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"Drink it all, boys. Th' guy wot put out that order about shavin' ain't comin' up here to inspect us."

This book is dedicated with the greatest love and respect to the men of the Cactus Division who fought — and many of whom died—in the actions herein described. Let us not forget it.

The men of Company E are grateful to Bill Mauldin and Wil-Jo Associates, Inc. for the free use of his cartoons reprinted in this book. Then, as now, we knew he was on our side.



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"Wisht I could stand up an' git some sleep."

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"Let 'im in. I wanna see a critter I kin feel sorry fer."

1

FIRST ATTACK ASSIGNMENT 9 Nov. 44 to 18 Nov. 44

The night before we moved into the front lines we spent in a muddy woods near Epinal, France. We lay in our tents and listened to the rain on the canvas over us and heard in the distance the dull booming of artillery and the occasional chatter of machinegun fire. Some of us joked: "What are they doing firing on the range at this time of night?" And some of us lay quietly, wide awake, and wondered, "What will it be like?" We had something of the same feeling as a little child has on the night before it starts the first day of school. "What will it be like?" Nothing that we had learned in our training, nothing that we had learned from soldiers who had already been in combat helped to answer the questions that gnawed at each individual's mind thruout that rainy night. For they were personal questions, not platoon or company or battalion questions: "Where will I be tomorrow night? How will I act under fire? Will the experience that I am about to have change my personality and outlook on life? What will it be like for me?"

The grey dawn streaked the sky, we ate our last hot chow for some time to come, ammunition was issued; we then stood around. We stood around and waited and the questions had not yet been answered. We joked some more, "Why, this is live ammunition — somebody's going to get hurt if they keep this up." We waited. We wondered. It snowed a little, it rained a little, the sun shone a little. And the afternoon of 9 Nov. 1944, the 409th Regiment of the 103d Division began relieving elements of the 7th Regiment of the 3d Division. We got out of the trucks and started walking, route march, one column on each side of the road. The artillery sounded close and we could hear small arms fire occasionally. We were moving into positions in the Vosges Mountains, southwest of St. Die. The mountains were steep and dark in the late afternoon. The questions weren't troubling us much now: we were finding out first-hand how it was.

We talked to some of the fellows we were relieving. One GI asked timorously, "Where is the front line from here?" "Front line?" a sergeant from the 3d Div. laughed, the lines of Africa, Italy and D-Day in Southern France on his face, "Hell, son, you're on the front line."

Yes, we were there, and we felt pretty much the same as we had felt the night before in the muddy woods near Epinal. There were a few startling experiences: the sight of a frozen hand reaching frantically out of a blood-stained German field-green sleeve from under a pile of brush, (the first sight of death); some tanks pulling out of position to be relieved by the Anti-tank Plt. of the 2d Bn. drew German artillery on a road just as E Co. was moving in: one fellow was too scared to hit the ditch and stood immobile in the road — 1st Sgt. William Scott knocked him down — a few were wounded, one killed (the first sight of American Blood.) But we were there. One had the courage to ask a 3d Div. soldier the question on his mind: "What will it be like?" The veteran smiled at the newcomer. "It won't be as bad as you think."

The 2d Bn. occupied two large hills of the Vosges Range southwest of St. Die. E Co. occupied the left hill, with outposts in the little village of Rougville at the base of their hill in the Valley of Taintrux. F Co. occupied the hill on the right, with similar outposts in Richardsville down the valley. G Co. was in reserve on the crest of E Co's hill on the

left. The 3d Bn. was on our right and the 410th was on our left. In front of us to the northeast, across the Valley of Taintrux, there were three large hills or mountains between us and St. Die; the Germans were in these hills.

We were less than 5 km. from St. Die. St. Die has a special claim to the interest of Americans, for it was there in 1507 that a geography book entitled 'Cosmographiae Introductio' was written in which the editors coined the name "America" to be applied to the New World for the first time. Most of the nights while we were waiting to attack, the city was in flames, lighting up the dark woods with a pale, unworldly light. Perhaps some of our fathers and uncles had seen this same light in World War I, when St. Die was all but destroyed by fire: most of the fighting in the Vosges sector during the war of 1914-18 had been done on the same line we occupied in Nov. 44.

Several weeks before the declaration of WW I, in the last days of July, 1914, the French began the fierce battles which eventually won back St. Die and drove the Germans to entrench themselves east of the city in positions which they held right up until the Armistice. Americans were engaged in large numbers around St. Die in 1918. Twenty-six years later Americans were again attempting to take St. Die.

Some of us were lucky enough to be able to move into foxholes which the 3d Div. had occupied. They had dug deep 2-man holes and covered them with a thick layer of logs and rocks. "It's a lot of work," they told us, "but it's well worth the bother when those tree bursts start coming in." Those of us who couldn't find old holes set about digging new ones to the same specifications. The serious business of digging in, getting used to artillery, and standing nervous hours of guard thruout the dark nights began. The woods into which we dug, called the "Bois de la Famille" or "Family Woods," were thick with tall oaks, pines and a European kind of spruce. The thick woods contributed to make the nights as black as blindness itself. One pair of guards in the Anti-tank Plt. decided to stand an extra shift after they had spent 1½ hrs. hunting for the foxhole of the men who were to relieve them, even tho the hole they were looking for was only 75 yds. from their own.

The 1st Machinegun Plt. of H Co. was assigned to E Co. on the left, and the 2d Plt. was with F Co. on the right. H Co's mortars were on the crest of E Co's hill near the Bn. CP, which was in a little settlement of houses called Le Haut Jacques. The Heavy Mortarmen were warned of mines by the 3d Div., but they didn't take the warning too seriously until they saw a Cannon Co. jeep blown up on the road beside their position. Pfc. Henry T. Adams, Mortar Plt. medic, rushed thru the minefield to the assistance of two wounded men in the jeep, only to be caught in the explosion of a delayed action mine. Adams' disregard for his own safety won him the Silver Star. The Ammunition & Pioneer Plt. of 2d Bn. Hq. Co. busted themselves night and day clearing the road which ran from the battalion CP down the hill on the left to E Co. Hq. Co's Anti-tank Plt. had two guns down this road in case the enemy should try an armored attack.

Sunday, 12 Nov., the Bn's popular Chaplain, Capt. Leon Davis, jumped from foxhole to foxhole to hold 13 separate church services. At one service with F Co. Chaplain Davis was forced to interrupt a prayer long enough to dive into a muddy ditch when some German 88's came in. Even the least religious among us felt better to have seen the Chaplain and to have bowed heads for a few moments in prayer. This was serious business and most of us were feeling pretty serious.

The days went by, one like another. We got used to the conditions and our nerves calmed down considerably. One night we got the report that an enemy patrol had gotten thru our lines, and the anxious guards got a little trigger-happy that night,

shooting at bushes that scraped trees in the darkness. Capt. Marshall G. McBee, coming out to inspect his guard was halted by one of his own guards but he couldn't tell where the voice came from in the darkness. "Where are you, Hernandez?" he called, a little nervously. Even more nervously, from deep down in the mud where Pvt. Pancho Hernandez had hidden, came the reply, "Here, Sir, under the jeep."

Lt. John J. O'Hara, battalion intelligence officer, went down into the valley with a patrol from F Co. and was pinned down by enemy machinegun fire for a whole day in the little town of Richardsville. This patrol had the distinction of being the first patrol sent out by any unit of the 103d Div.

The days went by, and we began expecting orders to attack. Finally, on the afternoon of the 15th, those orders came. The meeting which took place in the dugout of Capt. Bernard F. Teitelbaum, C.O. of F Co., must have been typical of similar meetings, which took place in all the companies of the regiment that evening. Capt. Teitelbaum called all of his platoon leaders and the platoon leader of H Co's 2d Machinegun pl. which was attached to F Co., to his CP. There wasn't much doubt in anyone's mind as to what was in store for the battalion the next morning when he said, "Well, this is it." The captain had just returned from the battalion CP with the attack order for the next morning. As the officers crouched in the 5' x 5' hole, which was the company CP, and tried to examine the map with two stubs of candles — there were many questions asked and answered. But there were questions in everyone's mind which were not asked and which could not be answered until the next day: "What will it be like? How will the outfit act under fire?" The 2d Bn's mission was to seize and hold the high ground southwest of St. Die. This high ground was the three hills right in front of us across the valley of Taintrux. The valley was about 500 yds wide and a small stream, the Taintrux River, flowed thru it. E Co. was to attack straight across the valley, with G Co. coming out of reserve around E Co's left flank to attack with E Co. H and F Co. were to provide a base of fire from the edge of the woods on the right hill and from the houses in the village of Richardsville.

The 2d Plt. of F Co. was already in Richardsville as an outpost, and the 4th Plt. moved its mortars and machineguns down into the town right after the meeting in Capt. Teitelbaum's dugout. The 1st and 3d Plts. followed the winding road that led down into the valley at about 0515. It was a black night with the glow of St. Die burning in the distance providing only a little light. Everyone had a lot to do that night, which was fortunate, since it kept one from thinking too much about the next day.

The days had been dark, full of rain and snow, but 16 Nov. dawned bright and clear. The 3d section of Heavy Mortars from H Co. moved down into Richardsville to give close-in support. The Anti-tank Plt. set up one of the .50-cal. machineguns in Rougiville to give the attacking companies additional support, and the battalion CP was moved down into the valley to a large chateau in Rougiville. Everyone was in position and anxiously awaiting H-Hour, when the artillery began preparatory fire at 0845. Ten minutes later the artillery began pounding the objective right across the valley. The attack would begin any minute now. Everyone was tense. Riflemen had given letters to others who would stay behind, letters which had been written the night before by flashlights in foxholes. Some said silent prayers. Others just chomped furiously on their gums.

The attack was executed exactly as we had been taught in training. Immediately after the last round of artillery, the scouts hit the clearing on the double. The assaulting platoons moved out of the woods 300 yds. behind the scouts, a smoke screen

being laid down by mortar fire to cover the movement. G Co. had the 2d Plt. on the left and 1st on the right, with the 3d in reserve. The 2d and 3d Plts. were the leading platoons of E Co., while the 1st had the mission of flushing out the houses in Rougville. H Co. and F Co. opened fire on the objective to cover the advance.

There was only one natural obstacle in crossing the valley that morning — the Taintrux River. The Bn. S-2 section informed us that it was only about 2-ft. deep at most places, but the attackers found it to be more than 4-ft. deep and even over one's head at some points. When Pfc. Amebry Brooks, SCR-300 radio operator for Easy Co., hit the river he landed in a deep spot well over his head, and used the radio as a life preserver swimming across the river.

E and G Co's crossed the river one way or another and entered the woods of the enemy's hill. At 0940 both companies reported that they were about 100 yds into the woods and, 8 min. later, G Co. on the left had reached a bald patch on the hill about three-quarters of the way to the summit. E Co. met little resistance and by 1100 both companies had reached the summit, made contact, put out protection for the exposed right flank, and were continuing to advance. Hill #3, the largest enemy hill, had been taken. There was one smaller hill to the right and rear of Hill #3 and a large one in back of both hills. The most difficult hill had been taken quickly and with surprisingly few casualties and the medics had handled these few excellently and with bravery.

Attached to the 1st Plt. of E Co., Pfc. Henry England had moved out with his platoon in the attack. It was only minutes later that the cry, "Medic, Medic, I'm hit," was heard. Small arms fire from the hill to the front temporarily pinned the platoon down. In an instant, England was on his feet moving forward — a medical kit his only weapon, a Red Cross helmet his only cover. In the middle of the firefight, England began his first aid. Despite shouts of warning, the medic stayed put. Then he was hit — a painful injury in the groin — but England went back to work. He injected his patient first, then himself, with morphine and administered first aid before pain forced him to cease.

Sgt. Howard Blaske, aidman attached to the 2d Plt. of G Co., was determined to aid his wounded buddies regardless of what the Jerries had to offer. Blaske, following with the reserve squad, was well concealed behind an embankment when he spotted the wounded platoon runner and ran to apply first aid. He found the doughboy bleeding profusely. While Blaske was reaching in his aid kit for a tourniquet, the Jerry sniper took another shot. Later describing the sensation as a white light exploding before his head, Sgt. Blaske fell unconscious. Coming to with a buzzing in his head and blood on his face, the medic realized he was hit. He turned to inquire how his buddy was, and again the Jerry sniper shot, this time hitting Blaske in the fingers. Conscious enough to realize that he himself was too far gone to aid his buddy, the sergeant staggered for the cover of the river about 25 ft ahead. A few minutes later, Walter W. Slavens, the medic of 1st plt. came to assist Sgt. Blaske in giving medical treatment. While working on a man who lay near the creek, Slavens also was hit. He crawled into the creek and, along with Blaske, remained in the water 6 hrs. At 1430, a patrol rescued the men from the creek.

As G Co. approached its objective, another aidman, T-5 Herman E. Kitzman was wounded. Cpl. Kitzman was busily caring for men of his platoon when a mortar barrage interfered. Everyone dispersed, including the guards escorting German prisoners. When the barrage subsided, Kitzman found himself not over 30 ft. from a German, formerly a prisoner, now armed with a machinegun. Ignoring the Geneva

Cross, the Jerry fired on the aidman. Bullets entered Kitzman's wrist in 3 places, but the Jerry was KIA a few seconds later.

That night G Co. was hit by a heavy mortar barrage and suffered more casualties than they had had in the day's attack. It was a long night, especially for those who had to lie wounded in their holes all night.

Another dawn came on the 17th and another day's activities began. For some reason almost everyone had felt that we had gained the objective and would probably prepare to hold it. This assumption was not correct. With dawn came the order that F Co. would take Hill #2, which was the small hill to the right and rear of Hill #3. The company formed and started the trip across the open valley toward Hill #2 from the houses in Richardsville. F Co. moved out at 0730 after a short artillery barrage.

Everyone had his fingers crossed in hopes that Jerry had pulled off of "2" after G and F Co's had taken "3". The hill was in good position to observe the whole valley and there was a chance that the Jerries might have decided to hang on. The company moved across the ground at a fast walk and headed straight for "2". When they hit the base of the hill and started up everyone soon discovered what the men in the other two Rifle companies had experienced the morning before. There was plenty of underbrush and the hill was very steep. Capt. Teitelbaum called a halt before deciding how to move up the rest of the way. He decided to drop the packs and extra equipment to facilitate passage thru the dense underbrush. He sent the 1st Plt. around to the left side of the hill and the 2d and 3d were to move up the front and right side. The company started out again. The orders were for the lead squads to move on and keep on the lookout for Jerry while the support squads would check the dugouts. The company finally arrived at the top of the hill at 1400 and everyone hoped to be able to dig in and hold. In fact, some even had visions of spending the night in a lookout building that was found built in the rocks on top of the hill. Capt. Teitelbaum, after some difficulty due to the fact that the batteries were giving out, reached battalion on the 380 and reported that the objective had been taken and the company was preparing to dig in. No resistance had been met. Battalion orders were to move on to Hill #1 and to meet C Co. on top. F Co. would have the right side of the hill, G the left.

About 1500 the two companies started up Hill #1. They had learned from a French civilian that the enemy had abandoned at least the base of the hill on the afternoon before, moving up the hill on the road to St. Die. F Co. started up this road, and G Co. moved up farther to the left. At about 1645 the companies had reached a point just below the crest without meeting any opposition, and decided to hole up there for the night. F Co. had no contact with Bn., except faintly and indirectly thru E Co.

The companies had had no rations for a day. They were hungry and the night was cold. They had dropped their rolls back on Hill #2, and some dug all night just to keep warm. S/Sgt. Robert Hearn, F Co's communication sergeant, finally reached Bn. by radio. They sent him an encoded message, but due to faint reception and to the lack of light, Sgt. Hearn never made sense out of the message. The next day F Co. sent back a guide and 30 men to lead some officers from the 411th Rgt., which was to relieve us, up the lines. The 30 men were to pick up the packs which had been left behind. We spent one more night in these positions, but by 0937 on 19 Nov., all of the 2d Bn. had been relieved.

We went into a reserve position to reorganize for another attack. The First Attack was over. In our first highly successful engagement, we had learned the nature of combat. We weren't veterans by any means, but we knew what combat was.

2

LUBINE ROADBLOCK

15 Nov. 44

Upon crossing the Meurthe River, the 2d Bn., 409th Inf. was quartered in the woods north of La Hollande. The ground had just been cleared the morning before and the battalion CP was set up in the city in a large chateau, which had been previously occupied by an enemy CP.

During the night of 21 Nov., Maj. Lloyd L. Hanes, the battalion commander, received orders that he was to form a task force. Early hours of the morning of the 22d were spent in planning. F Co. of the 2d Bn., under the command of Capt. Teitelbaum, was chosen as the rifle company and G Co., under the command of Lt. George Holtz, furnished the battle patrol. Therefore, any reference to the 2d Bn. will be understood as not including Fox and George Co's until such time as those units shall rejoin the battalion. Task Force Hanes left La Hollande at 0730 on 22 Nov.

After the task force had moved out, the 2d Bn., under command of the battalion executive officer, Capt. Earl Roth, was ordered to move by foot to Marzelay. Upon closing into this village at about 1530, Easy Co., commanded by Capt. John Stevenson, was called to clear St. Die of all enemy north of the Meurthe River. Easy Co. spent the night of the 22d clearing St. Die; then on the following morning, which was Thanksgiving Day, they were returned by motor to Marzelay. In the rain, amid the smoldering ruins of Marzelay, the men of the 2d Bn. celebrated a strange Thanksgiving. Chaplain Davis held a service for men of all faiths in a barn, and the only Thanksgiving dinner that day was K-rations. Next morning at 0530 the cooks served a belated turkey dinner before the battalion moved out to assemble in the woods east of La Petit Fosse.

While en route, however, orders were changed and the battalion was to continue by motor to Colroy-la-Gronde, where they were to take over from Task Force Hanes. The task force was held up between Colroy-la-Gronde and Lubine by a railroad and highway bridge which had been blown. At that time the streams were swollen so badly that our vehicles and armor could not bypass this obstacle. The battalion, therefore, detrucked at Colroy-la-Gronde and proceeded by foot thru Lubine, clearing the route as they moved. A few prisoners were taken.

The battalion continued to march, past the hairpin turn in the road at Fouillaupre, 2 km. northeast of Lubine. The enemy allowed the battalion to advance right up the road, around the hairpin turn, and around a 2d turn on the steady upgrade. At the point the battalion rounded a 3d turn they ran upon an abbati roadblock: many tall pines had been felled across the road. The battalion was led by E Co., the point coming out of Lt. Brenner's 1st Plt. When the point reached the roadblock, they were fired upon and pinned down by crossfire from machineguns and "Burp Guns." Capt. Roth immediately called upon the remainder of G Co., under the command of Lt. Robertazzi, to go around the battalion's right flank and try to cut off these weapons. George Co. moved thru the woods to a position looking down on the enemy's weapons, only to be pinned down themselves. G Co. then pulled back with the remainder of the battalion and moved back under cover of darkness to billet in Fouillaupre, leaving one platoon to act as a covering force. During the afternoon the engineers had cleared the roadblock back at Lubine and the battalion motors were able to join the foot troops.

A platoon of 4.2 Chemical Mortars was attached to the battalion. Capt. Roth and

the battalion S-2, Lt. John O'Hara (who was acting as S-3 in the absence of Capt. John Smith, who was attached to the task force) along with the 4.2 Plt. leader planned to place a concentration of fire in the area around the roadblock. The 4.2's were set up in the road behind Fouillaurpe. Under cover of darkness the battalion moved up into a safe position to move on the roadblock after the barrage. The concentration of about 300 rounds was laid just at dawn of the 25th. Immediately after the barrage was lifted the battalion started to move thru the roadblock, only to be pinned down again. Easy Co. was then called upon to send a platoon to knock out these strongly entrenched defensive positions. The action had little success and Easy Co. suffered some casualties as well as losing one man as a prisoner. The battalion remained in the area for the rest of the day while Lt. Hennecke of G Co. took a patrol out to find a route to move the battalion around to the right over the hill and thereby bypass the roadblock.

When Lt. Hennecke returned with the necessary information, the orders for the battalion had been changed again. The 3d Bn., which had followed the 2d up from Lubine, was to bypass the 2d on a route to the right such as Lt. Hennecke had found and then continue on to Ville. The 2d Bn. was given the mission of knocking out this roadblock after it had been bypassed and surrounded. The battalion again pulled back under cover of darkness. The following plan was decided upon: Lt. Hennecke was to take one platoon reinforced with machineguns before dawn on the 26th thru the route that he reconnoitered. He was to cross the main road behind the enemy and proceed thru the woods to take up a position to support our attack and catch the enemy withdrawal. The remainder of the battalion was to move under cover of darkness up an ax trail thru the woods until they reached the top of the hill and then swing to the left across the whole length of the hill and come down on top of the enemy.

The battalion reached the top of the hill at dawn. The timing was perfect. Not a shot was fired by either side. The battalion moved across the hill toward the block. They passed some excellent positions dug-in with barbed wire all around the whole defense. When the battalion reached the road, there had still been no shots fired. It was later learned from a French family that approximately 400 Germans had moved out at about 0230.

The battalion formed the approach march and started on down the road. The battalion reformed at Col d'Urbeis. In many places from Col d'Urbeis the road was barred by abatti roadblocks and the attached engineers were working on these blocks so that the battalion and regimental vehicles could follow. There was one sniper at Haut d'Urbeis, but all of Bois d'Urbeis and Urbeis itself were cleared of enemy. The march continued altho the men were getting tired and hungry.

On entering Fouchy the battalion was halted in the road while the battalion CO went forward to get his order from the regiment Commander. At this point the battalion motors caught up with the foot troops. While the battalion was taking a break in the road the Germans surprised us and poured in about 15 rounds of 88's. By 1730 the battalion was finally at its destination and were quartered in La Laye.

The 1st Bn., which had been on our left all the way up, made contact here and some of them were quartered in La Laye also, where we enjoyed a rest of 3 nights and 2 days. During the break, clean clothing was issued, weapons cleaned, bad feet fixed up, and a few reinforcements arrived to fill up the battalion.

Then came the order from regiment. The 2d Bn. would march to Ville; there the attack would swing 90 degrees to the right and continue in the direction of Selestat. Maj. Lloyd Hanes again took command of his battalion.

3

TASK FORCE HANES 21 Nov. 44 to 29 Nov. 44

The objective of Task Force Hanes was to reach the Steige Pass and hold it. For added striking power and support there was added to the task force; one company of tanks (less one platoon), one company of Tank Destroyers (less one platoon), one battery of artillery, one platoon of Engineers, a detachment of Signal Corps men, one platoon of 4.2 Mortars, and one platoon of Reconnaissance troops.

The order came to "saddle up" and get ready to roll. Hastily munching their breakfasts of K-Ration biscuits, cold pork and egg yolks, the infantrymen pondered their situation. Someone remarked that it was going to be pretty damn tough. At 0800 the riflemen met the tanks on the road. One platoon boarded the first 2 tanks and the first 2 TDs, thus forming the point of the spearhead. The remainder of the company rode, armed to the teeth, in 2½-ton trucks. A point was furnished by the reconnaissance troops to lead the route. The supply vehicles, ordnance, artillery, etc., formed a column behind the infantry. The leaders of the task force — Maj. Hanes, Capt. Teitelbaum (commanding F Co.), 1st Lt. Thomas P. White (F Co. Exec.), and 1st Sgt. Keith R. Cooper — had spent a sleepless night in planning the action.

The long column straightened out and started forward. There was a bit of confusion at first due to the fact that a similar task force formed by the 3d Inf. Div. had also begun to move out. In fact, Pvt. Fred Eggers, a war correspondent for the Beachhead News, jumped on a Task Force Hanes tank when he was supposed to have boarded a 3d Div. tank. The day was cloudy and cold. It was impossible for the snake-like column to pierce the enemy lines because the Jerries were retreating at the rate of 1,000 yds./hr. When night fell, Task Force Hanes was in St. Jean D'ormont. The 1st and 3d platoons of F Co. dug in on the high ground above the town while the 2d pl. searched the town for Jerries. When the search was completed the men of the 2d pl. went to sleep inside the houses of the town.

The dawn of 23 Nov. was dreary and cold with the drizzling rain which fell the entire night. It was Thanksgiving day. Before reloading on the tanks and trucks, the men ate their Thanksgiving dinner — K-Rations with canned cheese and bacon. The men began to bitch as all good soldiers will when the situation is irremediable. Then the column started forward again, winding down the road thru the towns of Battant de Bourras, D'Hermainpaine, and La Petite Fosse. The civilians in these small towns heartily welcomed the Americans, giving the soldiers apples and wines and "Schnapps." The last mentioned was a German drink quite new to the men of the 2d Bn., its potency compared to that of gas and poison. A certain pale variety of Schnapps became known as White Lightning.

When Task Force Hanes reached the edge of Provencherez it had already hit the enemy line and was driving a wedge into it. After a brief consultation, the force swung northward and headed toward Saales. At the road junction near the Bois de la Bollee, a GI in a jeep was shot in the arm by a sniper concealed in the woods. The scout car at the point opened up with its 37 in an attempt to rout out the sniper, but only succeeded in uncovering a great deal of fire.

Capt. Smith, 2d Bn. S-3 and also S-3 of the task force, called upon 2d Lt. (now 1st Lt.) Charles G. Kepler, 3d Plt. leader, to clear the wooded hill so the column could

move on. Lt. Kepler and Sgt. Butor, 1st squad leader, made their way to the ditches on the left flank of the position from which the sniper was firing. They decided to try to get around the left flank with one squad covered by the other two and begin combing the woods. But in the next instant they were pinned down in a stream bed by sniper-fire. Deciding that no fate could be worse than freezing in the stream, the men got up in one moment and together sped for cover in different directions. Sgt. Butor dashed back in the direction from which he had come; Lt. Kepler ran ahead to cover of a partially constructed roadblock. By this time the 1st squad had worked its way up to the squad leader and the 2d squad had attained a good firing position. On signal the 1st squad moved up the ditches, crossed the road near the roadblock, and began up the wooded hillside with marching fire. The fire superiority was too much for Jerry, and the woods were soon cleared.

The hill proved to be a cleverly camouflaged defense position. Trees had been transplanted and wired into the ground to conceal the zig-zag firing trenches. An 88 was uncovered complete with ammunition and commanding a perfect field of fire down to the road. Its not being fired remains a mystery, for it could easily have raised havoc with the column on the road. An underground shelter was found which had been partially completed and was cemented in. The Germans had left in a hurry. In their CP, which was located in a farmhouse, there was still warm food on the table.

Meanwhile the 1st Bn. had caught up with the task force and was driving to the high ground south of Colroy La Grande. With its left flank several hundred yards to the right of the column, the 1st Bn. pulled up on a line generally even with the middle of the task force. At this point that battalion received mortar and machinegun fire from the high ground on its right flank. Machinegun fire also sprayed the road on which Task Force Hanes was moving. Maj. Hanes ordered the tanks and TD's to open fire. This silenced Jerry, but the 1st Bn. had suffered a few casualties.

The task force bypassed Jerries that afternoon. No one paid much attention to a small old man in a tattered uniform who was walking down a hill toward the rear of the column. But the harmless-appearing little Jerry picked up a Panzerfaust, fired it at an artillery 2½-ton truck, and damaged it almost irreparably. He then threw up his arms and yelled "Kamerad!" Some of the doughs wanted to shoot him on the spot, but others with more sporting blood sent him back to the rear as a PW.

Late in the afternoon Maj. Hanes decided to seek quarters for the night. A roadblock at the edge of Colroy La Grande prevented the advance of the motors. The 3d Plt. of F Co. then went in to clear the town while the Engineers removed the roadblock. Everyone found comfortable quarters in houses and haylofts that night.

At dawn the task force was on the road again and headed toward Lubine. After moving a short distance another obstacle was encountered. Jerry had ingeniously blown a railroad overpass and diverted a stream across the road. The 2d Plt. of F Co., under 1st Lt. Stanley J. Schlossberg, secured the high ground above the obstacle while the Engineers looked the problem over. The Engineers did not have the proper equipment for bridging the blocks and Task Force Hanes retraced its course. Arriving at the scene of the skirmish of the day before, the column moved forward north and east and came to a halt just south of Saales, where the men dug in for the night.

With daylight the mobile force began rolling again. No opposition was met in Saales or the nearby town of Bourg-Bruche. Moving eastward now, the column approached L'Evereuil where sniperfire was received from a small group of buildings. The Infantrymen quickly began to clear the surrounding woods, which gave them the

advantage of commanding the high ground above both L'Evereuil and La Salee. A few snipers were captured in the Bois de L'Evereuil. While the rifle platoons were mopping up the woods, Jerry inflicted a bit of damage with sound-determined mortarfire. During the barrage everyone sought cover and only Pfc. George Cutler was hit. The medics were called for and Pfc. Myron M. Howard, a 3d Plt. medic, came running to aid the wounded man. He did not stop once, altho the mortar shells were falling dangerously close, until he reached the casualty and with the aid of Pfc. Morris Feinberg, he bandaged Cutler. While evacuating the wounded man, the two medics came upon a German patrol. In direct violation of the Geneva Convention, the patrol started after the three men. Howard wasted no time. With Cutler's rifle he fired above the heads of the Jerries and drove them off. He had no choice but to fire the rifle, it was his duty to save Cutler's life. By the time he and Feinberg reached the aid station Howard had received a shrapnel wound in his back.

The mortar shelling continued, but there were no more casualties. Sniper parties were routed out of the woods and taken prisoner. Before dark the combat patrol had taken La Salee and F Co. moved into town behind the patrol. The Bois de L'Evereuil was subject to shelling the entire night, but no one was there.

At 2000 a patrol reported a column of enemy troops entering La Salee from the west. From his seat in a Recon car, Capt. Teitelbaum opened up on the Germans with a light machinegun. Rifle fire was added to the fire power and, amid the whistling streams of tracers, the enemy column was soon cut down.

On the following day Task Force Hanes received orders to push thru the Steige Pass and continue on to Ville. The movement was marked with occasional sniper skirmishes and an eventful union with the 1st Bn. in the town of Steige. Passing thru Malsonsgoutte the task force neared St. Martin. At this juncture contact was lost with the battle patrol which, with several trucks, had been sent north to Breitenbach to secure that town. At the outskirts of Ville, the point was halted by heavy fire concentrations coming from the high ground south of the town and a roadblock at the edge of town. While the Engineers began work on the roadblock, the 3d Plt. of F Co. entered Ville to clear it of snipers in a room-to-room search. Enemy fire from the north of town began to harass the troops. One squad, under Sgt. Howard Bishop, was sent to locate the emplacement. The 1st Plt. of F Co. then entered Ville to aid the 3d in clearing the town.

It was in the town of Ville that the 3d Bn. lost a fine officer and a brilliant S-3. Both Capt. John S. Smith and his driver were killed when the jeep in which they were riding was sprayed with machinegun fire.

By nightfall Ville was in American hands. The Germans turned loose Nebelwerfer barrages on the town. It was the 2d Bn's first experience with "Screaming Meemies." They took the very heart out of a man. On 29 Nov. the 2d Bn. marched into Ville and re-joined Task Force Hanes. The mission of the task force had been successfully accomplished.

4

PUSH THRU ALSACE **29 Nov. 44 to 9 Jan. 45**

With the success of Task Force Hanes in reaching Ville, the 2d Bn. found itself on the fertile plains of Alsace. In battle-scarred Ville, the entire battalion reassembled for a large scale attack on Selestat. Company F, the rifle company of Task Force Hanes, went into battalion reserve. Company H, with its mortars and machineguns, supported E and G Co's as they moved thru the 36th Div. taking the towns of Nueve-Pglise, St. Maurice, Thannville, and Scherwiller. This last town had been taken under a heavy mortar and artillery barrage and had not been cleared of snipers when the HQ staff moved in to set up the battalion CP.

The Geissen River, running thru the center of 3 km. of flat country, divided Scherwiller and Selestat. Selestat lay to the south. An attack on this city would mean complete exposure for the troops in addition to the obstacle of the waist-deep stream. All spans over the Geissen had been destroyed.

The plan was to attack Selestat that night, 1 Dec., and secure a phase-line in the city. The 1st Bn. was on the right flank of the 2d and was flanked on its right by the 38th Div. Company C moved into the attack toward Selestat but was driven back into Scherwiller by an intensified artillery barrage. On the drear morning to follow, the battalion waded the stream and advanced steadily thru a hail of mortar and small arms fire. By evening, a firm foothold had been secured in Selestat, and a perimeter defense had been set up on the first phase-line.

H Co's S/Sgt. Brennon Packer, supporting the attacking companies had used the courtyard of Selestat's French barracks as a firing position. When his section moved forward, the bulk of the platoon occupied the position. The new crews began to set up the mortars in the courtyard when S/Sgt. "Saki" Van Belle, Cpl. Jack Mahl, and Pfc. Henry Prince, decided to check the buildings. In their search they flushed out 3 Krauts — one clad in a sniper's camouflage clothing — fully equipped and armed respectively with a Schmeisser Machine Pistol, a P-38, and a rifle. Each had a good supply of grenades. Sniperfire in Selestat was a constant menace. Pfc. Robert E. Wallin, G Co. mortarman, was downed by a sniper's bullet as he dashed across an open street. Mortars were set up in backyards to answer the enemy shells which landed all thru the night in the doughboys' section of the city. Engineers were unavailable, so the 2d Bn. A and P Plts. set about clearing a roadblock at a railroad crossing, working under sniper fire and mortar barrages. Their only mine sweeping tools were probes, which are practically ineffective against "S" mines. A "Bouncing Betty" inevitably was set off, killing Pfc. Arthur Helvey and Pfc. Stephen Burzynski.

On the morning of 3 Dec., proceeding toward the center of town, the battalion completed phase-line two. Again, a perimeter defense was set up. The third and final phase-line was completed on the following day when riflemen of the 2d Bn. made contact with the 36th Div. doughs. Selestat was now wholly in American hands.

The 409th Rgt. was relieved on 5 Dec. and was moved northwest by motor. In Diefenthal the 2d Bn. rested for one day. New protective weather hoods were issued to every man. Another motor march on 6 Dec. brought the battalion into VI Corps reserve in the town of Tructersheim. Christmas packages began to reach the men. Here an important change in command was effected. Relieving Maj. Hanes, Maj.

(now Lt. Col.) Louis K. Hennighausen assumed command of the 2d Bn. Capt. James D. Wimberly relieved Capt. Roth as battalion executive officer. Maj. Hennighausen had been regimental S-2; and Capt. Wimberly had been with Anti-tank Co.

The next move was forward to division reserve in the town of Schalkendorf on 8 Dec. At 0430, 9 Dec., the battalion moved out on a road march to Bitschoffen, here to assemble while the 411th Rgt. pressed the attack to the east. A memorable spectacle was the 190-gun, 15-min. artillery preparation for this attack. Doughs of the 2d Bn. were on the road when the bombardment began. The dawn turned blazing red; the earth shook with volley upon volley of thunderous reports.

In Bitschoffen the Luftwaffe appeared. Two Me-109's dived on nearby artillery emplacements. S/Sgt. Noel M. Clute of the Anti-tank Plt. manned his .50 cal. machinegun mount and loosed a merciless stream of tracers straight at the low flying planes. One plane went down in smoke, the other, badly shot up, sped away from the scene without inflicting any damage.

Following behind the 411th, the 2d Bn. began a series of road marches which brought the companies on 11 Dec. to the heavily mined town of Gunstett. Here the rifle companies passed thru the 411th to jump off and continue the attack. Meeting no resistance save sporadic mortar fire, companies E and F moved northeast from Gunstett thru the Kreuzheche forest and on to the large town of Surbourg. The battalion CP was set up for the night while the line companies moved on to Soultz, where bitter resistance was encountered. The following day the battalion staff and Hq. Co. moved into Soultz to join the reserve G Co. On 14 Dec., with G Co. remaining in reserve and H Co. nursing its' machineguns after the previous day's duel, the push continued. By nightfall the Maginot Line had been passed, the attacking companies were moving toward the treacherous Hardt Mts., and the battalion CP had been set up in Cleebourg, 9 km. northeast of Soultz.

The next towns to fall were Bromerbach and Oberhoffen. These towns gave way to newly committed G Co. The 2d Bn. was gaining momentum and more than a few Jerries in retreat were trampled under the tremendous stampede. The battalion was combat-wise and strong in heart. Each order to "push on" was fervently carried out. It was go! go! go! attack! don't stop!, and the onslaught was carried on to the town of Weiler. The 1st Plt. of George Co. hopped aboard 5 tanks of the 14th Armored Div. and won the town after a short bitter firefight. Meanwhile, F Co. and the rest of G Co. moved on, crossed the German border and seized the town of Rechtenbach.

Two hills to the north lay the Siegfried Line.

During the daylight hours of 16 Dec., companies E, F, G and H moved atop the first hill, secured it by digging in, and prepared for an assault on the second. At 0900, 17 Dec., three patrols were sent out to gain information of the enemy on the second hill. F Co's patrol was fired upon. The battalion I&R patrol located barbed wire entanglements, trenches, and unoccupied positions. E Co's patrol returned safely with information of similar emplacements. At 1015 the artillery preparation was laid. At 1030 the attack was on. The attacking companies, E and F, moved down the wooded hillside, across a narrow valley which was quite green for December, and up the steep slope of the second hill to contact the enemy. And contact him they did! The first objective was a pillbox. Its capture was comparatively simple since it had been hit heavily by artillery and the embrasure facing the attacking units contained a jammed machinegun. George Co's 3d Plt. lobbed several hand grenades into the opening and the remaining enemy troops surrendered. Few prisoners were taken as the defenders

had a route of escape thru the maze of trenches connecting the fortifications on the mountain. Fierce fighting and close combat raged the entire day, and at twilight two objective pillboxes were still in enemy hands. The 1st Plt. of G Co., held as support, was committed to overcome the stiff resistance met by the 2d Plt. Shortly after nightfall the entire company moved into the connecting trenches which were far from cleared of enemy troops.

The Siegfried fortifications were quite elaborate. One pillbox, not yet captured, was a mortar and artillery CP. It had a number of small embrasures and a large periscope. The Anti-tank Plt. despatched bazooka teams to each company to be used against the pillboxes. Easy Co. on George Co's right flank was successful in capturing its' objective pillboxes.

Fox Co. dug in at the bottom of the hill and remained in reserve while the companies atop the hill set up their perimeter defenses for the night. G Co's defense was in the form of a horseshoe, the peak of which contained the most recently captured pillbox. The 1st Plt. closed the shoe at the bottom in a line containing the first pillbox, now being used as aid station and company CP. The hill, or mountain, was immediately named Pillbox Hill. No one slept on Pillbox Hill that first night. The crack of grenades was constant. The burping of the Jerries' Schmeisser machine pistol was incessant. Answering this threat were American M-3's and Thompson sub-machineguns. Machinegun duels continued unsettled thruout the night. 1st Lt. Avel O. Henneke threw more than the contents of one case of grenades. "Give me some more grenades," he demanded, "those bastards can fight!"

The one remaining pillbox in G Co's sector was impregnable to assault. Three men volunteered to attempt its' neutralization with pole charges of TNT. The company set up a rigid defense during the first hours of daylight. Then the 3 volunteers, led by T/Sgt. W. A. Springborn snaked a perilous path to an embrasure of the OP pillbox. Swiftly and with great dexterity the demolition men set off a 40-lb. charge. This feat resulted in the immediate capture of 15 German officers. New positions were set up in the afternoon. Newly captured trenches were occupied. The bulk of the day was comparatively quiet, but the night was filled again with the death-tolling sounds of battle.

A counter-attack was expected the following morning, and at 0820 it began. The Jerry charge was heavier than expected and was reinforced with tanks. The tanks came as a surprise, but their effectiveness was impeded by the nature of the terrain: a steep hill and heavy foilage. Concentration bazooka fire soon put the armor to flight and the heavy firepower of the rifle companies discouraged advances of the German infantry. After the fight the troops became concerned with the replacement of their expended ammunition, as no supply route had been established. That night Bn. HQ sent pack mules and teamsters with supplies and ammo to the beleaguered riflemen. From that hour on, the sight of mules became commonplace. Many an army mule became stubborn at precisely the wrong moment.

A new counter-attack, in greater force and firepower, was launched against the line of E and G Co's at 0820 on 20 Dec. Again the enemy was repelled. Pfc. Robert Leslie, a G Co. machinegunner, earned a Bronze Star for holding off the attacking forces with an M-1 rifle when his machinegun jammed. Another Bronze Star recipient was T/S Billy Carnival, who established, operated, and maintained his aid station under constant enemy artillery fire. One more sleepless night passed.

The usual 0820 counter-attack came as expected the following morning. The enemy was thrown back. F Co., commanded by 1st Lt. (now Capt.) White moved up "Pill

Hill" to relieve G Co. During the night Capt. John Stevenson, Easy Co's CO, called for artillery fire on a platoon of Krauts who were felling trees. The artillery landed close to the E Co. men; but accurate adjustment by Capt. Beaucheman of the 382d FA wiped out the tree-felling platoon in short order with no injury to Capt. Stevenson's men. Major Hennighausen, lived these 6 days at his CP, which was located on the hill first secured by the companies. His staff remained with him.

Between midnight and dawn of 22 Dec., the 45th Div. was guided into the positions held by the 103d Div, and the 2d Bn. was relieved. The battalion spent that day in a small town between Rechtenbach and Wissombourg. With nightfall the weary captors and defenders of Pillbox Hill marched to Wissembourg, where a convoy of 2½-ton trucks awaited. The men crawled onto the trucks and almost immediately fell sound asleep. Someone had heard that the convoy was going to take the battalion 80 mi. to the north. It didn't matter. The men were off the hill now. They refused to worry about anything. More combat was in store for them, certainly, but tonight was tonight — and the devil with vigilance, hunger, fatigue and strains of battle and bloodshed. The motors hummed, the convoy started on its way. The night was icy cold — but no one gave a damn.



By permission of Bill Maudin and Wil-Jo Associates, Inc.

"I can't git no lower, Willie. My buttons is in th' way."

5

DEFENSIVE POSITIONS IN LORRAINE

23 Dec. 44 to 9 Jan. 45

The motor convoy came to a halt at 0300 in the bitter cold of the morning of 24 Dec. 44. The infantrymen of the 2d Bn. climbed stiffly out of the huge 2½-ton trucks which had transported them some 80 mi. from the German border-town of Wissembourg to this bombed out town of Hellimer in the province of Lorraine. Bodies ached and feet were numb from the cold. Once quartered, the men sought nothing but the sanctuary of sleep inside their precious sleeping bags. When they awakened the sun was shining brightly, but the cold was depressing. Christmas packages had arrived in great quantity, and almost every man had a bit of Home with him that day. Then it was learned that the battalion had orders to move. This struck an unpleasant note in the minds of the men, for it was hoped that Christmas Eve would be their own.

The late afternoon move proved to be a 12-mi. motor march north to Guenviller. Here the infantrymen detrucked and moved into new and better quarters which, for the most part, were warm and comfortable houses. Near the main intersection of the town, Chaplain Davis held devotional Christmas Eve services. After supper in the evening, the chaplain visited the companies individually and led the men in singing hymns and Christmas carols. More packages from home arrived filled with luxuries and good things to eat. Christmas Eve was, difficult to grasp as it seemed, actually being celebrated. The Christmas spirit felt by all was undeniable. In some houses the soldiers went so far as to trim Christmas trees and truly enjoy the event.

On Christmas Day the cooks prepared appropriate dinners with all that the occasion desired. There was turkey with dressing, cranberry sauce, corn, creamed peas, potatoes drowned in rich, brown gravy, pudding and candy — nor was it necessary to make a hodge-podge of this meal by dumping every course into the neutralizing mess-kit. Dishes, cups, and kitchenware were borrowed from the townspeople for that grand holiday dinner touch.

December 26, the day after Christmas, found the four companies moving out of Guenviller with all their equipment. Each company marched generally north for approximately 2 mi. and then dispersed on line on a long stretch of high ground overlooking obvious military strategic points — roads, intersections, rail lines, a stream, bridges, and the like — and the huge industrial town of Merlenbach.

The situation was this: Von Rundstedt's offensive threatened the 3d Army's front. The 103d Div. was committed to protect and defend the right flank of the 3d Army. The division's position then was the left flank of the 7th Army and the right flank of the 3d. A system of defense phase-lines was to be set up to prevent the imminent enemy breakthrough from gaining irresistible momentum — should it materialize. The 2d Bn. behind the 411 Rgt. formed defense phase-line A.

Phase-line A extended 5½-mi. from the town of Betting westward toward St. Avold. That first day found the companies digging positions with engineer tools in ground that was frozen and rocky. Standing foxholes, machinegun emplacement, and observation posts were dug. The spirits of the men rose when it was learned that the troops would not remain in their holes at night, but would return to the warmth of their quarters in Guenviller.

G Co. defended the right flank of the phase-line directly above Merlenbach, guar-

ding the two parallel roads, 1½-mi. apart, leading into the mining town. E Co. defended a hill also between two roads on G Co's right flank and another, 2-mi. westward, which curved along the river Essin. F Co. was located in positions above this last road on the battalion's extreme left flank. It was a long, thin front, but one which could have proved, for the enemy, distressingly invulnerable.

A complete defensive position was set up which included barbed wire entanglements and mines. Each morning the companies would march out to their sectors, dig deeper, camouflage, and constantly improve their holes. The Bn. CP remained in Guenviller. Give a GI a little time and he will make his foxhole his castle. Typical, if not a bit exceptional, was the "squad hole" dug by the 4th squad of H Co's 2d machinegun platoon. The squad hole was indeed a luxury, as the primary, alternate, and supplementary machinegun positions and individual foxholes had already been dug. In the full spirit of cooperation, the squad, in the course of one day, completed their little home. It measured approximately 8-ft. square with 6-ft. of head room. A roof was fashioned with logs 6-in. in diameter and 2-ft. of earth and stone. A trench was dug to the primary gun position; and then the entire work was camouflaged. When snow began to fall in early January, one could not detect the position from more than a few yards away. The squad home was furnished: a rug was placed over the straw which covered the dirt floor; a small coal stove was installed for warmth; a window was hollowed out of the bank for observation and light; and a small table and 6 folding chairs added that homey touch. One squad member would stand guard at the observation window while the others played cards, wrote letters, cleaned their pistols, or cooked rations on the stove. Should action present itself, the squad had only to crawl through their burlap door, along the trench, and into the gun position.

The Bn. I & R section dug three 6-ft. deep observation posts. All three accommodated four men, had log roofs, and were exceptionally well camouflaged. George OP was in G Co's sector and commanded a view of Merlenbach to the northeast and Hombourg-Haut and Hombourg-Bas to the west. Easy OP 1 and Easy OP 2 were in E Co's sector and afforded a view of the valley left of Hombourg-Haut leading up to the forest in F Co's sector. The I&R section manned George OP and Easy OP 1 every night from 1800 to 0800. Four riflemen aided the section in observing each night at both OPs. Since this put six men in each OP, two would sleep in nearby foxholes until their shift came due. On New Year's Eve the observers in George OP, one of whom was 1st Lt. O'Hara (2d Bn S-1), witnessed a 3-hr. German reconnaissance-in-force attack on the 411th Rgt. Jerry was trying to make his breakthrough. The 411th put up a stubborn resistance, yielding not one inch to the attacking forces.

S/Sgt. Joseph Kutansky of Chicago, IL, Anti-tank Ptl. sergeant, had his 57's act up in readiness on the outskirts of Guenviller. But the breakthrough, for which the entire battalion was thoroughly prepared, never came.

The January snow fell thick and deep during the first days of the new year. The men remained alert in their watch, determined to eliminate all element of surprise. Once a B-24 crew came floating down in parachutes after their plane had been knocked out. There was a great deal of uncertainty on the part of both the Infantrymen and the Air Corps men. The latter thought they had landed in enemy territory and the former had been persistently flooded with reports of German paratroopers. One airman found himself helplessly enmeshed in his chute, which had landed him in a tree. Three men with all due suspicion watched him struggle for a short length of time. Then one took a bead on him with a fully loaded carbine. There was no doubting the

nationality of the man in the tree when he threatened, "You shoot me with that damn thing and I'll come down and kick your . . .!"

On 7 Jan. 45 the 2d Bn. move by motor from Guenviller to Merlenbach was a welcome haven for the infantrymen. But the pleasures and comforts found in this somewhat modern town were to be short-lived. The 2d Bn. loaded onto trucks in the afternoon of 9 Jan. The trucks headed southeast into Alsace and back to the front from which these same men had been relieved some 18 days before.



By permission of Bill Mauldin and Wil-Jo Associates, Inc.

"Fire two more fer effect, Joe. I'm makin' a stovepipe."

6

MATTSTALL TO OBERSOULTZBACK

9 Jan. 45 to 21 Feb. 45

The 2d Bn. of the 409th Inf. Rgt. relieved elements of the 70th "Trailblazer" Div. during the night of 9 Jan. The Trailblazers had been holding a sector on the Maginot Line behind the bitterly contested town of Wingen. Detrucking at the Mattstall railroad station, after having ridden in open trucks 80 mi. through Lorraine and Alsace, the men moved out to take up the positions of the hard-hit 70th. The CP was set up that night in a chateau ¼-mi. from the railroad station. In the morning it was moved to the railroad station and, later that afternoon, to the town of Mattstall. All three rifle companies went on line at once. G Co. occupied the right sector, F Co. the center, and E Co. the left sector. F Co. was withdrawn two days later to the town of Mattstall and held in reserve; E Co. lengthened its line to the right.

Lembach lay in the beginning of a valley formed by two pillbox-blemished hills. From the positions of G and E Co's atop these hills could be seen the spire of the Church in Wingen, which was located 3-mi. northeast of Lembach. Directly behind G Co's hill was a group of barracks built for French garrisons occupying the Maginot dragons. A study of the elaborate underground bastions proved quite revealing. Pillboxes on both hills were connected to one another by a series of steel reinforced tunnels and underground railways. Living quarters along the tunnels were ample and roomy. There had been electricity and air conditioning in the network at one time. Some of the pillboxes and fortifications were employed by E, G and H Co's as observation posts, BAR positions and sentinel posts. The hills were dotted with miniature 2-man pillboxes which had steel doors. The larger structures were attainable only thru the underground passages.

The battalion was on the defensive as it had been in Lorraine, but the situation was much more active now. Enemy artillery harassed the troops. A short 88 barrage fell in Mattstall regularly for three consecutive days. Altho the shells landed in and near the main intersection of town, no casualties were suffered. G Co's 2d Plt. outposted the town of Lembach. Patrols were sent out above Lembach to the east and north. On one patrol, four G Co. men were wounded and one man fatally injured when the men walked into a mine field. T/Sgt. Weldon Mallette successfully led an F Co. patrol into Wingen to determine the enemy's strength and disposition. There was approximately one platoon of Germans in the town.

Word came to Bn. HQ. in Mattstall that the German offensive around Hagenau had gained in strength and that the salient formed by the 103d Div. was threatened with being cut off. To straighten out the VI Corps line, it was necessary for the Cactus Div. to conduct an orderly withdrawal 18 mi. south—to the high ground behind the Moder River. Maj. Hennighausen had ordered that not one article of GI equipment be left behind. The Alsations, rightly fearing that their liberators were going to leave them, probed the doughboys with questions. But their inquiries were met with silence, for the men either did not understand them or did not want to understand them.

The strategic withdrawal began at 2200 hours. The night had seen a heavy snowfall, and the roads were icy. The companies formed at the Mattstall railroad station. E Co. took the lead and was followed by F, Hq., and H Cos. G Co. did not pull out of Lembach until 0130. The march began, and so did the bitching. The icy roads made

it necessary for every man to walk rigidly balanced. This was an almost excruciating task for men with machineguns or mortar tubes on their backs, not taking into account every individual's pack and sleeping bag. The moon was bright, the snow glistened, and the night was cold and still. But that calm beauty may as well have been sordid ugliness, for there was none who cared to note it. Beauty now could be found only in rest, food and warmth.

After a few hours, men began to swear and fall out by the roadside for extra breathers. "Damn it! I can't go no farther!" But they would go farther, because they had to; and they did. The mumbling, cursing column stretched out endlessly for miles. During their periodic breaks the men would throw themselves and their equipment to the ground and drink up every moment of rest. But the breaks were constantly interrupted by tank columns forcing everyone off the road and into the deep snow. The tanks, having next to no traction on the icy roads, progressed so slowly that they would regularly be overtaken and passed by the infantrymen. Then, while the men rested, the tanks would pass them again. Irritated to the limit of their patience, the men would loose a vicious volley of derogatory remarks. The situation could not be favorably altered and the men and tanks telescoped each other the entire night.

The 2d Bn. moved on and on thru familiar towns and along familiar roads — familiar because less than a month ago these towns and roads were falling to the soldiers who now painfully retraced their course. Soon all this territory would revert to Jerry hands. It was disheartening. It was, in some respects, cruel. Some men cried to be giving up the hard-won, blood-drenched territory. Nevertheless, not one mind doubted that it was another step toward winning the war. "Hell, it's strategy!" To wage successful war, it is not so important to gain ground as it is to destroy the enemy. By eliminating the Lambach salient and straightening out the front line along the Moder River, there would be afforded more advantageous opportunity to destroy the enemy with heavy artillery concentrations and counter-attacks until it was time for the entire army to move forward. But thoughts of dead buddies still haunted them.

Slipping, falling, stumbling, the battalion continued on its night march. The paddle-feet were sweating under their loads. Backs ached and feet swelled. Men fell asleep as they walked; some wandered off the road or bumped into vehicles to be startlingly aroused from their unnatural slumber. Others slipped and fell asleep as they hit the ground. At 0800, the sun came out to shine dimly behind snow clouds. The men had reached their destinations. They were exhausted.

E Co. set up an outpost in the town of Kindwiller and dug in along the river between Pfaffenhoffen and the Bois de Zutzendorf (Zutzendorf Woods). F Co. secured its side of the Moder River by forming a line from Niedermodern to La Walck and in the hills above Pfaffenhoffen. In one day the men were back to normal. Their misery had changed to anticipation.

Two days later the advancing Germans met a brick-wall defense.

The route to the outpost in Kindwiller was completely open, offering no cover whatsoever. The men of the 2d Plt. of E Co. were supplied with rations and equipment under cover of darkness. Bitschoffen, which lay 2 mi. from Kindwiller to the east, was soon occupied by a battalion of Jerries; German patrols in white snow-camouflage suits frequented the vicinity of Kindwiller. One patrol was pinned down by the riflemen of the outpost and shortly after, annihilated by well-directed artillery fire. Sgt. Walter Ordenecki of G Co. led five patrols thru the outpost into what was rapidly

becoming Jerry-infested country. Each succeeding patrol met with increased enemy resistance. Meanwhile the battalion CP was set up in Schalkendorf, 4-km. (2½ miles) west of Pfaffenhoffen. G Co., which arrived in Schalkendorf 4 hrs. behind the other troops, was quartered in the town as reserve company.

On the bright moonlit night of 21 Jan., Kindwiller was subjected to a fiercely swift attack. The men at the outpost were hopelessly outnumbered. Kindwiller was in German hands. The front was now stable and definite. The Yanks and the Jerries were 2500 yds. apart. No Man's Land was level, open country.

A period of static warfare began.

The guns of the 382d Field Artillery Bn. boomed incessantly, day and night. The 614th Tank Destroyers knocked out the church steeple in Bitschoffen with 3-in. guns and .90 mm guns tore down the sturdy and prominent church steeple of Kindwiller. Both were suspected as being used for observation. Jerry was continually shooting white flares and desperately searching the night for the menacing American patrols which raided Bitschoffen and Kindwiller. When the weather was clear, the Jerries would suffer intense bombardment from the 8th AF and the British RAF. P-47's formed aerial merry-go-rounds to dive on Bitschoffen or Uhrwiller or Engwiller — all German-held towns north of Kindwiller. The ground for miles around would shake from the impact of the bombs. The raucous chatter of twin 5-cal. would be heard as the Air Corps men strafed German tank columns and infantry.

Then the Wehrmacht began loosing Neberwerfer barrages. These are rocket artillery which create a high-pitched ghastly wail which, after reaching their zenith, fall helter-skelter where they may. The effect of the Nebelwerfer is not so devastating as aimed artillery, but its psychological effect is much more demoralizing. Nebelwerfers are aptly referred to by the men who sweat them out as "screaming meemies." Corps artillery zeroed in on the foe. In due time, Kindwiller could not boast one undamaged house. The town was leveled almost to the ground.

• Maj. Hennighausen remained in his OP above Pfaffenhoffen the entire time the 2d Bn. was on line. The OP was the living room of a hillside house, which also served as the F Co. CP. Dug in 75-yds. to the left in a well-camouflaged OP, the I&R section added forward artillery observation to its' regular duties. Picking up enemy emplacements and activities thru a 30-power scope and reporting them suggested to this section a method for immediate action. In cooperation with the 382d FA, the intelligence observers reported all visible enemy activity and, as a suitable climax, brought artillery fire to bear upon such targets as horse-drawn guns and vehicles, Krauts digging in, and enemy OP's. The Anti-tank Plt. had its three 57's and both 50-cal. machineguns set up to the left of the town of La Walck, which was outposted by a platoon of riflemen. La Walck, north of Pfaffenhoffen, was separated from that town by a bridge.

A week elapsed. G Co. relieved E Co. Then the 1st Bn. relieved the 2d. The 14th Armored Div. moved into Pfaffenhoffen to further strengthen the line. The battalion went into regimental reserve in Buschweiler on 28 Jan. For 5 days the men rested and enjoyed showers in pyramidal tents on the outskirts of town.

The 2d Bn. then relieved the 3d Bn. and took up the defense line overlooking the enemy occupied towns of Nieffern and Mulhausen. G Co. dug in along the edge of the Bois de Zutzendorf while E Co. maintained a front on the bald, gentle slope of a hill to the left of the woods. The forward CP was established in the town of Zutzendorf, where F Co. rested in reserve. In Obermodern the rear CP carried on its problems of supply

and administration. An E Co. patrol to Nieffern ran into shoe mines, which are the simplest form of land mines.

Within 5 days, the battalion was back in Buschweiler. During this second stay, G Co., under the leadership of Capt. Roger H. Craddock staged a successful night raid on Kindwiller. Two days later, Maj. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, who, with the 101st Airborne Div. at Bastogne had answered "Nuts" to a German ultimatum, introduced himself to the battalion as the new Commanding General of the Cactus Div. He also commended G Co. for its success in the night raid.

The raid had been carried off at midnight on 7 Feb. Its mission: prisoners for interrogation. In planning the raid, coordination between the Inf. Co., the Field Artillery Bn., and a searchlight battalion was achieved. Capt. Craddock made visual land reconnaissance from the MLR and visual air reconnaissance from an artillery liaison plane. Direct wire communication from the artillery and searchlight battalions were laid up as far as the last OP in La Walck. From there communication men would lay wire with the company as it moved out. Kindwiller was blocked off into 4 preregistered artillery concentration sections. Concentrations 1 and 2 were the 2 sections at the east end of town. Concentration 3 was the area to be raided; and 4 was the west end of town. While the assault was in progress, concentrations 1, 2 and 4 would isolate the sections of the town not subject to the raid. A green flare set off by the infantrymen would be the signal for withdrawal. The platoons would leave the town and in 5 min., all 4 concentrations would be fired to cover the withdrawal.

Detrucking at Ringendorf, the company moved forward on foot and passed thru the La Walck outpost at 0100. Walking in thick slough, the men followed a planned route along the north bank of the Moder. Upon reaching the crest of a muddy slope, the skirmish line began moving left towards the town, having moved westward along the river. Reaching the fringe of town at 0225, Capt. Craddock called for one round of artillery on concentration 4 to mark the west end of town.

When the company was directly south of the town, the raiders jockeyed into position for the assault. Their weapons included hard-hitting M3's or "grease guns", Thompson sub-machineguns, BAR's, and percussion type grenades. The skirmish line moved forward, slowly, stealthily, in a silent stalking wave. Eyes were squinting and straining. Trigger fingers were tense. Success of the raid could not be dependent upon the element of surprise. Kindwiller had been raided before, and preparation by the Jerries for a recurrence was a certainty. Before the skirmish line had moved to within 50 yds. of the town, 2 Mauser rifles cracked. Tracers began to burn a path from the dark outline of the shattered houses. Jerry machineguns opened up and the hail of small arms fire grew thicker. The GI's advanced into the withering fire and answered it with vicious marching fire. Prier and copse growths and water-filled abandoned foxholes gave shape to somewhat of an obstacle course, but nothing could stop the raiding platoons which were pitched to the feverheat of battle. Concentrations 1 and 2 were called for. The fight increased in ferocity. The artificial moonlight of the searchlight battalion was brought into play. Artificial moonlight is a process whereby the yellow rays of at least 3 giant searchlights focus on a cloud and are reflected to the earth, lighting up any chosen sector for better observation.

Pvt. Earl Sprague fought a duel with a Jerry machinegunner. Firing at the flashes of the machinegun, he moved forward and returned burst for burst, constantly changing his position. He silenced the machinegun. Arthur Meyer flushed 7 Krauts out of the first house he came upon by tossing a grenade in the window. The assault continued

until 0321. Capt. Craddock ordered the artificial moonlight turned off and the green flare was fired. In 5 min., all artillery concentrations were fired to cover the withdrawal. At 0410 the first elements of the company checked in at La Walck. The others came in at 0530 carrying the wounded. During the withdrawal, stretchers were carried up to evacuate the wounded to Pfaffenhoffen where medical aid jeeps stood by. The 4th Plt. of G Co. was credited with taking all of the 9 prisoners brought back. 1st Lt. Henneke and 1st Lt. George F. Hoaglin did an excellent job of reorganizing the men who had lost contact with their squads in the din and confusion of the attack. At 0700 the company was in Buschweiler, where the raiders were given coffee and doughnuts.

On 15 Feb. 45 the 2d Bn. was once again taken out of regimental reserve, this time to relieve the 1st Bn. and re-occupy the familiar post-withdrawal defenses from Niedermodern to the Bois de Zutzendorf. Six more days of static warfare elapsed. Then, on 21 Feb., the 14th Armored Div. and the 410th Rgt. took over the entire sector from Niedermodern to Schillersdorf. The 2d Bn. moved back to the town of Obersoultzbach and remained in division reserve for 21 days.



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"Hell. When they run we try to ketch 'em. When we ketch 'em we try to make 'em run."

7

3D ASSIGNMENT—TASK FORCE RHINE 12 March 45 to 23 March 45

The 409th Inf. strategic Moder River defense in middle Alsace was climaxed by this regiment's 21 day rest period in reserve. The scene of this relief from nerve-racking static warfare, was a sleepy little village named Obersultzbach. Here, in the environs of Ingwiller, Bouxwiller, and Saverne, the 2d Bn. enjoyed the luxury of warm quarters in houses, occasional movies, music by the division band and 3 hot meals a day. A training schedule was inaugurated to keep the men from growing stale and to enlighten new reinforcements as to combat methods and discipline. The unpopular schedule called for map reading classes, close and extended order drill, infantry-supported-armor problems, pyrotechnic exhibitions, and lectures and discussions concerning the trend of the war throughout the world. During this interlude all GI equipment was brought up to S.O.P. efficiency, all T.O. duties were filled, and all supply problems taken care of. Obviously something big was in the offing. In the north the 1st and 9th Armies had opened a powerful offensive. The 3d Army had begun to push thru the Saar. And surely the 7th Army would subsequently launch a last Alsatian campaign. The seasoned 409th doughs fully realized the situation. It was rest . . . and wait.

Suspense culminated in operational undertone. March 12 brought long-awaited news to the battalion. Regimental Hq. had given the alert order for the beginning of a new offensive. The order was disclosed in a meeting of battalion commanders, and all relevant information was labeled "top secret." Only a few heads knew that the Corps' objective was to uncover and relentlessly penetrate the Siegfried Line, upon which success the attack would continue indefinitely to the northeast.

At 1115 hours on 14 March the battalion commanders gave this information to their company commanders and special staffs. The knowledge remained top secret. The important plans contained were these: H-hour and D-day — 0900, 15 March 45; and the 410th and 411th would launch a coordinated attack on their fronts, seizing the ground along the Zintzell River (to be Phase Line B). At this point, the 3d Bn. of the 409th would create a task force (Task Force Cactus) the mission of which would be to seize Climbach, 25 mi. north. The 2d Bn., fully motorized, would then follow the 3d Bn., relieving it at Climbach and passing thru it to attain Bobenthal, which lay across the German border.

The job of deciding what equipment was excess and the building up of ammunition and ration loads commenced. The Co. Cdrs. met at 0840, 14 March, to learn that their men, after orientation, would be transported in organics to Schillersdorf, 10 km. to the north. Everything was to go according to plan. Alternate plans were drawn up to meet any uncalled-for situation or emergency. The following paragraphs will show the success of these alternate plans.

Veterans of the Vosges Mt. and Alsatian campaigns once again felt the tenseness of entering combat, once again wondered if — this time — their numbers might be up. The general comment among them was, "Oh hell, here we go again!" The new reinforcements hardly knew what to expect. They almost eagerly anticipated what lay ahead. The battalion moved out.

In Schillersdorf the rumble and crack of the big guns and the chatter of machineguns were audible. Prisoners were being marched thru town back to the rear

in droves. Second Bn. GI's were eating the last hot meals to be served them for some time. George Co. feasted on Chicken-a-la-King.

On the next day, 16 March, the march order was received. The battalion moved on foot northward thru Mulhausen, past Uhrwiller, and then to the high ground beyond. Here, during the period of twilight, defense plans were made to hastily fortify the area. The battalion staff had set up its CP in Engwiller. Here were evidences that the Germans had been living in the basements. Small wonder — our artillery, the 382d FA, had been shelling this town constantly for the past two months. 1st Lt. Ethan Rives, the commo platoon leader, captured a portable Jerry switchboard which he found marvelously handy. It was no larger than a shoebox.

Morning, 17 March, came chill and moist. With it came the order to relieve the 410th Rgt. and to continue the attack. The battalion — with its commander, Maj. Hennighausen, and its S-3, Capt. Teitelbaum, at the head of the troops — moved out past roadblocks, thru a forest, across a swamp where the water was ankle deep, across Phase Line B, and into Gundershoffen. Dead Germans were strewn all about. Sobering the men on the march was the sight of a goodly number of GI's laying on the cold ground where they had fallen in the previous day's battle. Their corpses lined the sides of the road to Gundershoffen. The 410th had encountered vicious Nazi delaying parties — young Hitlerites whose ages ranged from 15 to 20 years.

In Gundershoffen the battalion, with F Co. in the lead, G Co. on the right, H Co. in direct support, and E Co. in reserve, awaited the Major's order to move out. On the right flank of the 2d Bn. was the 3d Bn. F Co's objective was Froschweiler. G Co. was to liberate the nearby town of Reichdorf. Between Fox and George Co's, Maj. Hennighausen and his party moved out in the direction of Froschweiler. With him were Capt. Teitelbaum, Capt. Beaucheman of the 382d FA and his radio crew, T/5 Hiram Burnie and his 300 radio and the 2d Bn. I & R Section.

Moving out in squad column formation, the companies covered 2 mi. of open country and 1-mi. of dense woodland to reach the outskirts of Froschweiler and Reichdorf. The Major set up an OP behind some bushes at the edge of the forest. In front of him was 500-yds. of open country and F Co's objective. Capt. Beaucheman set up a similar OP and prepared to direct artillery fire at the enemy.

George Co. was halted for flank coordination along the edge of the forest and formed a skirmish line. An unsuspecting Kraut nonchalantly, at sling arms, headed directly toward the rendezvous of G Co's 1st Plt. He was hailed at 50 paces, but instead of surrendering, he opened fire. 1st Lt. Leslie Dickson promptly tore him to shreds with 30-cal. MG bursts. A Jerry MG nest atop the hill then opened fire into the company area. 2d Lt. James H. Edwards, 2d Plt. leader, was wounded in the foot. The German machinegunners beat a hasty withdrawal when over 100 rifles opened up on them.

Later, the 1st Plt. of G Co. left the forest, crossed a clearing, and re-entered the neck of the woods at a stream. Here Pfc. Bruce Johnson, the Co. lead scout, surprised a Kraut washing his mess gear in the stream. The German, another fanatic, started for his rifle which rested some 15-yds. up the bank. He never reached it. Pfc. Johnson, S/Sgt. Robert M. Johnson, and Pfc. (now Sgt.) De LaNotta Sheftoll opened up on him with BAR and rifle fire. G Co. then jumped off in a successful attack on Reichdorf.

Meanwhile, G Co., undergoing a terrific artillery bombardment, swiftly gained the edge of their town — only to meet intense fire from a pillbox, which to all appearances was nothing more than another house. The camouflage was excellent. Methodically and in true Infantry style, F Co. soon occupied a complete section of Froschweiler. G

Co. was called in to clear the remainder of the town. Twenty-one prisoners were taken. F Co. suffered 15 casualties, not one of them being small arms fire victims.

In town the battalion CP was set up and plans were made for divisional Hq. to move in on the following day. Fox and George Co's went farther ahead to secure a bridgehead in preparation for passage of a task force. Up to this juncture roadblocks, blown bridges and mines had forestalled Task Force Cactus.

Now came another phase of the 2d Bn's role in the 7th Army's drive to clear the west bank of the Rhine. Early on the brisk morning of 18 March, with Maj. Hennighausen once again at the head of his battalion — this time on the road in advanced guard formation — the push continued. Company G took the lead with Fox, Easy and How Co's following in order. Just before passing Lembach on the Maginot Line, American P-47's dropped a load of bombs perilously close to the formation. Yellow signal panels were speedily displayed by Sgt. G. J. Flannigan and Pfc. Charles Greenfield. Their frantic haste saved the column from further bombing. No one was hurt.

The 15 mi. to Climbach, objective of the 3d Bn's task force, were covered on foot in less than a day's time. No resistance was encountered, altho it had been necessary to pass thru a GI mine field. This field had been laid by the 70th Div. above Lembach just prior to the VI Corps withdrawal in January and the Germans had not bothered to clear the field.

In Climbach, packed with troops and vehicles of all 3 battalions, the 2d Bn. CP was set up for the night. Five 105 mm. shells landed less than 700-yds. away from its location, wounding 6 men from Cannon Co. On the German border above the Lauter River, the rifle companies dug in and held the high ground in the Hardt Mt. past Climbach. One thought was pressing, one question preyed on everyone's mind: "Will we be good enough to crack that damned Siegfried Line?" This heretofore impregnable line of fortresses guarding all approaches to the Saar lay only a mile or two away. There would be no turning back this time.

At Climbach the 2d Bn. was placed in regimental reserve, but this was in no way an assurance of safety. Moving west of Wissembourg even men in Reg. Hq. were prey to Jerry mortar shells. In one barrage, E. Co. lost its commanding and executive officers. The former, Capt. John Stevenson, was killed outright; the latter, 1st Lt. Thomas McFadden, was wounded and hurriedly evacuated. 1st Lt. Henneke assumed command of the company.

With the entire battalion, including the CP and rear echelon, dug in reserve positions just south of the hamlet of Reisdorf, another task force was formed. In complete readiness, this task force waited for the 1st and 3d Bn's to clear Reisdorf and open a path for armor. Reisdorf was situated in the valley of 4 heavily defended hills. Hills C and D were held by the stubborn enemy. The plan now was to start the task force in coordination with the attack by the 1st Bn. on Hill C next morning. Security was set up around the armor of the task force.

Then, at 0600, 22 March, the jump-off came. The attack was on; and the breakthrough was a success. The tanks moved forward in furious reconnaissance by fire — blazing 50-cal. and thunderous 76's. The 4 days of painfully slow advances from pillbox to pillbox had at last become swift mobile warfare. The Siegfried Line defenses in the Hardt Mt. had been breached. The men were confident now — the impossible had become great reality and magnificent accomplishment. The 103d Div. was in the open in a sweeping avalanche of armor rushing toward Jerry rear-echelon.

The task force was called Task Force Rhine, symbolizing perhaps the eventual

goal of the armored force for which the task force was acting as pathfinder. It was made up of the 761st, colored Tank Bn., less one company, and the 2d Bn. of the Cactus Div's 409th Inf. The CO of the 761st, Lt. Col. Bates, was commander of the force, and the 2d Bn's Maj. Hennighausen was in command of the doughfeet. The men rode on top of the tanks, and after going a short distance, met vicious enemy sniper and machinegun fire. F Co. was soon held up by a gigantic roadblock consisting of felled trees reaching a width of over 3000-yds. While the 2d Plt. acted as a covering force, the 1st Plt. assisted the Engineers in clearing the road. The last tree was just being shoved to the side of the road when a concealed anti-tank gun opened up on the head of the column, knocking out a Sherman Tank. While the tank burned, more fire, including heavy barrages of 88's was poured in. All this time Col Claudius L. Lloyd, who was riding a tank with F Co. directed the troops under fire.

In a short while the road was open again and George Co. rode on to take the town of Birkenhardt. The rest of the task force assembled there to take off just after dusk. Task Force Rhine roared out of Birkenhardt deeper into enemy territory at 2000. With all guns blazing, they crossed the Jerries' MLR, which consisted of a 14-ft. tank trap, just after pulling out of town. From then on for the rest of the night, the force was in German far-rear-echelon. The 76's continued steady fire. The 50-cal. machineguns expended round after round and belt after belt of ammunition. And 37's from the light tanks played hell with Krauts dug in on the hillsides. On the outskirts of the town of Silz the tankers knocked out an anti-tank gun before the crew could get to their gun to fire. The gun was in position and with plenty of ammunition at hand, but the column had knifed thru the darkness so rapidly that the enemy was caught unprepared and pinned down in their holes.

The town of Silz was burning brightly from the fires set by the tank's guns. Often a Kraut would walk into the light of the fire to surrender. The force took 40 or 50 prisoners in this town, most of whom claimed to be cut off or lost from their outfit. One group of civilians found hiding in a cellar claimed that they were escaping French forced laborers. Others claimed to be Italians. One obliging doughfoot of G Co. forgot the war for a moment to help a screaming woman get her cow out of a burning barn before the roof fell in. Maj. Hennighausen himself, along with Pfc. Bruce E. Smith, ferretted 4 Krauts out of one house and got a P-38 for his trouble.

There was an end-of-the-world terror about the town: hellish fires casting weird shadows, screams of terrified civilians, and the groans of the wounded. Silz was in complete confusion and the task force met no serious resistance there; the Supermen all seemed very eager to surrender.

The task force zoomed on the Munchweiler. On a straight stretch of road just outside of Silz they caught up with a German supply convoy and plowed thunderously on thru it. Tanks ran over horses and men and the tanks' guns mangled trucks. Jerries ran screaming down the road with their hands over their heads. A later survey revealed the following carnage strewn out along the road for over 2 mi.: 25 trucks, five tracked vehicles, 10 cars, 12 kitchen vehicles, five 88's, two 50-mm anti-tank guns, twelve 37's, five 75's, one 170, 116 horse-drawn vehicles, 9 Neubelwerfers and 12 horse-drawn apparatuses for artillery. Uncounted scores of horses either lay dead along the road or grazed in the fields, puzzled at their freedom. The force had not run into any roadblocks, mines or blown bridges after the first tank trap since the enemy was trying to use the same route on which to withdraw.

The convoy halted just outside Munchweiler and a burning German ammo truck,

began popping out ammunition like a popcorn roaster, punctuated from time to time by heavier and more dangerous explosions. For a time this cut the column in two, leaving the supply trucks and the rear guard of the light tanks on the other side of the exploding truck. The supply trucks finally got thru to catch up, but the rear guard disappeared for the rest of the night. Three jeeps were dispatched to find them, and on their way back to the column they found that some Germans had moved down out of the hills after the task force had gone thru. With carbines and M1's, the jeeps shot their way thru about 100 Krauts. For the rest of the journey, these 3 jeeps acted as rear guard.

Prisoners were being picked up all along the way and the 3 gas trucks available for prisoners were packed to overflowing with Krauts. If the prisoners hadn't been quite as submissive as they were, they could have easily overpowered the guards, who were either perched precariously on the cabs or pinned in a corner on the trucks amid the teeming prisoners.

Just at dawn the task force reached its objective, the town of Klingenmunster. Considerable fire-fighting developed just outside of the town when a Panzerfaust opened on the congested column from the rear, but the guns of Task Force Rhine silenced the Panzerfaust before it could do much damage. The tanks and infantry moving in to take the town met with only a little sniperfire resistance. Then the town was in American hands.

After the first bold dash behind Jerry lines, the tremendous firepower of the tanks and infantry had discouraged very much of any resistance from German rear-echelon troops. The force had next to no casualties and had netted well over 100 prisoners. No one will ever know how many German casualties were suffered from the reconnaissance fire. Bodies of dead Supermen lay in the hills and fields all the way from Birkenhardt to Klingenmunster. About 15 mi. of chaos lay behind the task force when it came to a halt in Klingenmunster.

The 14th Armored Div. roared thru Klingenmunster later in the morning and cut northeast to the Rhine. The bleary-eyed, tired soldiers of the 2d Bn. settled down in their diggings satisfied and proud to know that they had cleared the way for this final push to the Rhine. They also had struck a heavy blow against the enemy in their own right and had aided in a large measure in closing the Palatinate pocket, in which the 7th and 3d Armies had trapped tens of thousands of German troops.

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"Fresh, spirited American troops, flushed with victory, are bringing in thousands of hungry, ragged, battle-weary prisoners..." (News item)

8

AMG PERIOD 23 March 45 to 20 April 45

In Klingenmunster on 23 March 45; the men of the 2d Bn., still restless with the amazing success of Task Force Rhine, settled down in their quarters for a 4-day rest. German prisoners were put to work salvaging equipment and clearing the roads and fields of wreckage. They went out in details under guard to bury dead horses. It was not surprising to see a 10-man detail go out in the morning and return to the PW cage in the evening stronger by 1 or 2 men. Jerry soldiers continued to come out of the hills in droves. Some would surrender themselves to the first American soldiers they came upon; others, a trifle dubious, would simply fall into a detail as inconspicuously as possible and work alongside their prisoner-comrades. GI's rode from place to place on captured bicycles. Many went horseback riding.

The order to move reached Bn. HQ on 27 March. Late the following afternoon, the companies loaded onto trucks for a 2½-hr. ride. Arriving in Maudach after dark, the battalion detrucked and marched to Mundenheim. Both Maudach, 35 mi. northeast of Klingenmunster, and Mundenheim, 2 mi. west of Maudach, were suburbs of the city of Ludwigshafen. The Cactus men relieved elements of the 71st Inf. Div. As the companies moved out to the Rhine River, the Germans threw in a mortar barrage. No one was hurt. It was the only barrage the 2d Bn. experienced during their watch on the Rhine. In the morning, Hq. Co. moved into Ludwigshafen, and Bn. CP was set up in an apartment building.

Ludwigshafen was situated on the west bank of the Rhine. It was an industrial city of some importance, but the factories and most of the large buildings had been destroyed by the effective saturation bombings of the RAF and the USAAF. The rubble which blocked the thoroughfares had all been cleared. The German people were very methodical in their recuperative efforts. On the opposite bank, directly across from Ludwigshafen was the equally large, equally industrially-important city of Mannheim. After 3 days of constant shelling by Yank artillery, that city was surrendered to the Americans by the Mayor. All members of the Wehrmacht had fled from the city in the face of the onslaught of the 36th "Texas" Div.

The Infantrymen lived in semi-luxury — there was running water in the apartments and the electricity was good; furniture was to be had, and there were radios. The non-fraternization policy of the conquering American armies, which had begun for the 103d in Klingenmunster, was strictly enforced.

There was no action in Ludwigshafen. Not a shot was fired by the riflemen or the heavy weapons men during the 4 days in which they secured their side of the Rhine. The 36th Div. had cleared Mannheim in short order. On the east side of the Rhine the Germans were swiftly retreating deeper and deeper into the Fatherland.

On 2 April the battalion moved westward away from the Rhine into Westphal. Each company occupied a different town. Bn. Hq. set up its centrally located CP in the city of Gruenstadt. G Co. was quartered in Harxheim. E Co. occupied Bockenheim. F and H Co's were situated respectively in Kindenheim and Obrigheim. The role of the 2d Bn. now was that of aiding the American Military Govt. Each town was outposted, and motor patrols made daily inspections of the neighboring towns and villages. In a short while each company had a day room and athletic facilities. The men drank beer, had their hair cut, played volleyball and relaxed in their leisure

time. Garrison duty took the form of road marches and close-order drill. There was evidence of snipers and saboteurs, but the hazard was slight and only served to keep each man alert at all times.

On April 7, the 2d Bn. entrucked and headed east once again. Passing thru the bombed out historic city of Worms, the infantrymen made an uneventful, but for that reason, interesting and enjoyable, crossing of the Rhine. The trucks rolled over the engineer-built Gen. Alexander M. Patch pontoon bridge. The swiftly flowing river was bright green. The German state of Baden, with its verdant hills, deep forests and picturesque farmhouses overlooking compact, highly cultivated fields was, except for an occasional burned-out vehicle, totally unmarked by war. The convoy rode on thru the early afternoon. The warm Spring sun was a tonic for the spirits of everyone.

At the end of 35 mi. of pleasant sightseeing, the men found themselves in a new AMG sector. The Bn. CP was set up in the town of Babenhausen. E Co. was billeted in the same town. F, G and H Cos. occupied the surrounding towns of Scharfheim, Dudenhoffen and Seligenstadt. The troops settled down in their new quarters just long enough to eat 2 meals, get a good night's sleep, and attend Sunday morning church services. The sector of the battalion was then changed and enlarged. The men hopped aboard trucks once more, this time for a 16-mi. ride northward.

White flags still waved from almost every house in every German town. In Alsace, tri-colors flew from the dwellings of each town as the liberating forces advanced. Now the Liberators were Conquerors and their successes were acknowledged by the waving of bed sheets, pillow slips and dish towels. The children waved white handkerchieves happily as the OD wave moved forward. Company G's destination was Bad Orb. Hq. Co. and E Co. detrucked in Salmunster. F Co. and H Co. rode on to the villages of Steinau and Gelnhausen. The Bn. was spread out for miles.

The men of G Co. lost no time in making themselves at home in the mineral bath resort town of Bad Orb. They moved into the town's best hotels and drank beer and champagne. Bad Orb was noted for its PW camp. Here, the SS troops had watched GI's of the ill-fated 106th Div. starve and die in over-crowded quarters and indescribable filth. The survivors had lost an average of 70-lbs. per man; their bodies were shrunken and yellow. The clothing they wore was that in which they had been captured during Von Rundstedt's offensive — snow pacs, combat jackets and pants.

Capt. Marshal G. MacBee, CO of H Co., found himself with more than a good share of business to attend to. In the town of Seligen, H Co. had the mission of guarding all vital installations in the area. There were, among other things, a canal-boat load each of barley and copper, a Jerry aircraft sub-station, a whiskey distillery, 2 breweries and 5 Wehrmacht hospitals (complete with patients, equipment and nurses). Closer inspection revealed 80 destroyed bombs; 7 trucks; a cache of machineguns, 80 mm. mortars and dynamite; a gas DP; a trainload of auto tires; an artillery ammo DP; and a OM supply dump of field ranges and dishes. What's more, German soldiers were bicycling around town in full uniform.

In Salmunster, 1st Lt. Henneke, commanding E Co., was faced with this problem: a Polish National who had joined the French Army, was captured by the Germans, and liberated by the Americans, wanted to know if he could marry a German Fraulein and take her to France to live. This was military government.

A daylight raid made by a platoon of E Co. men and a squad of Anti-tankers on the sleepy little town of Hausen disproved the report that the Wehrmacht had an arsenal stored there, but it impressed the inhabitants thereabout with the efficiency of the

American Army. It also showed T/Sgt. Claude Dugan what 3 Germans prized most in life. Ordered to level his 57 mm. AT gun at the home of these civilians, who were suspected of concealing "gewehr", Sgt. Dugan stood by awaiting either a confession or a fire order. Frantic at the thought, the first civilian — a young frau of not more than 23 years — ran into the house shortly to run screaming out with a baby in her arms. "Mein Gott!" exclaimed the second civilian, a middle-aged frau. She too ran into the house; and out she came with two huge feather pillows in her arms. Taking his cue, the third civilian — an old boy in knickers — dashed madly into the house. He double-timed out, his arms flailing in all directions, with a meerschaum pipe in his hand. The house was left undamaged after a thoro investigation by the troops.

The entire situation was the same as it had been in Westphal. The only threat to the safety of the troops was a lone member of the Luftwaffe who flew almost regular strafing missions over the sector at night between 1100 and 0100. His visits were so regular, in fact, that he was given the nickname of "Bed-Check Charlie." The slight damage he inflicted was negligible. The men were now becoming used to shined shoes, pressed uniforms and regular toilet habits. It was all a welcome change.

The battalion was alerted for movement to the front after it had been in this sector for 11 days. Transportation difficulties arose and the first move was cancelled. Part of the quartering party, which had moved out toward Neuenstein, returned. This was on the 20th of April. The remainder of the quartering party continued on thru Grab. At 0430 the next morning, the battalion set out to catch up with the quartering party and to subsequently catch up to the front.

By permission of Bill Mauldin and Wil-Jo Associates, Inc.



*"Them rats! Them dirty, cold-blooded, sore-headed, stinkin'
Huns! Them atrocity-committin' skunks..."*

9

FINAL PHASE 21 April 45 to 9 May 45

At 0430 on 21 April 45 the 2d Bn. formed a convoy at Salmunster, Germany. The vehicles making up the convoy were 28 "Ducks" (2½-ton amphibious trucks — DUKW'S) and five 2½-ton kitchen trucks. Riding on the Ducks was a new experience for the men. The amphibious vehicles were more capacious and much smoother on the road than the regular 2½-ton truck. Hq. Co. took the lead in the convoy and was followed by E and F Cos. Company G fell into the column at Bad Orb, and Co. H joined the convoy as it passed thru Gelnhausen.

Upon arriving in Oehringen, the battalion, under a change of orders, proceeded to Grab. The convoy was on the road the entire day traveling south thru Baden and east toward the state of Wurtemberg. Pulling into Grab at 1700 the battalion received another change in orders. This time the convoy would continue on to Haubersbronn. After refueling in Steinberg, the convoy arrived at Harbersbronn at 1730. Here, at a meeting of the company commanders, it was learned that the battalion would cross the Rims River. H, F and G Cos. were to occupy the town of Weiler, while Hq. and E Cos. took over Schlictern.

In the hills of Wurtemberg the weather was in complete contrast with the warm, balmy Springtime of Baden. Snow fell in Schlictern and Weiler. The following day, Capt. James D. Wimberly commanded a task force which captured the town of Ebersbach. Later in the afternoon the entire battalion moved to Jesingen, a suburb of the city of Kercheim. The continuous movement of the past 2 days had wearied the men, and a good night's sleep in Jesingen was welcome.

The battalion was alerted early in the morning of 24 April. At 0930 the companies formed on the road and began a foot march to Owen. Most of the distance to Owen was covered over a modern double-laned superhighway — Hitler's famed autobahn to Munich. Burned German equipment and dead horses littered the long, straight stretch of road. In Owen itself the ravages of war were in full evidence. The air was filled with the nauseating sweet smell of dead horses. Houses were still in flames, and the disgusting odor of smoke and burned powder mingled with that of the horses. Displaced persons — French, Poles, Yugoslavs and Czechs — wandered about overjoyed at their freedom.

A new change in orders reached the Bn. CP not long after it was set up. When the troops arrived in Owen they were ordered to drop their rolls and prepare for action. The 2d Bn. of the 410th Rgt. had been cut off and surrounded. The 2d Bn. of the 409th was to break thru to this battalion and relieve it. The 2d Bn., 409th, then moved by foot 1500-yds. to the town of Brucken. From here, F Co. scaled a steep mountain southwest of town moving cross-country with the mission of securing the high ground north of Erchenbrechtsweiler. G Co. moved out and crossed the Line of Departure at 1645. East of Erchenbrechtsweiler, F Co. met with small-arms and machinegun fire. Capt. Thomas P. White, C.O., was wounded along with two other F Co. men. 1st Lt. Stanley J. Schlossberg, F Co. Exec., assumed command of the company and silenced the enemy fire, which came from a forest 400-yds. east of town. Four prisoners were taken. Contact was made with the surrounded battalion. F Co. remained in the town as inner defense strength.

A counter-attack was expected at dawn. Companies E and G moved into the forest north of Erchenbrechtsweiler. The Bn. forward CP spent the night in that town, but the counter-attack did not materialize. The companies then moved south to Hulben where the Mayor, meeting the troops on the road, surrendered the town. At 0700 the Bn. rear and reserve moved into Hulben. The people were ordered to turn in all Wehrmacht equipment and in a short while the town hall was flooded with uniforms, machineguns, rifles, gas masks, knives, swords, bayonets and pistols.

Farther south in Urach the Jerries put up a half-hearted resistance. When the companies had taken the town the Mayor was immediately contacted and ordered to have the townspeople turn in all Wehrmacht equipment. German prisoners were held in the city jail. The entire battalion lost no time in occupying Urach and finding quarters. A task force formed by the 1st Bn. of the 411th Rgt. moved into Urach at 1700.

At 2300 the men of the battalion entrucked and moved out in a motor march to Geislingen. The long ride was cold and the men arrived in Geislingen stiff and sore.

Shuttle marches on 26 April brought the men to Bernstadt. From there Maj. Hennighausen and Capt. Teitelbaum moved to Gottingen where they obtained permission to move the battalion into the southwest corner of Langenau. After setting up all-round security, the men took a breather for the comparatively long stay of 2 days and nights. A great deal of territory had been covered in the few days following the departure from Salmunster. The 10th Armored Div. had been moving like a tidal wave thru southern Germany toward Austria. In 12 days the front had moved southward 306 mi.

On 27 April 45 the 2d Bn. crossed the famous Danube River and moved on to Nissingen. A night's sleep was followed by an early departure; a motor march which lasted the entire day and night. Whole columns of German prisoners were seen marching to the rear — unguarded! As the long motor column moved out of Wertemberg and into Bavaria, intermittent rain bothered the men riding in open trucks. An ME-100 at tree-top level attempted to strafe the head of the column, but was shot out of the air by the flak wagons of the 534th AAA. American P-47's chased it to earth where it crashed and burned. In the distance the mighty Alps were sighted.

The battalion finally halted in Altenstadt where the men snatched a few hours sleep. From here before noon on 28 April, the companies moved 5 km. to Schongau to secure a bridge-head south of the Lech River. The bridge had been blown out, but it was not impossible for the foot troops to cross the river on the debris of the bridge. This they did while the Engineers swung a Bailey bridge to the other side and paralleled the Bailey with a pontoon bridge.

On 29 April the battalion set out for the Alps behind the 10th Armored Div. and the 1st Bn. of the 409th. At 0230 the first elements of the column reached the beautiful city of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, scene of the 1936 Winter Olympics. The Bn. CP was set up and awaited orders to move. The troops remained with their transportation but the orders to move did not come during that night. Altho the entire battalion was prepared to move at a moment's notice, the night of 30 April was also spent in Partenkirchen. The reasons for the delay were blown bridges near the town of Mittenwald and a hold-up in the advance of the 10th Armored. The 382d Bn. was called into action to help clear the way.

The next move was to Mittenwald. Along the road, prisoners were straggling to the rear by the hundreds. Whole battalions of healthy, well-dressed Hungarian soldiers marched back. Then there were Jews who had been liberated from concentration camps. Their column was endless. They were cold, hungry and thoroly weakened;

their bodies were filthy and covered with scabs and traces of brutal beatings. They begged the Yanks for food and snatched pitifully at K-ration biscuits and cans of Corned Pork Loaf. One tall, wasted Jew stood by a bend in the road and waved to the soldiers and they rode by. He called out, "Why came you so late? Why came you not 2 years sooner?" In the Alpine town of Mittenwald the battalion was quartered for a night while the 1st Bn. (409th) fought to take Scharnitz, which was on the Austrian border. During the afternoon of 2 May the convoy moved thru Scharnitz into Austria and on to the resort town of Seefeld. Here F Co. was given the mission of securing the bridge across the Inn River in the town of Telfs, which lay on the floor of the Inn River valley. Eastward down the valley lay the city of Innsbruck. The importance of securing the bridge from Telfs to Pfaffenhaffen lay in the fact that, if Innsbruck was to be defended, it would be necessary to attack that city from both sides of the Inn River.

Company F, supported by 5 tanks, left Seefeld at 1930 and began moving down the mountains toward Telfs. The tanks moved slowly as the road was hardly more than wagon ruts. When the tracks on the 3d tank snapped, the other tanks bypassed it, and 4 men remained with it as security. Part way down the narrow mountain road, the lead tank broke a track. This was serious because the other tanks could not bypass it. It was impossible to roll the tank down the mountain, so F Co. continued down the steep mountain with only the bulldozer tank as support. Farther down, huge craters had been blown in the road. The dozer proceeded to fill the craters in, but the task promised a great loss of time. 1st Lt. Schlossberg, commanding the task force then received orders to continue the mission at any cost. Company F, now totally without armor support, moved on to the outskirts of Telfs, passing thru the town of St. Marie without searching it. Soon after, 2 Kraut prisoners were taken who said that a delaying force was ready to hold off any attack while the bridge was blown.

Lt. Schlossberg moved the company into town, set up a defense, and sent a patrol of 1 rifle squad and 3 engineers to locate the bridge and secure it. The patrol, led by S/Sgt. Philip E. Elbert, moved up to the bridge and found it guarded by 2 Jerry sentries — 1 at each end of the span. Sgt. Elbert told the first guard in German that the war was over. The gullible Kraut, after being disarmed, pointed out the location of the demolition charges on the bridge and actually helped the engineers disconnect them and dump the charges into the water. By this time, the guard on the other end of the bridge became aware of the situation and moved to the center of the bridge where he fired at the patrol. The shots brought more Germans to the bridge and a firefight developed. Fox Co. then moved out in assault formation across the town to the bridge. Two Jerry trucks were halted by machinegun fire from the weapons platoon. As the assault moved up along the river, the opposing forces withdrew. A defense was then set up to stave off any counter-attack. The bridge had been taken intact. Fox Co. then accepted the surrender of the towns of Telfs, Pfaffenhaffen and Oberhoffen. The mission was a complete success.

In the morning, Co's E, F and G and the Bn. staff moved down into Telfs. From Telfs the battalion made a 14-km. foot march to Zirl. Early in the evening of 3 May the battalion assembled in Zirl to load up in trucks and continue on to Innsbruck, which had been taken by the 409th 1st Bn. The 2d Bn. spent 2 restful days in Innsbruck and then moved by motor 16-km. eastward to the small town of Wattens. E Co. occupied the town of Tulfes. F Co. remained in Wattens with Hq. Co. G Co. was quartered in Ampass, and H Co. settled down in Volders.

At 0001, 9 May 45, the war in the European Theater of Operations was ended. Germany had unconditionally surrendered.

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"Damn fine road, men!"

10

REPORTS

**Blood ••• The Elusive Pants of Capt. Sahn ••• Mines
On to Berlin ••• Contented PWs ••• Surrender! •••
Kyle is Cool ••• Der Krieg Ist Fertag ••• The Last
“109” ••• Front Lines in Alsace ••• Knights and Robber
Barons**

BLOOD

The future looked pretty dark for Pvt. Sylvester Moreno of G Co., 409th Inf., when he caught a large piece of shrapnel in his left thigh. The 2d Bn. was moving fast into the Fatherland on the night of 22 March on a task force with the 761 Tank Bn., and when Capt. Stanley Sahn, Bn. Surgeon, started to work on Moreno by the light of a flashlight in a moving ambulance under heavy fire, the the wounded man had lost so much blood that his pulse seemed to have stopped. It took 1500 cc's of plasma to give Moreno even a little strength, but he had lost so much of his own blood that he didn't have enough red corpuscles to join successfully with the plasma. He needed whole blood. However, since the task force was a spearhead for larger units which would follow later, the roads had not actually been cleared and there was no communication or means of transportation to the field hospital in the rear.

But Moreno needed the blood badly. And so, at 0900 the morning of the 23d in the village of Klingenmunster, the task force's objective, Capt. Sahn asked Capt. Henri Beauchemin, Bn. Artillery Liaison Officer, to try to contact the field hospital with his radios. The message went from Capt. Beauchemin thru a tank radio to a Sad Sack Artillery Observation plane, and from the plane to Div. Artillery, to the Div. CP and finally to the field hospital.

In less than 2 hrs. Maj. LaRue, Exec. Officer of the 103d Div's. Medical Bn., pulled up in front of the 2d Bn's Aid Station in Klingenmunster on a bicycle with the whole blood. He had made the last half of the trip on a requisitioned bicycle as a sort of small task force all by himself. The Krauts had thrown up some roadblocks behind the task force which barred the major's jeep, so he had set off cross-country into semi-hostile territory with his precious burden.

After the Major arrived, Moreno became just conscious enough to realize that he owed his life to Maj. LaRue, to the pill-rollers of the 2d Bn. and to a long chain of Radio operators.

I hereby certify that I am familiar with the facts of this story and know it to be true — 1st Lt. Felix Y. Kazemba.

THE ELUSIVE PANTS OF CAPTAIN SAHN

Capt. Stanley Sahn's dignity ends abruptly at his waist. From there on down, whatever standard he maintains is directly accredited to Maj. Louis K. Hennighausen and 1st Lt. Charles G. Kepler.

*Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
"These are my own, my precious pants . . .?"*

It may seem odd for a major to dust off a chair just before a captain seats himself in it. But, when the major's trousers are at stake, it is a different matter. "Doc" Sahn — let it be known to all — is a man who has no pants to call his own.

In Buschweiler, France, at a party, the captain's pants were playfully cut off of him.

In Obersoultzbach, France, his one remaining pair of OD trousers suffered a more alarming fate. As he was leaving a party given in honor of a Red Cross donut girl, he fell into a manure pile. French manure definitely has 3 times the potency of American manure since the former is well seasoned with a winter's supply of bovine urine.

During the 2 months to follow, he wore a pair of the major's pants. In Wattens, Austria, after V-E day, he finally caught up to his personal effects and found among his things a pair of pinks and a pair of greens, but they were dirty. Reluctantly the captain entrusted his 2 pair of trousers to a 24-hr. laundry service. Lt. Kepler agreed to loan him his own pinks during these 24 hours. Two weeks elapsed. Lt. Kepler grew restless at the prospect of having his pinks worn thin.

Capt. Sahn is once again carrying out his duties in the major's pants.

We certify that we are familiar with the facts and know this story to be true. — RAS.

MINES

The men of the 2d Plt. of E Co., still talk of the heroism of S/Sgt. Edgar J. Otti, of St. Genevieve, MO, one dark night when the platoon was making a raid. As the platoon drew near to its objective the tense silence was suddenly broken by 3 explosions. Three mines had been detonated and 3 of Sgt. Otti's men had fallen wounded.

Disregarding his own safety, Sgt. Otti raced thru the treacherous darkness to administer first aid to his men. Just as he reached one of his fallen comrades, he too stepped on a mine. Once again, disregarding himself, he applied a tourniquet to his man before he turned to his own wounded foot.

I hereby certify that I am familiar with the facts and know this story to be true. — Pfc. John R. Fredericks/RKB.

ON TO BERLIN

Evidence of the fact that most Germans have resigned themselves to Allied occupation and defeat of the Wehrmacht is to be found in countless cities and towns east of the Rhine. Take this incident as an example: 1st Lt. Avel O. Henneke, commanding Easy Co. of the 409th Inf., was accosted in his military government duties by a German woman desiring a pass to Berlin. "But Berlin is not yet in American hands," ex-

plained Lt. Henneke. Almost scornfully the woman assured him that, by the time she reached Berlin, it would be.

I certify that I am acquainted with the facts and know this story to be true. — Pfc. Roy A. Swanson.

CONTENTED PW'S

What do you do when you're marching a bunch of PW's down the road at night behind German lines and suddenly you see a whole company of Krauts coming at you?

Pfc. Melvin Foes, of Great Bend, KS, and Pfc. Roger Anderson, of Valley City, ND, faced this problem on Task Force Rhine, with the 761st Tank Bn. The Cactus Doughfeet were detailed to march a sizeable number of prisoners back down the road to meet some supply trucks which were to follow the blazing task force. Foes had one bunch of prisoners out ahead and Anderson had a group of stragglers in the rear when the company of Supermen came down the road at them.

Foes couldn't think what to do — so he did nothing, and he and his PW's marched right by the Jerries without a word from either column. The Jerries must have thought the PW's were just another column and not noticed the GI in the rear; the PW's must have been just as well satisfied to remain PW's, since they didn't even mention to their comrades that they were prisoners. Foes continued on until he met some GI's who took the prisoners off his hands.

Anderson was not so lucky with his bunch of stragglers in the rear. The Jerries seized him prisoner and took him along with them, presumably to the Fatherland across the Rhine. A little later, however, the table was again turned when a jeep from the 42d Div. came upon the column. Anderson, now a PW guard for the second time, wearily undertook to get rid of his charges.

I hereby certify that I am familiar with the facts and know this story to be true. — Pfc. R. K. Bingham.

SURRENDER!

It's not only the shooting and the hand grenades that make for the success of a raid such as G Co. made on an enemy-held town one night. Planning and preparation are important too, and the communication problem is not the least consideration.

And so it was that 1st Lt. Ethan Reeve, T/5 Karl Morley, Pvt. John Bosgraaf and Pfc. Benjamin Anderson, all of the 2d Bn's communication platoon, laid 5-mi. of wire right past the boys in the foxholes up to a forward outpost the morning before the night raid. The German artillery knocked out the wire that afternoon tho, and T/5 Morley and Pvt. Bosgraaf went out to service the wire just before G Co. was scheduled to jump off. They noticed that an important bridge on the way to the Kraut town had been destroyed. It was after midnight; H-Hour had been set at 0130, and so the wiremen took it upon themselves to repair the bridge.

Going back out to the OP after they had repaired the bridge, they suddenly heard several cries of "Surrender! Surrender!" in an alarmingly unfamiliar accent. Some

Jerries had moved in around the OP and Lt. Reeve prepared his men for a fight. It turned out that the Jerries who were hollering, "Surrender" were merely interested in surrendering themselves. The commo men helped out G Co., one of whose missions on the raid was to get prisoners, by giving them 4 candidates for the PW stockade before the raid even started.

The communications men later helped out again by administering first aid to the wounded and by acting as litter bearers. It takes all kinds of people to win a war.

I hereby certify that I am familiar with the facts and know this story to be true — Pvt. Tople/RKB.

KYTLE IS COOL

The men of the 1st Plt. of E Co., always knew that S/Sgt. Elton L. Kytile was cool under fire, but they didn't realize quite how cool he could be until one time when Sgt. Kytile found himself pinned down by enemy machinegun fire far out ahead of his own lines. He awaited patiently until nightfall before he tried to get back, but then found that he could go neither forward nor to the rear. Some tank destroyer troops mistook him for a German infiltrating toward the American lines.

Trapped between the two lines, Sgt. Kytile calmly stretched out in a depression in the ground and wrote letters to his wife and family by the light of the moon. In the night the Germans moved back and in the morning his own outfit caught up to him. Naturally Sgt. Kytile was glad to see an officer who could censor the 3 letters he had written.

I hereby certify that I am acquainted with the facts and know this story to be true. — Pfc. Robert K. Bingham.

DER KRIEG Ist FERTIG

Perhaps the deciding factors in F Co's success in securing the vital bridge at Telfs were S/Sgt. Philip E. Elbert's German and a Kraut guard's gullibility. S/Sgt. Elbert, whose home is in Orange, NJ, was in charge of a patrol made up of men from the 3d platoon's 1st squad. Moving up to the bridge, the patrol found it guarded by 2 German soldiers, 1 at each end of the span. With unaffected nonchalance, the sergeant told the guard on his end of the bridge that the war was over. To disarm him he merely eased the Jerry's rifle off his shoulder. The guard, eager to cooperate, then pointed out the location of the demolition charges on the structure. The Engineers soon arrived to disconnect the wires, dump the charges into the Inn River, and thank the Jerry for his help.

I certify that I am familiar with the facts and know this story to be true. — RAS.

THE LAST "109"

As Infantrymen of the 2d Bn., riding in convoy thru Bavaria, passed by the smoldering remains of an ME-109 someone remarked, "That looks like the last dying dog." Fifteen minutes earlier the pilot had attempted a strafing mission on the long rolling column of 409th motors. He was met with 50-cal. machinegun fire from 534th AAA flak wagons; and 20 seconds behind him, 4 American P-47's made short work of sending him to earth in flames. The remark was significant, for the intonation was that the Luftwaffe was dead. This was 10 days before VE day.

As far as the 2d Bn. is concerned, the Luftwaffe had never been a serious enough threat to long worry the foot soldiers in their movements. In Bitschoffen, France, when two ME-109's dived on supporting artillery emplacements, S/Sgt. Noel M. Clute, of the battalion Anti-tank plt., riding his 50-cal. Mg mount cowboy style, shot one to the ground and sent the other limping home. Occupants of battalion jeeps and trucks have met with occasional one-plane strafings. But the Germans were so anxious to get away that they gave their targets nothing more than a bad scare. "Bed-Check Charlie" constituted a slight menace with his nightly missions over Bad Orb. In the long run the facts prove that the Luftwaffe has suffered more damage than it has wrought in its tangles with this battalion.

I certify that I am familiar with the facts and know this story to be true. — Pfc. Roy A. Swanson.

FRONT LINES IN ALSACE

From the foxholes where we stand guard at night we can see two towns. The name of one of them begins with a K and the town sits on a hill directly in front of us across a valley; the name of the other starts with a P and it is just to the right of us. Elements of one of our armored divisions occupy the town on the right. And about 1500 yds. in front, in K-town, are about a battalion of Germans. We can see the towns at night because they are usually lighted up by burning barns set afire by artillery.

In K-town there was a high church steeple that commanded a view of the entire valley. The Germans have a habit of using church steeples for artillery observation. And so, just to be safe, our TDs blew it down with their 3-in. guns. A few bricks still point skyward, but the enemy can't see much anymore.

Our two 57 mm anti-tank guns are dug in and camouflaged just below the crest on the reverse slope of our hill. They cover a road that runs out of the left edge of K-town, and across the valley in front of us to P-town. Our two 50-cal. machineguns are dug in on the crest of the hill and we have foxholes around our anti-tank guns. When we are not manning our guns or standing guard, we live in two farmhouses at the base of the rear slope of our hill. Riflemen are dug in all over the forward slope of our hill.

We have been holding this particular defensive position off and on, alternating with another battalion, for over a month now, ever since the trouble started up north. Here in Alsace there hasn't been much trouble and things are comparatively quiet. In this month the snow has melted and the days have become warm and bright. Our tactical air force comes often now. The other afternoon they bombed K-town right in front of us. Twelve of them formed an aerial merry-go-round, swooped down one after

another to release ground-shaking bombs. The town burned all night after that.

The melting snow has left a pond in the valley between us and the enemy. The water cuts down the possibility of enemy patrols at night, except along the road. And one of our 50's covers the road.

During the day we observe with field glasses from the attic of one of the farm-houses. When we occasionally see Germans moving around in the town ahead of us, a mortar observer comes up to the attic and directs fire on them, sending them back into the cellars. At night we have 4 guards out on the hill, 2 on each gun, as listening posts. We stand in a foxhole that is partially covered with logs, dirt thrown over the logs and camouflaged. We stand 2½-hours at a time.

You hear strange noises and see peculiar sights at night. The other night our artillery observers must have spotted some activity on the road behind the enemy town because they let fly a barrage of time-fire that burst in the air over the target. Some of it burst short, right over us, and we had to get down in the hole. There was some muttering about war workers coming to work with hangovers and adjusting the fuses sloppily. They also fired a barrage of phosphorous on the hill to the left of the enemy's town. Phosphorous rounds burst in a fountain of white light that looks like July 4th pyrotechnics. They light up the whole countryside and if a spark of burning phosphorous falls on enemy troops, it burns right thru their clothing very painfully. We could hear Teutonic groans for several hours after the barrage. Both sides fire flares all thru the night that illuminated the lines with a ghostly white light. If you are caught standing up when a flare goes off, you must freeze immobile in your tracks, as a moving shape is easy to pick up; whereas a statue is almost impossible to detect in the short time the flare is lighted.

The enemy doesn't have much artillery here, and almost all of the steady pounding that goes on day and night is the work of our 81 mm mortars, 105's, 155's and 4.2 chemical mortars. But just after dusk one evening when most of the rifle companies were coming out of their holes in shifts for their evening hot chow and mail, Jerry treated us to a rare serenade. It started like a dozen fire-wagon sirens, and an appreciable concentration of fire fell in the town on our right. Some said they were "Screaming Meemies" and others shook their heads and said the Germans must have a new V-weapon. A few houses were burned, but no one was hurt so far as we know except a little Alsatian boy in our house who tried to run between a bulky T/Sgt's legs when we were all stampeding for the cellar. He skinned his knee. The actual effects were no worse than artillery, but psychologically, it was terrific. The screaming and shrieking made us imagine all sorts of horrible things. It sounded as if the whole front were opening up. The corps concentration of artillery we gave them for an answer was somewhat less spectacular, but probably much more telling in the long run. At least we haven't heard from the rocket guns since.

Most of the activity is limited to a continuous and one-sided artillery duel and to patrols at night. We send out reconnaissance patrols of 4 or 5 men and battle patrols in forces as large as a rifle company to harrass the enemy in towns.

One of the most difficult tasks for our guards at night is to decide which noises are serious enough and close enough to warrant alerting the rest of the men sleeping in the houses. Some of the more nervous in our number come running down to the house breathlessly every time a mortar round bursts in the enemy's town ahead of us. We get out quickly at every call, and we never chide the guard who calls us, even if the noise he heard turns out to be only one of our own jeeps and not an enemy Panzer Div.

moving up. Better to get up for 1000 false alarms than to sleep thru one real attack. The Germans in K-town have a habit of doing something with a horse and wagon, probably bringing up supplies, every night. We're usually out for that. And we occasionally get out of our sleeping bags to listen to Jerry who, inspired by an ample ration of schnapps, has begun to fancy himself something of a Superman after all and courageously hollers abuses at us across the valley. It's all in a day's work.

But last night, right after a little German mortar barrage, we had a real scare. At about 2100 in the P town on our right, about 2 light 30-cal. machineguns, a few 50's and numerous M-1's and carbines started firing furiously. It was less than 1000 yds. away. Some of us had already taken off our shoes (we hardly ever permit ourselves the luxury of removing our trousers) and were either in our sleeping bags or lying on top of them, with a blanket over us. But in a matter of seconds after the fire-fighting began on our right, we were all out in our holes, clenching our weapons, our pockets loaded down with hand grenades. We didn't hear much return from the Germans and so it sounded to us like a night attack, in which the attacking force seldom fires its weapons for fear of giving away its position. They come in stealthily with knives, bayonets and grenades. A night attack seemed especially plausible to us after the mortar barrage; they don't often fire mortars at night. We had several new replacements, or "reinforcements" as Gen. Eisenhower prefers to call them, and they were quite upset. We all were. The firing continued at a tremendous rate, machineguns, rifles and an occasional grenade. We peered anxiously into the darkness, expecting the first elements of the attacking force to emerge out of the gloom momentarily. One man on the right flank thought he saw it and fired his M-1. None of the rest of us could see anything to fire at and we couldn't fire indiscriminately into the riflemen on the forward slope ahead of us. The lieutenant phoned battalion, but they didn't know what the firing was. Eventually the firing subsided and after an hour or so most of us went back down to the houses. We didn't take off our shoes that night, and what fitful sleep we did get was full of bad dreams.

Today we heard a rumor that Army HQ had set up a truck-load of T-5's to make a phonograph record of automatic weapons in a fire-fight at night.

Pfc. Robert K. Bingham.

KNIGHTS AND ROBBER BARONS

For a while it looked as if a 20th Century American blitzkrieg was going to be slowed down by a German 12th Century fortification. Landeck Castle may not be part of the Fuhrer's Siegfried defenses, but its commanding position atop the highest and steepest hill near the town of Klingenmunster made it a serious threat to the Americans attacking the town. The Americans in question were the colored and white soldiers of the 103d Div's hard-hitting Task Force Rhine, which was made up of the 761st colored Tank Bn. and the 2d Bn. of the Cactus Div's 409th Inf. Task Force Rhine had smashed ahead all thru the night, the infantrymen riding on the tanks, deep into Jerry rear-echelon — and just before dawn the task force reached its objective, the town of Klingenmunster.

To chase the enemy out of Landeck Castle, which commanded a view of the whole valley into which the task force wanted to move, Maj. Hennighausen, Bn. CO of the infantry, dispatched Lt. James R. Holmes and his 3d Plt. of E Co. The doughboys

started up the hill toward the castle just as dawn was breaking. Back in the middle ages the robber barons of Klingingen had lived in the castle on a hill and waged war down on the countryside from their excellent defensive position. But the Barons of Klingingen couldn't have been any more disagreeable than the 20th Century Nazis, who defended the castle against E Co's 3d Plt. They were a treacherous lot.

The whole platoon had passed by the body of one Kraut before the platoon guide, S/Sgt. Fred Sytsma got suspicious. He covered Pvt. Nolan Brown, while Brown investigated. After a good swift kick where Brown thought it would do him the most good, the "corpse" suddenly came to life and sprang up to use the rifle he had concealed under him. Sgt. Sytsma was ready, however, and he placed an M-1 slug between the eyes of the Kraut in such a way that he no longer had to pretend to be dead.

The hill seemed to go up at about a 90 degree angle, and the wily Krauts tossed down boulders as well as handgrenades on the advancing platoon. The defenders had scattered snipers liberally thruout the woods. And further to add to the difficulties, some of their comrades down in the valley who didn't know quite where Lt. Holmes' platoon was in the darkness, and who thought they had seen some Germans at the base of the hill, took a few shots at the heels of the platoon as they moved up the hill.

In the words of the platoon sergeant, T/Sgt. Danny Shea, this is how the hill was taken: "I took two squads up the hill on the left, while Lt. Holmes, Sgt. Sytsma and the rest of the boys sneaked up a defiladed approach on the right and surprised the Krauts." Forty prisoners were taken, including a Lt. Col. and several junior officers.

When Lt. Holmes was lining up the prisoners, one treacherous Superman suddenly pulled out a "Burp Gun" which had not been noticed in the half-light of dawn and started belching slugs right over Lt. Holmes' head. But Lt. Holmes is pretty quick on the draw himself, hailing from the plains of Texas, and he finished the Jerry with his carbine before he could do any damage.

Sgt. Sytsma says "I kick every corpse I see now and search every PW we take twice after that deal."

Landeck castle is about 800 years old, and the 3d Plt. claim they have taken the oldest pillbox in the Siegfried Line.

I hereby certify that I am familiar with the facts and know this story to be true.

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*"I coulda swore a couple krauts wuz usin' that cow fer cover,
Joe. Go wake up th' cooks."*

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"Th' hell this ain't th' most important hole in th' world. I'm in it."