bulk of the Ninth was to move north of these positions, seize Kef en Nsour and cut the main road east

THE FRENCH AND GOUMS

ATTACHED to the Ninth at this time was the Corps Franc d'Afrique . . . colorful, brave and poorly equipped. A hodge-podge of humanity made up the Corps . . . Spanish Loyalists-in-exile, Jewish refugees from Vichy France and Germany, DeGaulist *Free French*, so-called *political prisoners* (who had been released by the still pro-Vichy local government—in hopes that they would die in action) and fierce-looking Berber tribesmen . . . the Goumiers of legendary fierceness.

The Corps Franc consisted of three infantry battalions, one marine battalion and an attached Tabour (battalion) of Goums. Its commanding officer was General of Brigade Magnan, one of the men who had tried—unsuccessfully—to aid the American landings in Morocco. He was imprisoned by General Nogues, later released and exiled to command what amounted to another *Foreign Legion*. The Corps was without any transportation to speak of; medical attention was lacking; food was scarce and supplies were inadequate. Attachment of the Corps Franc to the Ninth Division meant that the Ninth had to furnish trucks, mules, medics and food to keep the outfit rolling.

Brave men . . . dirty men . . . old men . . . young men . . . the Corps Franc had them all. However, its best-known attachment was its Tabour of Goums. These fanatical bathrobe-attired Goumiers were feared mortally by the enemy—particularly the Italians. They were discredited and credited with every type of barbarism—both by the enemy and by self-appointed publicity agents.

The Berbers are a tribe of swarthy white mountaineers, who, although Mohammedan by faith, had been driven into the fastness of the Atlas Mountains by Arabs (who also were Mohammedans), although the latter never conquered them. French authorities hired whole Goums (clans) as warriors. Later the word *Goum* came to mean *irregular soldier*, and the Berbers grew to dislike the expression.

Finding that dried enemy ears offered souvenir value to GIs, the Goums began cutting off ears of German and Italian dead and traded with them. Soon a legend grew that Goumiers killed for ears and heads.

Goum pay was what a Goumier could loot and a Goumier's *djeballah* (bathrobe-like burnoose) carried his



worldly goods. He would put everything he owned inside his tent-like clothing; increased girth meant increased wealth. But loot and all, the Berbers could hike over fifty miles without stopping. They could sneak through woods and brush so silently that the enemy was constantly surprised . . . places where GIs generally made some sort of warning rustle or noise.

Because they spoke no English or French, the Goums used no passwords. They simply ran a light-fingered hand over the back of a man's helmet. If American or French, the wayfarer would pass unharmed; if not, a split throat and a looted body told the story. Many is the Yank, who walking through a clearing at night felt a twig or branch hit his helmet. It generally was a Goum on guard duty . . . getting the *password!*

Interesting facts are many about these battling mountain men. A few outstanding features of Goum warfare were: their weapons—a *Koumia* (10-inch Moroccan knife) plus such rifles as they could obtain; their family life—Goums carried their women along with them, the latter staying slightly behind the battle; their fatalism—they were not afraid of death, shaved their heads, except for a pigtail by which they could be hauled into heaven by *Allah*.

Combined with the fanatics and brave men of its other units, the Goums made the Corps Franc as courageous (if not as efficient) as any group in action. Few were more colorful.

of the objective. This would turn the flank. Unlike El Guettar sweat was to be substituted for blood; and the jungle terrain, rough as it was, would serve as a path for the flanking battalions.

The plan developed into one of the most brilliant envelopments in the history of the war . . . a so-called

classic example of flanking. It consisted of two separate battles, one for Jefna and the other for the Sedjenane Valley. At Jefna the 47th Infantry focused the center of the enemy's attention with localized holding attacks. Meanwhile, the 39th C.T. made a wide flanking sweep—through country

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thought impenetrable by the enemy—and worked around to the rear of the Green-Bald Hill mass. Then, from atop commanding ground, the 39th was able to call artillery fire on any part of the enemy's positions quite easily. This made the foe's strong-points untenable. North of the Sedjenane the 60th C.T. and the Corps Franc executed a similar movement. The French drove straight ahead while the 60th performed a series of flanking maneuvers through almost impassable terrain, bottling up the enemy to the north.

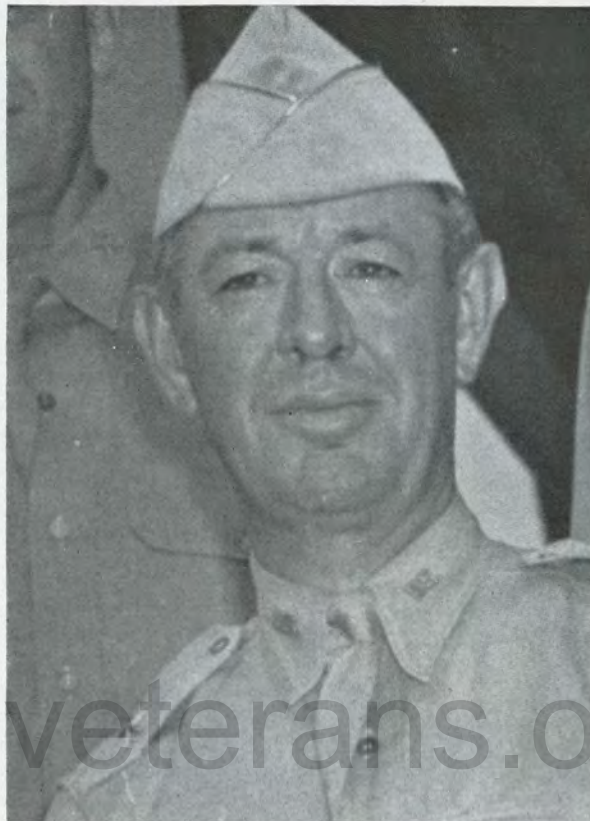
General Irwin, whose artillery had proved the trump card at Thala, now faced another difficult situation. The front was abnormally long. Even with artillery reinforcements, this lengthy sector could not be covered adequately if the battalions remained together. Divarty was split, therefore, into two groups—one for the north and one for the south. A centralized control was established and, although the American field pieces were in full view of the enemy during much of this operation, good support was seldom lacking for the infantry . . . notwithstanding difficulties of supply and displacement.

* * * *

THE clock ticked on . . . hours and days passed and the big offensive was near at hand. Hitler's birthday anniversary fell on April 20th but nothing of a predicted enemy *birthday present attack* resulted. On the contrary, the British captured Enfidaville and the Germans pulled back several miles.

For the Ninth Division, these semi-quiet days before the storm were put to excellent use. Medical collecting men of the *Raider* regiment set up a rest camp for men on the line; the 60th C.T. continued to move secretly by night, gradually easing into its new positions, and the Ninth began learning a new and valuable lesson of warfare—the art of patrolling. While the enemy was able to out-patrol the Americans initially, the doughs soon caught the hang of patrolling and mastered it. The result was a knowledge of the enemy which gave confidence to the fighting men of the Division.

Another day clicked off the clock . . . and another . . . April 22nd dawned to find the men of the Ninth positioned for the drive which would begin on the following morning. Field orders, reports and last-



GENERAL IRWIN

minute checking occupied the majority of time. There was all sorts of news. The French and Goums were going to act as a sort of *fourth* regiment of the Division . . . they had come in from Cape Serrat to avenge the past and glorify the future.

More hours melted away and the quiet air of the Sedjenane and the Melah now was charged with expectancy. Artillery was warned not to register until the attack. And a final word came from the Division commander, General Eddy:

"This Division will shortly be called upon to take part in the combined attack of the 18th Army Group that will mark the end of Axis resistance in North Africa.

"In your previous engagements at Port Lyautey, Safi, and in Southern Tunisia you have done well. You have endured the privations of campaign, suffered heavy casualties, and have emerged from your

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baptism of fire with the stamp of approval given only through battle-field performance.

"We are now to have the opportunity of attacking alongside our comrades of the Second U.S. Corps, the British First and Eighth Armies and the French Nineteenth Corps and Corps Franc. We are making history. I charge you and expect you to put forth every ounce of effort, with a ruthlessness that has been taught us by our enemies. This I know you will do. *We must advance and keep driving forward* no matter how hard the going may be. Resistance met must be reduced by outflanking maneuver by all units from the platoon up.

"A world spotlight will be focused on us from the moment we attack until we have killed, captured or driven every Axis soldier from Tunisia. We have the finest arms and equipment in the world. We outnumber our opponents both on land and in the air. The cards are stacked in our favor. Anything less than annihilation of the enemy will be a blot on our record.

"I have the utmost confidence in this Division. I know that every officer and man will put into the coming fight everything he has in him so that our Division will contribute its full share toward a speedy, decisive victory. Good Luck." The Division commander's letter was almost a prophesy of what later transpired.

* * * *

PROBABLY the more important of the Ninth's two initial drives was the flanking of Jefna. This station was protected to the west by a narrow pass through which ran the railroad and highway. On either side of the pass stretched belts of mountains, broken only by the twin peaks guarding the entrance—Green Hill on the north and Bald Hill to the south. Taking these positions by frontal assault was militarily unfeasible, yet flanking either side of the pass presented an equally difficult problem.

Synchronized watches read 5:30 A.M. as the Division moved forward on April 23rd. At first it appeared as if the Ninth's previous errors might be repeated, judging by some actions that opening day. Shortly before noon it was reported erroneously that all regiments had reached their D-Day objectives and were encountering little resistance. But these

first reports proved only partly correct; for while the 47th and 60th C.T.'s had reached their objectives, the 39th C.T. in the center was meeting stubborn opposition from the dominating heights of Djebel Ainchouna. Night fell, and the "leading elements" of the 39th "were in a state of confusion and had only reached the lower slopes of the Djebel."

Operating just south of the Oued Sedjenane the 39th faced both a determined foe and a jungle-covered barrier—which was about six miles long and thirteen miles deep. Man-high brush and scrub were entwined into an almost solid mass of vegetation. Making matters worse, the enemy had worked clearings and peaks into a protective system of automatic fire and mines; and although the defenders were hidden from view much of the time, they could look down upon the advancing troops.

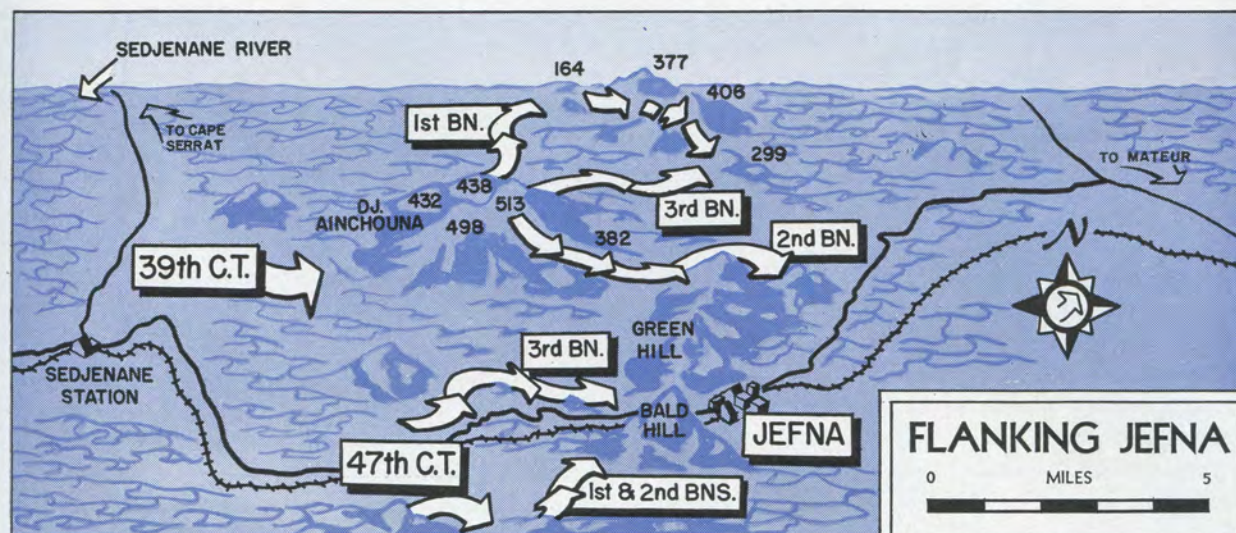
The whole action was a series of limited objectives, the monotonous taking of hill after briar-and-brush-tight hill. The problem of supply was never more acute: mules obtained by Corps from the French were the answer to the infantry battalion's problem over the narrow, steep, and many times booby-trapped trails . . .

—Artillery Report, Northern Tunisia.

To reach its first major objective, Djebel Azag (from whence it could force the enemy to withdraw from Jefna) the 39th C.T. was required to cross the enemy-infected Djebel Ainchouna to its front. Ainchouna is four miles long and its two dominating peaks are each over 1,500 feet in altitude. Following the capture of this barrier the *Falcons* were to seize a series of high djebels in order to outflank the Axis.

When the attack began the 1st and 3rd Battalions were spearheading the drive against Ainchouna's tallest peak—Hill 438—and the Axis was waiting with artillery and tanks acting as roving artillery. At the same time, another drama was taking place slightly to the rear. Colonel J. Trimble Brown, C.O. of the 39th, and his staff were moving their C.P. when a 150-man German combat patrol attacked the group, capturing the Colonel, his staff and the complete plans for the coming week.

Captain Felix P. Settlemire, who subsequently received a *D.S.C.* for the action which followed, was



in command of a small observation party which also was surrounded by the enemy. He observed that Colonel Brown and his party were being held captive. The captain fearlessly escaped from the trap, contacted reinforcements, and proceeded back ahead of them. Although wounded painfully, Settlemire was instrumental in rescuing the regimental commander and his group. About forty-five Germans were killed and many captured during the skirmish, but the important plans were lost permanently to the enemy.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the combat team was meeting a steel wall of small-arms, mortar and machine-gun fire—which, added to the rugged terrain, stopped the 39th from reaching its objective. Despite enormous setbacks suffered, the persistent *Falcons* continued their drive. An attack on the morning of April 24th showed the ferocity of the fighting, when the leading 1st Battalion received a terrific pounding during the 39th's push on Ainchouna. After each step forward the summit appeared a little higher. It was an almost suicidal drive up the hill against a well-entrenched enemy; but somehow the battalion reached the top. The Ninth Division *Report of Operations* takes up the story:

Several senior officers became casualties and it was only by the superior leadership of a junior captain (Capt. Conrad V. Anderson) that the battalion was able to retain its precarious hold on the mountain.

Battling on, the *Falcons* attacked to consolidate their foothold on Djebel Ainchouna. A devastating artillery preparation left 114 German dead awaiting the onrushing 39th that morning of the 25th. The regiment had teamed its fresh 3rd Battalion with the badly-mauled 1st, and backed by superior artillery support, this combination completed the occupation of Hill 438, as fiercely resisting Axis defenders finally were driven out . . . and the *Falcons* gasped for second breath.

With this mission accomplished the Germans were deprived of a valuable observation post, since the heights dominated most of Sedjenane Valley. It now was possible to have mechanized reconnaissance units advance well to the east in their probing—the 39th had captured the high ground.

* * * *

CONTINUING the envelopment to the east and southeast, the 39th C.T. made its way from djebel to djebel, ridge to ridge . . . battling nature and a fanatical enemy. It now had received a new commander, Colonel William L. Ritter (who took over from General Stroh) and a taste of victory.

The schedule of advance was resumed on the 26th when the *Falcons* moved upon Djebel El Akrat, their D-plus-1 objective. Flanking and climbing, the 39th pushed on. Hills 498, 513, and 382—all due east of Ainchouna—fell to the 2nd Battalion, and the *Falcon* advance on April 27th was the only real

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gain made by the Division that day. The 2nd Battalion, however, was beginning to encounter trouble at Hill 382 (a ridgeline peak) where enemy opposition had increased. Here the battalion was subjected to artillery and mortar fire for almost a week. In the meantime, the remainder of the 39th headed for the plains of Mateur.

Most of the 39th remained in place on the 28th except for the 1st Battalion, which was dispatched on a historical move. From its positions on Djebel Ainchouna, the 1st made a circuitous route to the northeast, knocked the Axis off Hill 164 (almost two miles northeast of Ainchouna) then pivoted to the right and captured Hill 336 . . . about two miles directly north of Hill 382, where the 2nd Battalion was having its rough fight. The 1st Battalion ended the day on nearby Hill 377, occupied for the purpose of jumping off against Hill 406 . . . capture of which would flank and gain the rear of the enemy positions as well as dominate the entire Green-Bald position and most of the Sedjenane Valley. Seizure of 406 was destined to become one of the decisive turning points of the campaign.

Falcons prepared for the attack against Hill 406 throughout the 29th and pushed forward successfully on the following day. The 3rd Battalion occupied the hill and then assisted the 1st Battalion's attack eastward, which culminated on Spur 299. That this area was valuable became evident upon attaining the heights. It commanded the terrain to the south and the road leading northwest (toward the head of the Sedjenane Valley); and since the enemy probably had concentrations of supplies and material for support of Green and Bald Hills located in the protection of the valley at Jefna, this was a blow at the Axis effort.

Hill 382, that thorn in the side of the 2nd Battalion, finally was cleared of the enemy with the aid of Divarty and the 39th Cannon Company. The *Falcons* now were able to direct accurate artillery fire upon any German position they desired, and this high dominant ground was put to excellent usage by forward observers. Divarty plastered everything Axis that was below . . . supply dumps and strong-points were made untenable . . . installations were shelled mercilessly. During one twenty-four hour

period the 26th F.A. sent over 4,000 shells. It was a maddening rain of death and the defenders could take it no longer. His defenses flanked, the enemy decided to move out on May 1st, leaving behind all types of supplies and equipment. The 39th was now in sight of the great Lake Achkel region and ready for its next move.

Helping to make the 39th's flanking movement successful were the well-timed diversionary attacks staged by the 47th C.T. against the Jefna stronghold. Without this line of riflemen to the south the *Falcons* would not have achieved the excellent results which crowned their efforts.

On the morning of April 23rd the 47th C.T. was five miles west of Jefna, waiting to jump off in a two-pronged drive. Its 3rd Battalion was to negotiate a hilly zone and come in from the north, occupying the enemy on Green Hill; a similar job by the 1st Battalion would be done on Bald Hill. This pressure was designed to detract any suspicion from the main effort—flanking to the north by the 39th.

The *Raider* 3rd Battalion experienced little trouble in reaching the heights before Green Hill on that first day. It remained for the 1st Battalion, however, to have the rougher time. The 1st had to cross a roller-coaster type of terrain—four miles of 2000-foot mountains—before facing Bald Hill. Both battalions kept on schedule, however, and staged such successful holding attacks that the enemy believed a frontal assault was in store.

Axis veterans had fallen victim of a very elementary boxing trick, the *one-two* punch, which feints one thrust and uses another to accomplish the knockout blow. The 47th feinted a direct assault while the 39th struck a roundhouse knockout blow via the left flank. Each segment of the strategy was equally important, although few fighting men of the 47th C.T. realized the tremendous part they were playing in the *big picture*.

Actually the Ninth Division never entertained any thought of storming *Greenie* and *Baldy*. The British had assaulted these positions three times and had withdrawn, badly defeated, on each occasion. From his excellent and long-tenable fortifications, the enemy similarly was able to withstand an incessant pounding from accurate American artillery as well as

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FOR SOME ITALIANS THE WAR WAS OVER

stopping all advances of infantry until flanked by the *Falcons*.

Combat patrols of the 47th operated until the enemy withdrew. On April 28th one patrol of the 47th got on top of Green Hill and found an emplacement deep enough to require a ladder. These areas were very well mined and any full-scale attack would have met not only enemy fire but death-dealing mines as well.

During this time the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron patrolled to the south, protecting the right flank of the "Raiders."

Corps had called off all attacks pending reorganization. It was May 1st . . . the enemy was retreating and the Americans were being regrouped on another part of the front. (This was the movement of the 34th Infantry Division between the 1st and Ninth Divisions). Under the Corps order a planned attack on Green and Bald Hills was called off by the

47th, and the 39th was issued a warning to hold its strategically important positions at all costs—until further instructions were issued. Jefna's envelopment was nearing completion and victory.

* * * *

MOST difficult of all terrain encountered by the Ninth Division in Africa, the zone north of the Sedjenane tested every bit of ingenuity and fortitude of the 60th C.T. and the Corps Franc. Tightly-packed jungle brush sometimes rose for eight feet or more in height. It was as if the South Pacific campaign suddenly had been transplanted atop the mountainous areas of Northern Tunisia. Notwithstanding this difficulty in its first action under Ninth Division leadership, the 60th proved more than equal the task assigned it.

April 23rd found the *Go-Devils* advancing on a line beyond the Cape Serrat-Sedjenane Station road against brush and briar. This vegetation gradually

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became more and more impenetrable—requiring all the jungle warfare knowledge long since forgotten by the amphibious and mountain warriors of the 60th. Despite overwhelming obstacles the regiment nearly reached its D-plus-one objectives when the day ended.

Less fortunate, the Corps Franc d'Afrique was held up by resistance at Hill 107. On the following day the Corps, with the aid and support of self-propelled 105's from the 62nd F.A. Battalion was able to seize this point.

It was on this day as well that the 60th's 2nd Battalion (Major "Black Mike" Kauffman) led the regiment's drive upon Djebel Dardyss. Impeded by the steep hills and dense undergrowth the 2nd faced an almost impossible task. At times the nature of the vegetation made necessary the men's crawling on their hands and knees. Nevertheless, the battle-scarred battalion fought its way to the top. Once on the summit, however, it was subjected to a counterattack by a superior number of enemy infantry,

Distinguished Unit Citation

The 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry, is cited for extraordinary heroism in the face of the enemy during the period 23 and 24 April 1943. This battalion formed the spearhead of an attack on 23 April against the Germans in the vicinity of the Sedjenane Valley, taking its first objective, Djebel Mrata, in an advance over densely wooded mountainous terrain, sooner than anticipated. Upon occupation of Djebel Mrata it became obvious that this position was of temporary importance because it was dominated by Djebel Dardys (sic), a higher ridge overlooking all terrain features in the vicinity. The battalion organized, pushed forward, and took the second position. On the morning of 24 April the Germans counterattacked with a force estimated at two battalions of infantry supported by artillery. The position defended was of considerable size and more than would normally be allotted for defense to a battalion. The attack lasted from 0800 to 1200, during which time the enemy made assaults from practically every direction. Fierce resistance and local counterattacks after the enemy had penetrated the position prevented him from gaining a foothold, and he retired leaving 116 dead, 48 wounded, and prisoners within the position. In this action the 2d Battalion lost 21 dead and 111 wounded. The gallant and intrepid conduct of this entire battalion afforded a great tactical advantage in seizing and holding dominating terrain and assisted the advance of our forces culminating in the defeat of German arms in North Africa.

supported by artillery. The battalion was hit from all sides for over four hours. Ferocious opposition by the 2nd, in the form of rifle and machine-gun fire, struck back and repulsed the enemy time after time. The 60th Regiment later advanced over this battlefield and counted 116 enemy dead.

As the battle ended, some "Go-Devils" learned for the first time that "Molotov" (Pvt. Karl Warner) the regiment's "Paul Bunyan" had been killed while on patrol with the French. "Molotov" was without visible fear and had a faculty for breaking regulations. Facts about "Molly" are legendary: he was a big-time gambler . . . had a huge desert tent and Arab servants . . . dressed like an officer . . . was seldom seen without his prized French field glasses . . . credited with the capture and destruction of hundreds of Axis troops . . . an excellent forward observer . . . eager for danger and excitement . . . hated, admired and tolerated by everyone. Warner died as he lived . . . "beating the rap" on a court martial and obtaining a medal for heroism. That was the heralded "one-man army of Tunisia" . . . known simply on records as "Molotov."

After Djebel Dardyss was captured the 60th C.T. and the Corps Franc rested in place for a day while more supplies and ammunition were brought up laboriously. Then, on the following day it became obvious that the French were "not sufficiently powerful" to keep up with the advance of the 60th to the eastern exit of the valley. General Eddy decided to have the *Go-Devils* take over a larger sector and so the 60th expanded to the north while the 47th and 39th zones were widened correspondingly. Following this change, the *Go-Devils* pointed into a new direction, moving northeast with the mission of "assisting" the Corps Franc to outflank Ac es Zapa and Djebel Touro from the south.

Meanwhile, the Division G-2 (Intelligence) received a prisoner of war interrogation report which told of strong Axis forces on Djebel Cheniti. These later proved to be true, with the *Go-Devils* storming the position.

* * * *

BRUSH and briar obstacles were flushed of the enemy as the jungle became ever-tighter. By April 28th, the 60th had reached impenetrable vege-

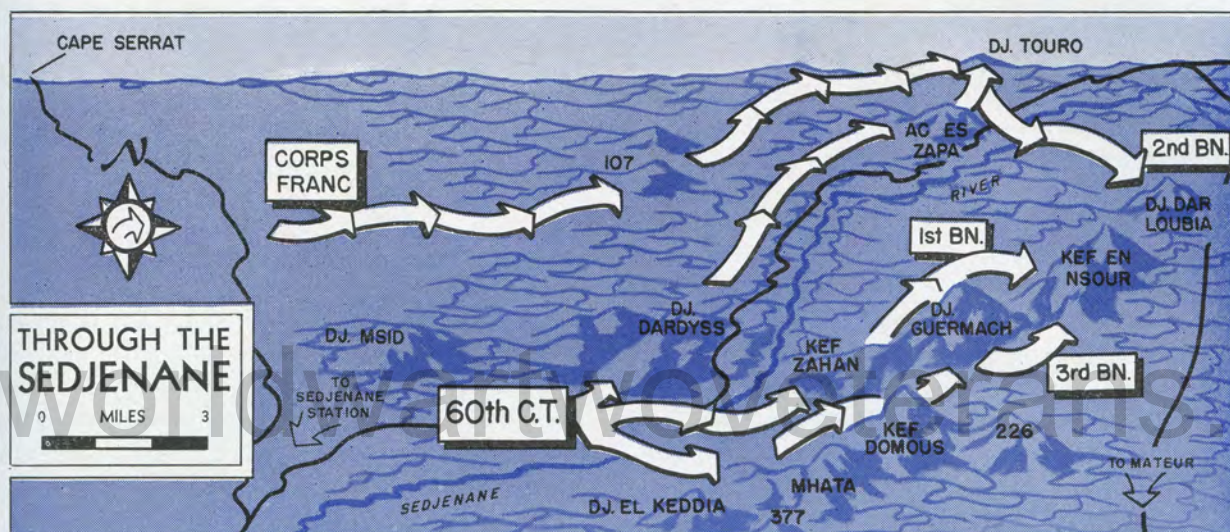
SAFARI IN O.D.

tation, and supplies were lagging behind. To the east were the dominating terrain features which formed the regiment's objective . . . notably Kef en Nsour, the last great obstacle before the Tunis Plain. Yet despite this juicy plum to its front, the 60th had to have a route which was reasonably passable or become isolated.

Supplies are the key to operational success. So for one day logistical figures outweighed tactical decisions. A reasonably passable road lay along the Sedjenane Valley and although use of this meant

man-high brush aided the concealment of troops, but this meant tougher going on foot. Vegetation and steepness made advance tedious and slow; and two days was not an uncommon period for advancing one mile. Supplies followed by hand carriers and burros. Fortunately, German resistance was not too pronounced; only the restricted passage stopped the 3rd Battalion from sitting upon Kef en Nsour. It took weary doughboys three days to climb to the top.

Although the 3rd Battalion was encountering difficulties with nature in its drive on Kef en Nsour,



sidetracking the capture of commanding terrain to the east, the 60th changed direction and moved to the northeast. Here astride the river valley, *Go-Devils* could advance with the French troops on their left. Following the capture of Kef Sahan, the regiment, nonetheless, returned its 3rd Battalion to brush and briar tactics.

This was for a good reason. It had become apparent that the Germans had both excellent and dominant observation from the east upon the 60th's zone of advance. Had he retained this high ground, the enemy could have stopped the regiment cold. While the 3rd Battalion hoped to reach Kef en Nsour by the night of April 29th, events turned out—as they so often did in North Africa—to be a battle against both the enemy and nature. There were times when

the 1st Battalion was able to capture Djebel Guermach on April 30th without too much trouble . . . and it prepared to assist the terrain-battling 3rd to the east. Simultaneously, the 2nd Battalion moved to the northeast and was now abreast of the Corps Franc . . . ready to help the French seize high ground at the eastern end of the valley.

* * * *

AS THE 60th pushed northeast and the 39th went almost due east, the inevitable happened; a gap of some four miles developed between the two regiments. It was conceivable that the enemy might counterattack through this opening to relieve pressure on his main positions. Therefore, a special force was dispatched to patrol this area. It consisted of a light tank company from the 91st Reconnaissance

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Squadron, dismounted elements of the Ninth Recon Troop, and the 894th and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalions. The 91st men guarded the road south of Djebel Mhata while the remainder of the soldiers covered positions on the Djebel, itself.

By 2 May, in the northern sector, the enemy faced the fact that his strongest positions were lost or out-flanked. The 9th Division had helped make inevitable the German retreat to the east.

—To Bizerte with the II Corps

When May 2nd dawned, the 39th was both reorganizing and preparing to move while the 47th had reached the commanding heights of Green and Bald Hills in the wake of an enemy evacuation toward Mateur. General Bradley instructed the Ninth to conduct a vigorous pursuit to the northeast, leaving one regiment to guard the southern approaches as the speedy advance got under way. Enemy materiel and equipment cluttered the path of the Ninth, and it was scooped gingerly into the swelling coffers of the victorious Allies. Here was evidence, indeed, of a hasty enemy retreat.

The *Go-Devils* in the northern sector had seized their strongpoint objectives of Ac es Zapa and Kef en Nsour coincident with the Ninth's southern flank successes. These captures spelled the downfall of Kef les Sba and Djebel Touro and cleared the way for the Corps Franc to advance on Djebel Cheniti. The French took quick advantage of the situation. Generally speaking, the commanding ground before Bizerte's last defenses now was held by the Ninth.

Patrolling to the south, the 39th was soon to become attached to the 1st Infantry Division and later the 1st Armored. The rest of the Division continued its advance . . . pushing forward rapidly. A well-rested 2nd Battalion of the 47th led the *Raiders* in a sweeping motor movement north through the 60th Infantry zone, as the entire Ninth line moved ahead.

A May 4th recapitulation of the advance made by the Ninth Division showed that twelve miles had been made in thirteen days over almost impassable terrain. Large stores of equipment and materiel had been captured, as well as 815 prisoners and *all* objectives. Green and Bald Hills were no longer Allied stumbling blocks, the road junction west of Lake Achkel felt the heels of the Ninth's tired soldiers,

and one last ring of rugged djebels was all which halted the Ninth from attaining its final goal. The long-awaited Axis explosion out of Tunisia was closer than ever!

At this time, the 47th Infantry was about seven miles west of Garaet Achkel and preparing to drive east. The French were stopped cold before well-defended Djebel Cheniti. As for the 60th C.T., its 2nd Battalion was gaining a position on Dar Loubia while the remainder of the regiment was assembled near the exit of Sedjenane Valley. Southward, the 39th C.T., with the 601st T.D. Battalion attached was getting ready to capture the main road junction to the east and reconnoiter toward Mateur. The Ninth and 91st Recon outfits stayed in place, guarding the gaps. Divarty, less the 26th F.A., moved forward toward the exit of the valley. The stage was set for phase two . . . *on to Bizerte!*

* * * *

THE fight at Djebel Cheniti accurately can be termed a battle for a *bottleneck*. The Ninth was on a *peninsula*, with the Mediterranean to the north and Garaet Achkel to the south. To the right flank was Djebel Cheniti, one mile from the enormous lake obstacle. Faced with laborious effort and narrow operating room, the Division needed ingenuity and fortitude to succeed. There was but one road leading east from the valley. No movement could be made south of the road, for blocking that route was Garaet Achkel. From the Mediterranean Sea to the road were formidable hill fortresses, ending at Djebel Cheniti. These were well defended by a fanatical enemy in his last ditch fight; furthermore, the foe had blown the only bridge over the Oued Douimiss . . . and so that road was not passable for wheeled vehicles. Even had the Ninth been able to move along the road under the fire from Djebel Cheniti, it would have been stopped at the destroyed Douimiss River bridge.

Thus the Division was placed in the unenviable position of having to fight across an eight-mile-wide isthmus, having but one highway on the lake flank and with the enemy astride one of his most formidable positions in the II Corps Zone. Since the

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Axis looked down onto the advancing infantry, the enemy was in command of the bottleneck.

Flanking had proved a great success in Jefna and General Eddy decided upon a somewhat similar procedure for breaking the narrow front. Frontal assault (initially) seemed to indicate unnecessary slaughter; however, by going north of Djebel Cheniti the Ninth might execute another Green-Bald maneuver, then break through to Bizerte.

This much was known, the Division would have to obtain elbow room. That meant driving the enemy from the hills north of Cheniti as well as from that dominant position. The plan evolved called for the 60th to hold the enemy at Cheniti while the 47th worked around, gaining high ground and eventually outflanking the defenses.

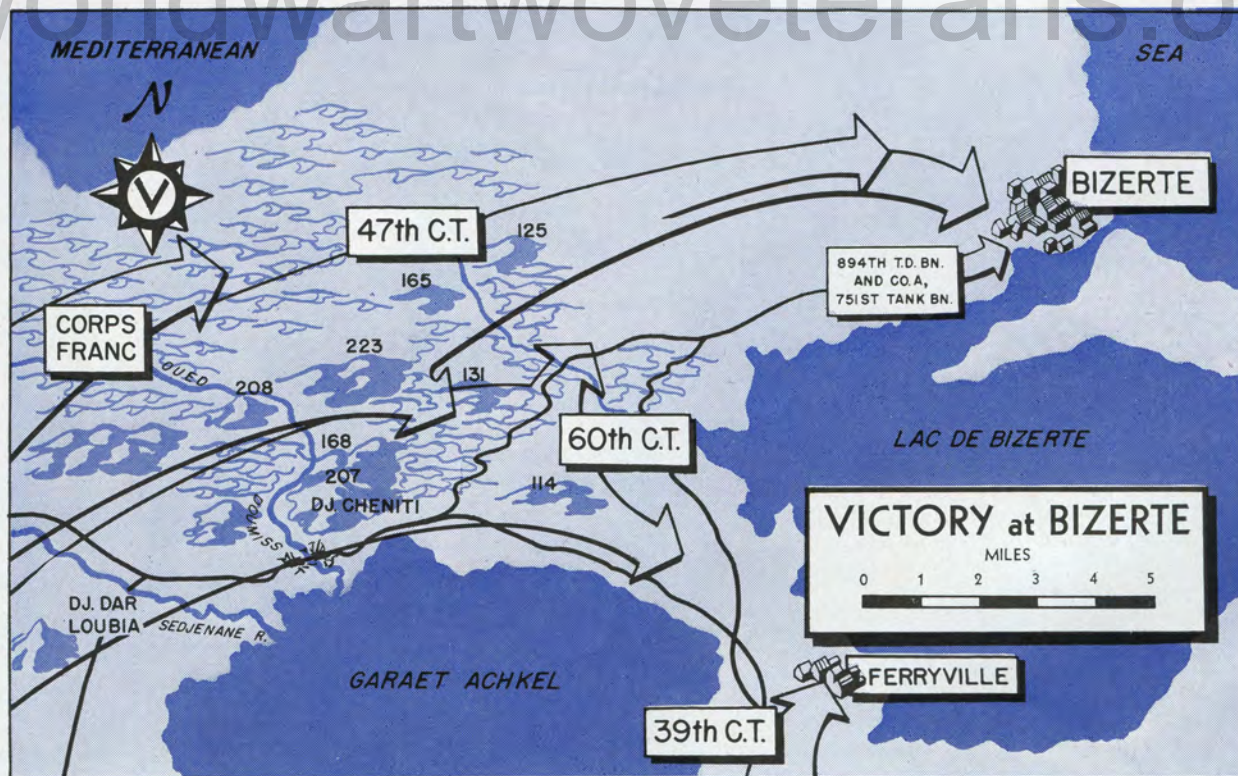
Such a plan necessitated the engineers constructing a new road to the northeast. Over this highway, artillery could displace and supplies could move forward with the attack. Here was the beginning of a master plan which was used many times later with great success.

Early on the morning of May 5th, the 47th C.T.

began the final battle of its North African career—objective Bizerte. Intermediate missions were the jungle-like hills to the east, one of which was many yards higher than Djebel Cheniti and thus offered dominating observation. Soon after the attack had begun the 3rd Battalion radioed that it was one mile from its morning objective. Ten minutes later, however, the battalion was pinned down by small-arms, machine-gun and light artillery fire. At 1:30 P.M. the situation began to change. Although the 3rd was stopped, Colonel Randle ordered a general advance. The 2nd Battalion took Hill 223 and pushed on. By nightfall the *Raiders* had advanced almost far enough for a direct assault on Cheniti to begin.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion of the 60th effected relief of the Corps Franc troops west of Cheniti; and, by the morning of May 6th, the 1st had reconnoitered thoroughly and found position areas for the regiment's supporting weapons.

American flanking tactics once more had caught the enemy off balance. Attacking and enveloping *Raiders* had progressed so well that by the noon of May 6th it was decided to launch the direct assault



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on Djebel Cheniti. So began the famous *leaning up against artillery* by the 1st Battalion of the 60th.

Not long after noon, the 1st—following withering artillery concentrations at 100 yards or less—began an assault on the western slopes of Cheniti with bayonets. This was a dramatic drive, one which carried the *Go-Devils* against the two main heights of Cheniti—Hills 207 and 168. Doughs pushed steadily upward and by dusk were holding Hill 168 and the saddle between that hill and Hill 207. One of the strongest positions in the final Axis defense thus was being assaulted by one battalion of infantry—with artillery blasting a shell-strewn pathway for its advance. This combination rose from the lowlands and began to hack another niche into the annals of foot soldiers who do the *dirty* tasks of warfare.

May 6, 1943, was a slippery, muddy, rainy day and the going was rough for the 47th. As the *Raider* 2nd Battalion approached its objective—Hill 223—an enemy machine-gun nest chattered away at the right flank of the forward C.P. This held up the advance until an anti-tank squad, under Second Lieutenant Louis M. Russo, Jr. wiped out the six well-emplaced guns. The enemy crews took off wildly

for Bizerte. And that rather well describes the actions all along the line.

The charges of Hitler and Mussolini were in head-long retreat and the entire Ninth Division was on the move to catch them. Men of the 47th C.T. trod ever eastward, capturing their line of objectives in a two-pronged drive. The gallant but tired 1st Battalion of the 60th Regiment completed its organization of Djebel Cheniti and now was moving to the eastern edge of the ridge. The *Go-Devil* 3rd Battalion also was on the prowl. It had worked east along the southern slopes of the djebel and then crossed the highway to the south, reaching Hill 114 without opposition. Now that Djebel Cheniti was in American hands, the destruction done to the bridge over the Oued Douimiss was repaired by the 15th Engineer Battalion.

Company *A* of the 751st Tank Battalion and the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion were able to use the structure just before noon, as armor began moving east and thence north under Division orders. Meanwhile, the Ninth Recon Troop rolled east along Route No. 11 to Bizerte. A mine field hindered its path at

BIZERTE WAS IN RUINS





JOURNEY'S END

the road junction near the center of the north shore but this was removed and the troopers drove on.

* * * *

THINGS happened at a rapid pace on May 7th.

The 39th C.T., attached to the 1st Armored Division for operations against Mateur, shortly was to enter Ferryville. Mid-afternoon information from a British *Phantom* Patrol indicated that the enemy was evacuating Bizerte. Since the Axis had withdrawn from the Ninth Division front, the signal was given to push on.

There are many stories regarding the first entry of Allied troops into Bizerte. Official records tell the tale as colorfully as any.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon of May 7th as Lt. Colonel Charlie P. Eastburn's 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion was grinding toward the city. The enemy apparently had fled and Colonel Eastburn wanted his outfit to enter Bizerte first. He radioed back to Division and contacted Lt. Colonel Alvar Sundin, the G-3. Said Colonel Eastburn: "Have covered the entire Valley of the Oued Garba. No sign of enemy in valley. Believe way to Bizerte wide open. Request permission to proceed into Bizerte and occupy city."

"Proceed to Bizerte and occupy it. Report position every half hour," replied Colonel Sundin.

"Will comply with pleasure!"

And so the objective of II Corps, one of the two major ports of Northern Tunisia, was the next stop for the 894th and Company *A* of the 751st Tank Battalion. This mechanized force was ordered into Bizerte at 3:30 P.M. As the vehicles probed forward, snipers popped-off from buildings, and artillery poured down from across the channel. It was a bit unhealthy to stay the night there, so the armor withdrew in total darkness toward the airport where they snatched a well-earned forty winks.

Some infantrymen riding on top of the tanks had come along with the armor. Snipers, time bombs, booby traps and mines were in all important Bizerte buildings. Typical of the forward observers who entered the city with the leading elements was Second Lieutenant (Captain) Orion C. Shockley of the 47th Cannon Company. He entered the objective on a leading vehicle ahead of the infantry and set up operations on the roof of *Hotel de la Marine*. There Shockley observed enemy batteries firing on the *Raider* regiment during the morning of the 8th. He directed fire from his cannon company against these



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guns and the cannoneers knocked out four 88's, two 20mm anti-aircraft guns and a mounted 20mm machine gun.

The 47th had assembled on the high ground northwest of Bizerte during the night of May 7-8. Major (Lt. Colonel) Johnston's 2nd Battalion entered the port from these heights on the 8th as the first unit of Allied infantrymen to enter the city. For political reasons (in order to allow the French to be the first to enter Bizerte), a battalion of the Corps Franc had been taken from reserve and placed to the left of the 47th. Although the 47th began entering first, the combat team was withdrawn and the French were allowed to mop up remaining resistance. This gesture allowed the French to take a major step in the liberation of their home land.

Rumor piled upon rumor as the day ended. There was every indication that the large force of Germans who were trapped on the peninsula south of Bizerte might try to escape over the channel into the city and flee to friendly soil. A special task force was formed to act as a foil, but the enemy did not attempt the crossing.

Then on May 9, 1943, the enemy surrendered in the II Corps zone and only scattered Axis units remained to offer resistance. The final explosion of the spark came on May 13th, when the balance of the enemy capitulated to the British on the Cape Bon Peninsula. The Axis was done in Tunisia . . . it was finished for good, and Hitler's finest *herrenvolk* had bit the dust in defeat.

* * * *

AFTER May 9th, the Ninth Infantry Division was busy with a new type of duty . . . guarding prisoners . . . and had patrols out to bring in stragglers. There soon were 25,000 P.W.'s in the massive II Corps cages, including General Jurgin von Arnim, the German supreme commander. An arrogant enemy army was getting a taste of its own medicine!

Repair work began in earnest on battered and deserted Bizerte, too. The job of clearing the city fell mainly to the 15th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Engineers had done superb work all during the Tunisian campaign; they had built 70 miles of double-way roads during the northern campaign, along with the repairing of 126 miles of other road. Many bridges were back in use, thanks to the 15th, and the battalion had constructed mountain trails to evacuate the wounded. Engineers were instrumental in keeping all supplies rolling forward. Now mines, rubble and repair in Bizerte took their attention. The port was partly destroyed and it seemed as if a hurricane had hit the city, bursting watermains and other utilities. Aided by clear weather the sweating engineers performed another monumental job.

Meanwhile, hot showers were in order for the 47th C.T. at the French Marine Barracks. And there was rest, replacement, story-swapping and all sorts of congratulations for the Ninth Division on its professional wind-up of the campaign. Best remembered of these commendations is a terse message from the Corps commander, General Bradley:

"During the recent operations which began on April 23rd and ended on May 9th, the work of the 9th Infantry Division has been most commendable. The Division was faced with a wide sector, which was extremely rugged and largely covered with an almost impenetrable growth of vegetation. In spite of the tremendous handicaps confronting the Division, it pushed ahead, overcoming every obstacle. Its efforts were rewarded by the capture of Bizerte. The Division is to be congratulated on its brilliant performance."

If any doubt ever had existed regarding the Ninth's combat ability, it now was dispelled forever. Unquestionably the Division had come of age. And while it received a short rest, pending a new and as yet unannounced campaign, the policing-up and prisoner-guarding continued. Simultaneously, the Ninth took stock of itself.

The Allied High Command did the same thing and came up with a most pleasing report. Implications were that the Allies had won their first clear-cut



EIGHT STARS TO VICTORY



A PORTION OF MATEUR P.W.'s CAGES

victory over the Axis since the beginning of the war; moreover, an entire continent had been freed of the aggressors. Pressure on embattled Russia had lessened and the victory at Stalingrad was greatly assisted, if not made possible, by the engaging of several hundred thousand Axis troops in North Africa.

In addition, a complete Axis army had been destroyed, while the Allies gained valuable experience in coordination and fighting. Most important of all, however, the threatened enemy domination of the world had failed . . . failed miserably and completely on the battlefields of Tunisia. Hitler and Mussolini now were on the defensive—permanently. They did not know where or when the Allied spearheads would strike next. Air, sea and now land supremacy had been wrested from a veteran foe. Hope and victory had been won in the desert!

* * * *

Other divisions after the end of the African campaign went back to bivouacs near Oran or Algiers, but they sent the Ninth to Magenta, 80 kilometers south of Sidi bel Abbes in the direction of the Sahara Desert.

—Hal Boyle (AP)

SOUTH of the French Foreign Legion Headquarters town of Sidi bel Abbes lies Magenta, Algeria . . . known for its flies, intense heat, manure, choking dust and lack of things modern. Magenta is a part of the *Little Sahara Desert* and was soon to become the home of the Ninth Division for seven long weeks.

Following its brief stay in Bizerte and vicinity, the men of the *Octofoil* packed their belongings and rolled west over the same route which had brought them into Tunisia. Final destination proved to be Magenta, where the Division arrived in late May. What started to be a fairly nice trip had ended in a somewhat disgusting finish. However, the weary soldiers

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made the best of a bad bargain and soon the area grew into a well-laid-out bivouac.

Passes were issued to Sidi bel Abbes by quota, and GIs were trucked in by day and returned back at night. Nighttime was most pleasant, for the temperature cooled appreciably during the hours of darkness—insuring perfect slumber. But heat during the day was overwhelming and forced the Division to issue an order that siestas would be taken by all personnel from 1-3 P.M. daily.

But all was not rest and passes. There was a future battle to condition for, and the job of training occupied much of everyone's time. The Ninthmen had set up camp around May 26th and by June 27th most of the troops had consumed their fill of drills, reveille, inspections, parades and marrow-stretching calisthenics. On the other hand, there was some pleasure as well. An occasional movie or musical show offered welcome relaxation and there was swimming for a few at the beach at Ain el Turck, which was close to Oran. Medics received little rest, however, since the aid men had their hands full with malaria and dysentery, the latter caused by the lack of sanitary facilities and the filth of the surrounding area.

As welcome a diversion as any was the training of units of the French Foreign Legion by various outfits of the Ninth. A great deal of friendship developed between the Ninth Division and many of its allies at Sidi bel Abbes. The be-medalled and be-ribboned Legionnaires claimed that *Beau Geste* actually had existed and had other stories for those Americans who could converse in French. But for all that, Sidi bel Abbes had little to offer after one visit.

* * * *

DURING the lull between battles, several changes in command occurred within the framework of the Ninth Division. On June 1st General Irwin, the Ninth's brilliant artillery commander, received his second star and soon departed for another command. He was replaced by Brigadier General Reece M. Howell, a familiar figure to the Ninth for several years past. Colonel Randle was promoted to Brigadier General and returned to the States. Colonel (Brigadier General) George W. Smythe, erstwhile

all-American football star, assumed command of the 47th Infantry Regiment.

Meanwhile, units of the Ninth Infantry Division participated in a review held in honor of King George VI of Great Britain and many British dignitaries at La Senia Airport near Oran. His Majesty's guard of honor was the 2nd Battalion of the 47th Infantry. On June 14th, General Mark W. Clark, commanding the Fifth Army, presented the 2nd's Major Johnston to the King as "the commanding officer of the crack battalion of the crack regiment of the crack Ninth Infantry Division." After that introduction Major Johnston and the King conversed regarding the battle for Bizerte. The British monarch also commented on the neat and soldierly appearance of the Ninth's soldiers after combat . . . a point noticed by many others.

Oran was a grand change but the men had to return to Magenta, where more training followed. Then General Eddy received word that the Division again would be split up . . . the 39th Combat Team and Division Artillery were to head for Bizerte and prepare for combat. On the 29th, the 39th C.T. (leaving behind its companion 26th F.A.) rolled out, covering the route to Bizerte via Orleansville, L'Arba, Setif and Souk Ahras. Next day Division Artillery motored along the same route . . . taking six days to drive the 910 miles. From Bizerte these units were to embark for another land and another battle—the conquest of Sicily. Not before they had dodged more bombs, however, for while encamped outside Bizerte the 39th Infantry and Divarty were on the receiving end of a jettisoning of bombs. These came from enemy aircraft which had been frustrated in an attempted bombing of Allied vessels in the harbor. Fortunately these were armor-piercing bombs and caused few casualties.

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MINUS some of its strength, the Division continued its regimen of training and conditioning. Then the call to arms was sounded again and on July 8, 1943, the Ninth packed its dusty equipment and clothing and headed for Ain el Turck. The infantry regiments had to march to the new area on foot and that was a truly rugged journey. In the

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ever-increasing heat of summer, the 47th and 60th Infantry Regiments trudged on. One day the temperature reached 123 degrees in the shade . . . after that scorcher all marches were made at night.

The new home of the Ninth turned out to be Bou Sfer, a staging area near the beach. There were the usual passes . . . this time to Oran and Ain el Turck, and there was also the perennial training. Bou Sfer was better liked than Magenta, for afternoons spent on the beach and at Oran, furnished more sight-seeing and beverage-consuming than did Sidi bel Abbas.

During this time plans were formulated for the Ninth's part in the coming Sicilian conflict and secret orders were issued, assigning the Division its role. Days of rest and training were soon to be over, and the hard grind of battle and the mountain climbing once more were to be the lot of the Ninth. Already units of the Division were facing the enemy in Sicily . . . and the full strength of the Ninth Infantry Division was now to be felt on that island.

Island Victory was in the making . . . *Safari in O.D.* was done!



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