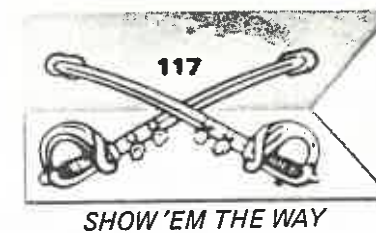


The Operational History
of the
117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.)
World War II



2d Printing
January, 1983
3rd Printing
November, 1983

We thanked the children and the nuns and promised that the American Armor Cavalry would not forget them. Neither we did and sent an ample supply of food each month until the end of the war and upon our return home.

Essex Troop continued to support the Italian Orphange until 1957 when it was abandoned.

Prior to loading various ships with the heavy equipment of the Squadron, I had an opportunity to visit the ruins of Pompeii where the attached sketch was made for the equivalent of \$1.00 in American Military Script. I believe it is a very good likeness for the times, at least everyone who saw it thought so.

The ruins were quite interesting and spent the good part of the day looking over every part of the ruined City.

That evening, I drove to Sorrento which is situated on a Mountainside overlooking the Bay of Naples. Fortunately, located a quaint and small Hotel called the "Lorelie" which was situated at the edge of a cliff directly over the Bay. The owner formerly lived in Brooklyn and he was honored that an American Major located his Hotel.

He and his wife went all out to prepare a most superb dinner which included soup, salad, fish, French fries and Lobster. He dug up some very special wines and the owner's wife whipped up the most delicious Italian pastry.

The dinner was served on the outdoor patio with candle light. My thoughts were far removed from the War and the impending invasion of Southern France. It was a night indeed to remember!

Upon returning to our bivouac the next day, I received the attached letter from Captain Thomas P. Kennedy, Master of the S.S. Grenville M. Dodge, the Ship we sailed on from North Africa to Naples.

Chapter VII

The Campaign In France

1944

Ref No. H-84

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

Auth: CG Seventh
Army

Copy No. 72

HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH ARMY
Office of the Commanding General
APO 758 US Army

Initials:

Date: 6 Aug 44

6 August 1944

Soldiers of the Seventh Army:

We are embarking for a decisive campaign in Europe. Side by side, wearing the same uniform and using the same equipment, battle experienced French and American Soldiers are fighting with a single purpose and common aim -- Destruction of Nazism and the German Army. The agonized people of Europe anxiously await our coming. We cannot and will not fail. We will not stop until the last vestige of German tyranny has been completely crushed. No greater honor could come to us than this opportunity to fight to the bitter end in order to restore all that is good and decent and righteous in mankind. We are an inspired Army. God be with us.

(s) A. M. Patch

(t) A. M. PATCH

Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding

Reproduced by:

HQ, USAT "MARINE ROBIN"
Office of the Troop CO
13 August 1944

TOP SECRET

Strike The Underbelly

Operation "Anvil"

Seventh Army - Aug. 15, 1944



LT. GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON WITH LT. GEN. ALEXANDER M. PATCH
 "... The Seventh Army was to take the offensive again under a new commander ..."

OPERATION ANVIL

The overall plan for the crusade in Europe and the ultimate smashing of the Nazi war machine called for an invasion of Southern France and a drive northward that would eventually link the forces of Seventh Army coming from the south with the Allied Armies which by August, 1944 had broken out of the Normandy Beachhead across France, Belgium and Germany. This was OPERATION ANVIL, an amphibious invasion on the southern coast of France. Some weeks before the invasion, it was felt the Code name ANVIL had been compromised and the operational code name was changed to DRAGOON. The invading force was Truscott's VI Corps. On 29 June, 1944, Captain Omar Brown brought from Headquarters, Fifth Army orders assigning the 117th Squadron to Seventh Army for attachment to VI Corps. Hodge was ordered to move the squadron to Naples. Brown was sent ahead as an advance party. At 0300 the following day, the troopers broke bivouac North of Rome and headed a convoy of wheeled vehicles towards the port city. Troop E and Company F convoyed the track vehicles to Civitavecchia where they were to load on LST's for a water move to Naples. A 270 mile motor move South brought Squadron Headquarters and the troops to Teano, a village 47 miles north of Naples where VI Corps ordered the 117th into bivouac. First order of business was motor maintenance and it continued for three days as the Squadron worked to put its battle weary tanks, armored cars, jeeps and other vehicles into shape for the future operations. Troop E

During the stay at Teano officers and enlisted men received their first passes since coming to Italy. Intensive training for personnel replacements, cross country marches for all personnel and inter-troop athletics were conducted during the Squadrons stay at Teano. A villa at nearby Formia was opened. Meanwhile Hodge, Omer Brown, and several non-coms moved into the "Blockhouse" in Naples where Truscott's staff was planning OPERATION ANVIL. It was here that the Squadron officers first met Brigadier General Frederic B. Butler, the assistant corps commander who was to command a task force in Southern France which was to win wide acclaim for what was probably the outstanding cavalry type operation of the entire war. The task force was to take its commanders name and its principle component was to be the 117th Squadron. Hodge and his staff devoted most of their time planning the operations of Task Force Butler. The story of Task Force Butler and the part the 117th Squadron played in that operation is a chapter in itself. *well why not a chapter?*

Operation Anvil was to be a three division assault on a stretch of beach extending from Theoule sur Mer, midway between Cannes and Frejus, and Cap Benat, some 16 miles east of Toulon. The coast in this area is rugged with high rock formations separated by extensive sandy beaches over which the Allied Forces would attack. The divisions involved were the 36th, a Texas National Guard Outfit that had been battle tested in

Generally the ANVIL plan called for Corps to invade with the 36th Division on its right flank moving over beaches in the area of St. Raphael. The 45th Division in the center of the Corps would move in over Ste. Maxime beaches and the 3rd, on Corps's left flank would hit over the beaches in the vicinity of St. Tropez. H-Hour was 0800, 15 August. It was to be preceded by two hours of the usual air and naval bombardment. By early Summer of 1944, the Mediterranean Sea had been swept clear of German Naval units and the Luftwaffe had been rendered almost ineffective in this area. This permitted the ANVIL planners to concentrate on the ground action and assured no interruption by enemy sea or air action. Once ashore, of course, the Allied Forces could expect some enemy air attack. The plan also called for dropping a provisional airborne division in the vicinity of Le Muy at 0400 on D-Day, four hours before the beach landings. There was to be an early link-up between the airborne units and the beach assault force. First contact between the two was made by units of the 117th Squadron late in the afternoon of D-Day. The VI Corps invasion plan differed from the Normandy invasion in that it called for reconnaissance units to land with the first infantry to go ashore and to move out in as a screening force for the infantry as soon as possible.

The terrain inland of the invasion area was rough and mountainous with heavy forests and few first class roads. The valley of the Argens River was generally fertile and here were found lush French farms and vineyards and orchards. The defense of the area was the responsibility of the German XIX Army. It was estimated to have 12 divisions available, several of them divisions which had been seriously cut up in the Normandy operation and had been moved to Southern France for periods of rest and reorganization. There were estimated two of the divisions were Panzers, one of these proved to be the 11th Panzer, elements of which were to first confront the 117th Squadron in the critical Montlemer action a few days after the landings. The first effort of the invading force would be to push far enough inland to put the beachhead out of the range of enemy artillery.

Italy and which carried the bitter memory of the disastrous Rapido River crossings; the 45th, a Guard division from Oklahoma and adjoining states; and the 3rd, a Regular Army Division. The operations plan called for the attachment of a reconnaissance troop of the 117th to each division. Troop A went with the 36th, Troop B to the 45th and Troop C to the 3rd. To each troop was attached a platoon of the squadron's tank company and a platoon of its Assault Gun Troop. The three troops, with the attached platoons, moved into the areas of the divisions to which they were attached and trained with the divisions for the weeks before loading out. Headquarters and Headquarters Troop remained in the bivouac at Eano until time for loading aboard assault craft. Elements of the Squadron's medical detachment were broken down and accompanied each of the recon troops. While preparing for Anvil, Troop E received new self propelled 105 mm howitzers, M7, to replace the lighter 75mm howitzers with which they operated in the Italian campaign.

Omer Brown moved from the Squadron staff to command of E Troop, taking over from _____ . On 12 August, elements of the 117th were aboard landing craft and attack transports the Squadron commander with Warrant Officer _____ Fort were aboard the Barnett, one of the two command ships for the invasion. On 13 August, the convoy was formed and sailed from Naples, passing through the straits of Corsica and Sardinia the following day. Before dawn on 15 August, the Armada dropped anchor off the coast of Southern France and with the first light of day, the naval and air bombardment commenced. At 0800, the initial assault wave of Truscott's VI Corps hit the beaches and moved inland against light opposition. First unit of the 117th to land was B Troop which went in with the 45th Division at H plus 17 minutes. The troopers moved inland screening the advance of the infantry. The Navy's demolition units were not able to break the undersea demolitions in one area and the 3rd Division was forced to go ashore at an alternate point near St. Rafael. Troop C was ashore by early afternoon. Meanwhile Troop A, with the 36th Division, was encountering fierce opposition and made limited advance on D-day. The following day, however, it screened the move of the 36th Division to

4
Le Muy, making contact with elements the _____ Airborne Division. Troop C was on left flank against slight enemy resistance. Troop B on 16 August was moving northwest, and it also found little enemy opposition. On 17 August, the entire Squadron was ordered to Assemble at Le Muy and Task Force Butler became a reality.

After Colonel Leo V. Warner joined the headquarters in July, 1944, as Deputy Chief of Staff, all General Staff positions remained unchanged throughout the Seventh Army's campaign into France and Germany except that of A. C. of S., G-5. Colonel Gerry was called to higher headquarters in October and was replaced by Colonel John J. Albright. Shortly thereafter Colonel Albright went to the 36th Infantry Division and on 4 December 1944, Colonel Joseph L. Canby became A. C. of S., G-5. Colonel Canby held the post during the remainder of the operation and well into the occupational period.

Two days after his appointment, General Patch was briefed on all planning which had been accomplished to date. He was able to inform his staff, as a result of conferences with high military sources while en-route to his new assignment, that in principle ANVIL had definitely been approved by the War Department and would enjoy a second priority in the world-wide operations of United States forces. He urged each officer to exert his best efforts for a successful completion of this major mission.

Basically, the Appreciation and Outline furnished Force 163 by AFHQ remained the governing plan. It was still envisaged, at the time General Patch assumed command, that ANVIL forces would invade southern France in conjunction with OVERLORD, establish a bridgehead, and subsequently exploit toward Lyon and Vichy. The target date was early June, although nominations of American and French components in the operation were yet undecided and would continue to depend on the progress of the battle in Italy. More imminent was the fact that an Outline Plan, coordinated with Naval and Air Task Force commanders, was to be submitted for AFHQ approval by 15 April.

Target Date Changes

Through the months to come, the original recommendations for the assault area as formulated under General Davidson were to remain intact. During March, conferences were held with the Air Corps and the Navy to discuss such matters as the employment of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, pre-D-Day bombing, the organization of the

Part 1. Invasion of Southern France

The invasion of Southern France by the American Seventh Army commanded by Lt. General Patch really started on the 8th of August 1944 with the loading of Allied Troops in Naples Harbor and other nearby Ports.

Elements of the 117th Mecz. Cavalry Squadron less those Troops assigned to the three Assault Division, boarded the S.S. Marine Robin at a quay in Naples. The three reinforced Reconnaissance Troops loaded the same day with the Assault Troops of their respective Infantry Divisions.

The entire attack convoy was fully assembled on the 13th of August 1944 and put out to sea. It was an enormous armada of every type cargo and landing ship fully protected by Naval Ships of Britain, France and American Navies. Our course took us through the straits between Corsica and Sardinia and by 4 AM the 15th of August 1944 "D" Day, we were in battle position just beyond the Horizon from the coasts of Southern France. See Map attached showing Assault Forces.

At the first light of dawn, a huge Allied Air Armada opened the preparatory attack of hundreds of heavy and medium bombers, then followed by Fighter Bombers and strafing fighters which altogether laid down a most devastating bombardment which left the German defenders in a great state of shock. This attack immeasurably lessened our casualties when we hit the beaches at "H" hour of 0800. Just prior to the assault landings, the Naval Ships raced in as close to the shore as possible and laid down another devastating barrage which was lifted only seconds before the first assault waves hit the beaches.

The landings took place at three different major areas. Troop "A" landed on Green Beach in the vicinity of St. Rafael and met the strongest and most determined enemy resistance. In fact, very little progress was made the first day and by nightfall, Troop "A" outposted the elements of the 36th Infantry Division.

At the center of the assault on Yellow Beach near St. Maxime, Troop "B" landed with the first assault wave of Infantry from the 45th Infantry Division. The air and Naval Bombardments were so effective, that the Germans had withdrawn a considerable distance and Troop "B" met only limited enemy resistance.

In the meantime, Troop "C" landing with the 3rd Infantry Division on the left flank of the assault hit the Beaches in the vicinity of St. Tropez. The Enemy resistance was determined but soon folded and the American Troops aggressively advanced.

Squadron Headquarters aboard the S.S. Marine Robin, loaded onto L.C.I's, small landing craft and we approached Yellow Beach at St. Maxime at about "H" Hour plus three, and had to wade

in water five feet deep. I held my equipment and gun over my head and soon were on the Beach where we quickly moved inland under cover.

Strong outposts were maintained at night while our Headquarters developed communications with all elements of the Squadron. There was a strong exhilarating excitement among our Staff in making a successful assault landing on "D" Day. It was a great comforting feeling of relief.

On the second day, all of the Reconnaissance Troops advanced inland with "B" Troop in the center making the greatest progress. Troop "A" and the 36th Infantry Division attacked strongly and the German resistance gave ground. By nightfall there remained little doubt of the successful Beach assault of the American Seventh Army against now identified, the Nineteenth German Army.

The French Army, fighting for the first time as a separate unified command, attacked Marseilles and liberated this great Port City after several days of difficult fighting.

The casualty losses for the Squadron in two days of fighting were three killed and twenty wounded. Included was Lt. James Shenk who was seriously wounded with a bullet two inches from his heart. Jim was to return to the Squadron within six months and I was, after the War, to serve as God Father to his first child, Susan.

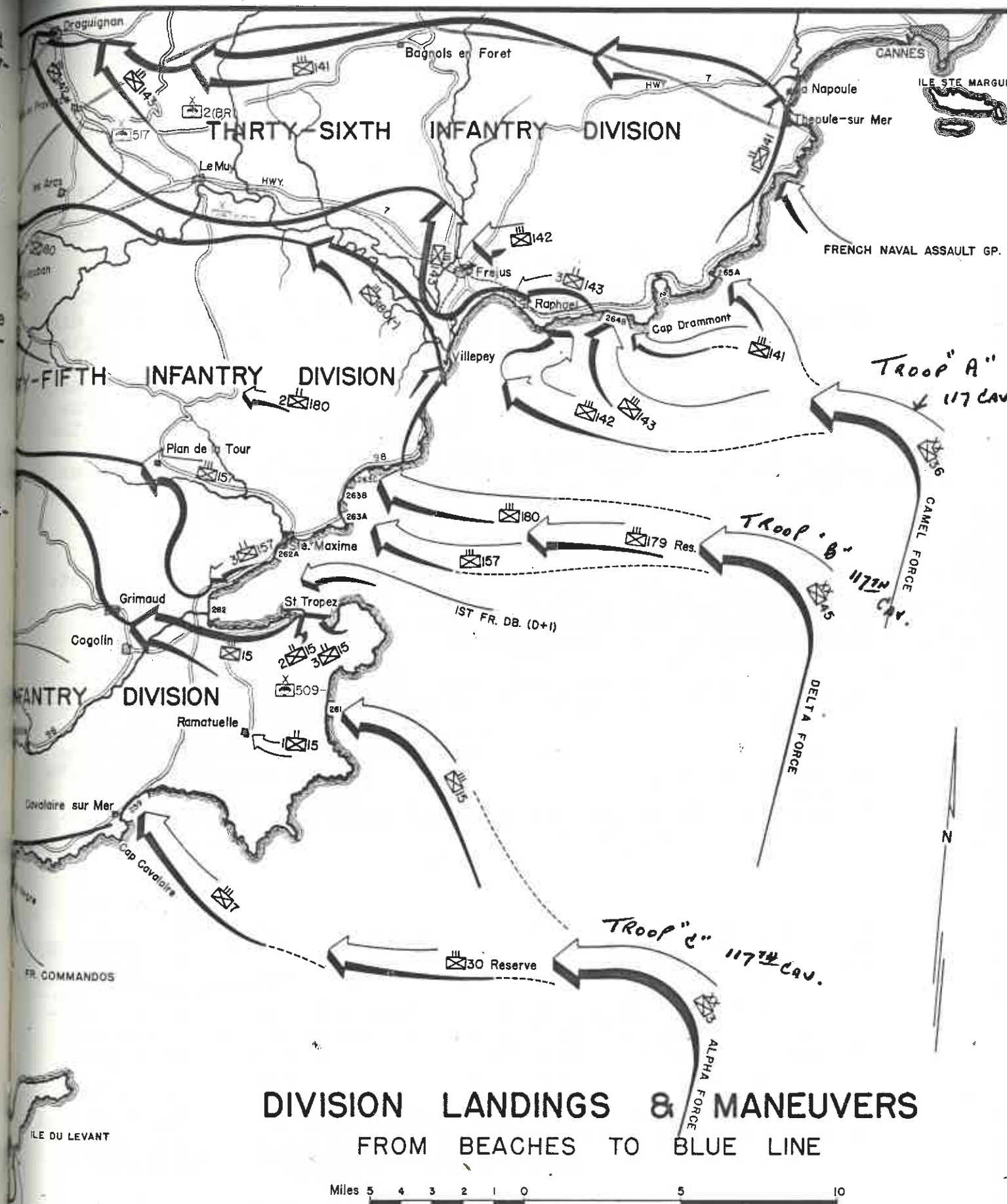
On the third day of the invasion, orders were received from the Seventh Army to assemble the entire Squadron in the vicinity of Le Muy France, which is situated about thirty-five miles inland from St. Maxine Beach where we had landed.

This group was designated "Task Force Butler" and its Mission was to advance aggressively toward Sisteron, France, (fifty miles northwest of Le Muy) and thence either;

- Seize and hold the high ground north of Grenoble, or
- Seize the high ground immediately south of Lyon astraddle the Rhone River, or
- Advance to the high ground on the East Bank of the Rhone River between Montelimar and Livron.

General Butler, superimposed his small Staff on that of the Squadron Staff for means of tactical control, operations and communications. I became Operations Officer for the Task Force and the General and I hit it off exceptionally well. He was my type of Leader, bold, aggressive and all Soldier.

A word about the General, he was a gruff regular Army Officer, exceptionally capable and highly aggressive. A man of about fifty-five. He was all Soldier and represented all the exceptional fine traditions that West Point develops of its Graduates.



General Butler was utterly fearless and demanded the maximum effort from all who served under him. At times it was embarrassing as he more often consulted with me rather than Colonel Hodge.

Nevertheless, it all worked out well and it was our greatest adventure of the entire War.

The operations of the "Butler Task Force in Southern France is completely narrated in Part 2 of this Chapter for the award of a "Presidential Unit Citation" to the Squadron for their outstanding accomplishments.

Unfortunately, due to the time it took to process the complete Report, two years after the War, the War Department did not act favorably upon it. This was strange and we never quite understood this decision, as the French Government, in their decision No. 267, signed by President Bidault of France and attested by General of the Army "Juin" on the 22nd of July 1946. The French Government awarded the "Croix De Guerre with Palm" to the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron for their extraordinary combat operations from Provence (The Beaches) to Lorraines near Strasbourg, France on the Rhine. Copy of the award is attached. Very few American Units in World War II received this highest award of the French Government.

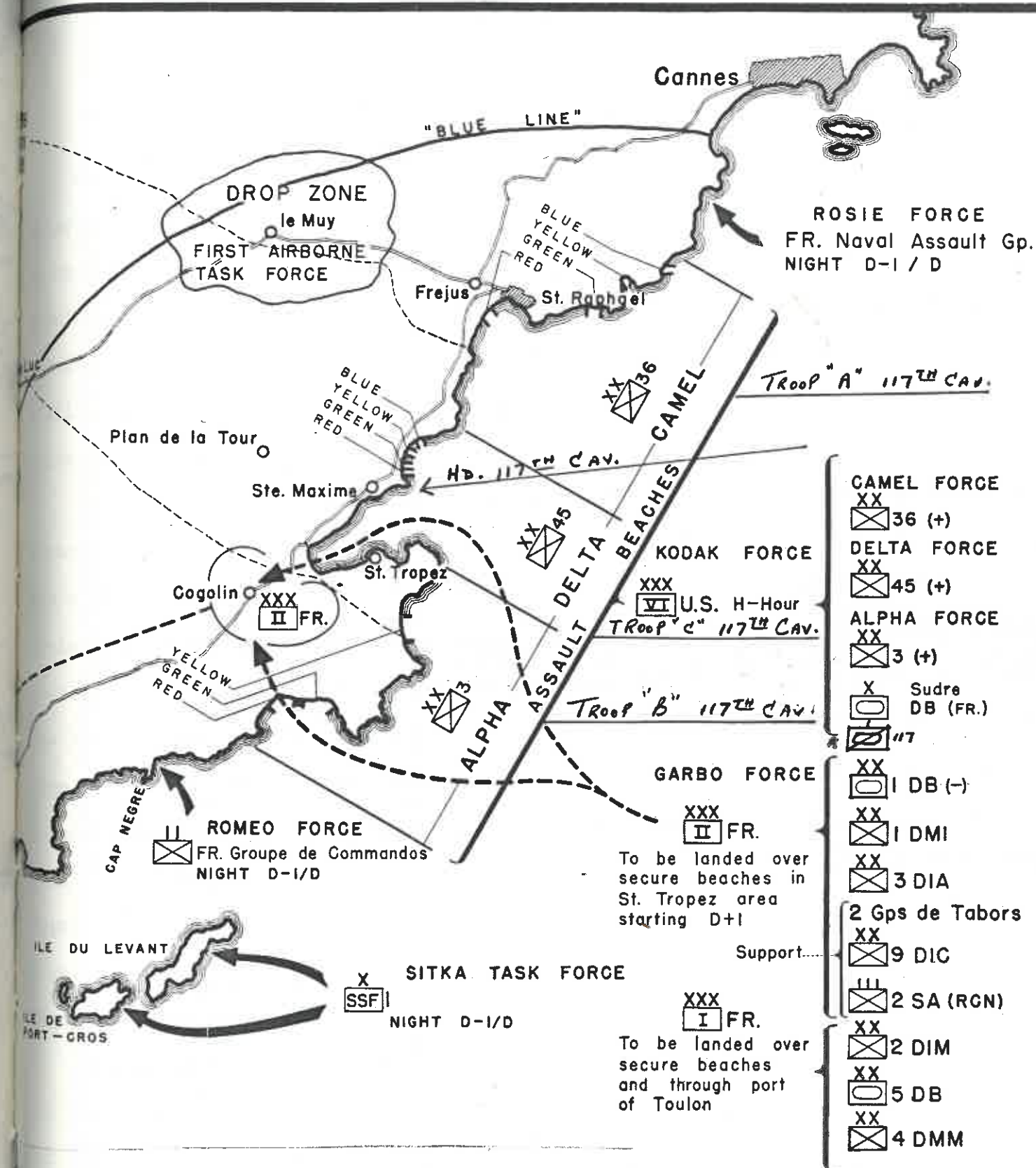
The following Pages of Part 2 is the full and complete story of the "Butler Task Force" and the leading part that the 117th Mecz. Cavalry Squadron played in one of the most extraordinary exploits of World War II.

In twelve days of combat, the Squadron liberated approximately 6645 square miles of Southern France, advanced more than 185 miles and captured 3500 German prisoners, including three Generals. Our total strength never exceeded 750 Officers and enlisted men!

At the close of the War, Seventh Army Historians prepared and published in three large volumes, "Report of Operations" and which are on my book shelves.

A complete account of "Butler Task Force" operations are described in Volume One, on Pages 173, 176 to 179, 184 to 189, 197, 198, 204, 214, 221, 225, 226, 242 to 244, 253, 255, 259, 260, 270, 271 and 274.

Perhaps what was said on Page 225 sums up the successful accomplishment of the Squadron's Mission when XII Tactical Command Air Intelligence stated, "it should be recognized that it was the brilliantly conceived and executed operation of Task Force Butler in effecting the road block (at Montelimar) which developed one of the finest Air Targets ever offered the Tactical Units of this Command."



FINAL PLAN ANVIL

Aug. 15, 1944

SHADES OF JEB STEWART

Although the bulk of the 117th Squadron by now, nearly three and half years after induction into Federal service, was made up of men assigned from replacement centers, some of them in recent months; most of the officers and senior non-coms in the outfit were cavalrymen from way back and the operation on which they were about to embark was a cavalryman's idea of a real mission. What was coming up was a "Go for Break" operation, a wild dash through the rugged hill country of Southern France, with an objective 125 miles deep in enemy territory.

Part of VI Corp's attack force was a combat command of a French Armored division. Truscott, according to his writings, was disturbed by the possibility that once the Corps was ashore, he would lose the French unit and thus be without sufficient armor to exploit any tactical success. Plans called for the French, coming ashore later, to take Toulon and Marseille and when it came time for this Truscott felt certain he would lose his French Armor. To overcome this problem, Truscott, two weeks before the Corps sailed from Naples, called on his assistant, Brigadier General Frederic B. Butler, to organize a task force heavy in armor. Truscott, an old cavalryman, ordered that the force be built around the 117th Squadron, and it was as the result of this that Hodge, along with Captain Omer Brown, who was later replaced by Captain John Brown, Wood, Sergeant Lapke and T/4 Lagowski, moved into the VI Corps operations headquarters in Naples to plan the Butler Task Force operation.

The primary mission of Butler Task Force was to sever the main line of communications to the German forces opposing the three divisions of VI Corps and/or harass and cut off, if possible, the fleeing German 19th Army. To some degree, the tactical situation would, naturally, affect the basic plan. There were three possibilities. The force should be prepared to seize and hold high ground north of Grenoble, to push forward and seize high ground at other points along the Rhone River, or seize high ground in the vicinity of Montelimar.

The task force included, in addition to the 117th, the 59th Field Artillery Battalion, the 753rd Tank Battalion (-), Second Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment; Company C, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company F, 344th Engineer Regiment; Company C, and part of Company D, 117th Medical Battalion; 3426th Quartermaster Truck Company and Detachment of the 87th Ordnance Company and Corps Military Police.

Butler, after being told by Truscott that he was to command the task force, set about assembling a staff and planning the operation. He decided that his staff, drawn from among the various assistants of the VI Corps staff, would be superimposed on the staff of the 117th and the communications for the entire force would be built around the Squadron's radio net. Hodge, a top notch staff planner who possessed also extensive command experience, became the key officers in the planning of the operations of Butler Task Force and worked feverishly at the Black House in Naples for several weeks prior to the invasion.. Before departing Naples, Butler decided to direct the main effort of the Force over roads running eastward from Draguignan to Salernes, to Reiz, then north to Oraison and Sisteron. He thus avoided the main highway in the area, the Route Napoleon. The plan called for Task Force Butler, with the recon troops of the 117th pacing the force and providing flank protection, to move out at 0530 on 18 August, passing through the outposts of the 36th Division on the Corps' right flank, and head toward Draguignan. Troop C jumped off first and shortly engaged the Germans near Draguignan. It had the mission of protecting the right flank of the Force. Piddington's A Troop was spearheading the advance of the main column and meeting at the start only slight enemy resistance. The column advanced west towards Salernes. The third platoon of Troop A was dispatched west to Barjols to protect the left and rear flank of the task force. The platoon, under _____ ran into stiff enemy resistance, including self-propelled anti-tank fire which was silenced only after the force commander reinforced the platoon with a section of tank destroyers. Heavy fire fights continued until

nightfall. The platoon outposted Barjols to contain any threat to the flank of Butler's cavalymen. Shortly after dark a motorized regimental combat team of the 45th Division arrived on the outskirts of the village and relieved the Third platoon. Relief, according to Butler's reports, came none too soon, the platoon was running low on ammunition, German riflemen were working out of the village and the enemy force was building up. As it turned out the 45th elements were engaged in fierce fighting in the area for several days.

Earlier in the day's actions, elements of Troop C bagged the 117th's prize catch of the war, a German corps commander, Lieutenant General Ferdinand Neuling. The commander of the German LXII Corps, who had eluded capture the day before by units of the provisional airborne division, was taken in an action north of Draguignan by the third platoon commanded by _____. Along with the General, the Troop captured his entire staff. The prisoners were brought back to the village and word flashed to Hodge of the capture. Hodge got word to Butler who started immediately for Draguignan to accept the formal surrender. When Butler arrived, he found Neuling seated on a bench in the village square guarded by troopers with the French populace yelling for his scalp. The General was weeping, but he shouldn't have felt badly, he was captured by elements of an outfit that was accustomed to taking Generals as prisoners. More than three years earlier in the Carolina maneuvers, a platoon of _____ Troop under _____ took an American Corps Commander prisoner in simulated operations in the Carolina maneuvers.

Troop C turned their prize over to Butler, but, reportedly, not all of the very fine brandy that was among the supplies captured, at least Butler suspects most of the cache of brandy was withheld. The Force commander, after a brief discussion with Neuling, sent him back under officer escort to VI Corps headquarters. By noon, Troop C had overcome fierce enemy resistance and continued its advance northwest protecting the right flank of the Butler Task Force.

Tells of Capture Of Nazi General

The proud Nazi general, straight as a ramrod and wearing the Iron Cross, had tears in his eyes as he surrendered — surrendered with his entire staff to Lt. Joseph L. Syms, of 852 Monroe avenue, 33-year-old platoon leader.

Lieutenant Syms, home after thirty months overseas, described his capture of Lt. Gen. Ferdinand Neuling, commander of a Nazi corps controlling the entire Southern France coastline from Nice to Toulon.

"We were starting an attack on the morning of August 18," the lieutenant, who served two enlistments in old Troop K, 102nd Essex Troop Cavalry,

any in Westfield recalled. "We went through a town where there was terrific firing. Artillery was flying and 40 calibers were sounding off to the right. I turned the car into a driveway and a Nazi came out and wanted to know if I spoke German. When he found out I did, he said that the general in command wanted to surrender. I sweated for a while wondering if it were a trick, but the whole thing was on the level and we got the entire staff.

"The general was a typical Nazi type. He was in his sixties and stood like one of those old ramrods. Tears came into his eyes when he surrendered. I even felt sorry for him.

"The general gave the American salute. All of the staff used the American salute, except one anemic looking private superman who stuck out a weak paw in the Hitler manner. The general thanked us for our courtesy, since we treated them better than they expected. He claimed they were out of artillery, but investigation proved different. If you looked at the number of wounded, though, it was obvious why they had to surrender.

"A West Point colonel had demanded their surrender the night before, but they said 'never.' Then the artillery caught up with them, and the infantry was moving up so they called it quits. We captured the whole bunch without losing a man and no one was even touched. It was well worth while, because in addition to the general and his staff we uncovered a lot of papers and maps showing the area and its defenses. We found a lot of cognac, cameras, five civilian cars, lugers, tins of cigarettes, and so on.

Gets Trophy for Essex Troop

A luger, which Lieutenant Syms took from the general is expected to be placed in the trophy room of Essex Troop. A World War I model it has an exceptionally long barrel.

Lieutenant Syms' job as a platoon

Nazi General Tearful As He Gave Up to Him



LT. JOSEPH L. SYMS, Elizabethan, home, relates how he bagged corps chief, staff.

leader sent him with his men out in front of the remainder of the outfit to reconnoiter and to direct artillery. "It's a wonderful feeling," he commented. "Everybody's backing you up, but who's in front of you? Any time some one wanted to know what was holding us up, I felt like telling him 'Nothing' but the whole German Army." The battle for Germany and the Italian campaign shared honors for the toughest fighting that Lieutenant Syms saw during his months overseas. Every man who serves in combat overseas is a hero, Lieutenant Syms declared when asked to point out highlights of the fighting. "Day in and day out every man risks his life. They can't all get medals, because it's their job. Every man is willing to help a buddy when he's in danger. It's a wonderful feeling to watch those kids running out to help you."

Landing in North Africa January 3, 1943, Syms' unit fought there and then went on to Naples May 16, 1944. It was the first motorized unit to follow the infantry in the invasion of Southern France, going ashore an hour and twenty minutes after the first boat hit the beaches. Opposition was so light, he said, that his platoon went all the way through the infantry lines and on the road to its objective before it ran into a fight.

"We went so fast in Southern France," he declared, "that we ran off all the maps, even the extra ones they'd given us for just such an emergency. We had to stop at French houses and get car maps. During the year and four months I'd spent in Africa I'd picked up enough French so I could make my way around pretty well, so we made out all right.

"The reception we got in Southern France really made our hearts feel good. We'd finally got somewhere where they appreciated us. We were spearheading the advance, so as we rolled into villages the people rushed out shouting and crying. The French really did a wonderful job helping us. The PFI got us information that saved a lot of American lives. The people shared cigarettes and food with us."

while rushing toward the front line day at the front. He was hit in the back but didn't stop. Countless other soldiers, bullets whistled within inches of his head, shrapnel splattered around him, shell fragments passed his clothing and grazed his skin.

The first time that he saw scenes, the suspense and the horrors of combat caught up with him was during a big counter-attack in France. His platoon held off a full enemy force throughout the day and then remained in the front more days. "When I came back, I was shaking," he admitted, "the first time since I went overseas."

The son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Syms, of the Monroe avenue home, the lieutenant was discharged from Troop K of the National Guard in July, 1937, as a non-commissioned officer. He reenlisted in the Essex Troop of the old Westfield in October, 1940. While in the Essex Troop he received his commission as a second lieutenant in the Essex Troop, receiving his commission in Knoxville, Ky., the following year, then rejoining his outfit, for which he has the highest praise.

"You can tell the men of the Essex Troop overseas," he said proudly. "They have a high intelligence and they are quick and quickness and they are messages to deliver to families from the troop who were over there and who hope to be home soon and I'm certain to do it."

Lieutenant Syms, who has been commended for both Silver Star and the Croix de Guerre; will return to the western front at the end of the war. He has particular praise for the men in uniform.

"In every country Red Cross and women go out of their way to help," he said. "The girls go to within three miles of the front. The U.S.O. camp shows are a lot, too."

The surrender of a number of towns held by the Germans was effected under the flag of truce as the Force swung north and west with lightening speed. The Germans were stunned by the sight of American forces so far inland, and they had no idea of the strength of the force that came upon them. If they had known, it is probable surrender would not have come so readily. The first garrison to lay down its arms was captured at Ampus when Omer Brown, a brave soldier and a persuasive talker, walked into the village with a white flag and led out the entire garrison of 150 Germans. With Brown when he entered the town was his driver. This was the first of many towns to be surrendered and by the end of the second day of operations more than 1,000 Germans were to be taken by elements of the Task Force.

In his notes on the Butler Task Force operation, Samsel describes the reaction of the French civilians as the Squadron liberated village after village. He observed: "The French civilians were delirious with joy as town after town was liberated.

Their genuine welcome and high enthusiasm was a sight to behold; older people wept unashamedly with tears of joy. The younger men and women showered the American liberators with wine, melons, fruits and other gifts. Perhaps such awe inspiring demonstrations by a down trodden people who felt the yoke of the German heel, gave greater strength and provided a higher incentive to all ranks to fulfill their mission in destroying the machine responsible for the devastation which the enemy left in its wake."

By late afternoon of the first day, the lead of the column, Troop A, was stalled south of the village of Quinson. Task Force Butler's air force, a single light aircraft that was doing aerial reconnaissance out in front of the column, reported the bridge south of the village blown. Almost to the last citizen, the people of the village turned out to build a ford over which passed the entire column. Actually the towns people were rebuilding a bridge they themselves had destroyed. The story the

ELIZABETH DAILY JOURNAL, WE

Breakthrough No Surprise

The German breakthrough in December did not come as a surprise to the men at the front, Lieutenant Syms said, since for some time the lines had become static and fighting was tougher. The Americans running into pillboxes so that shells didn't even make a dent. Lieutenant Syms holds the heart for a knee injury suffered in his armored car and a tank

villagers told Butler was that repeated attempts by allied bombers had failed to destroy the crossing. Since it was obvious the Allies wanted the bridge destroyed and had failed in their efforts, the local Marquis finished the job. The column rolled on and by 1800 with several hours of daylight remaining, Hodge set up squadron headquarters northwest of Reiz. By dark, Troop A outposted north of Valensole, Troop B did likewise north of Puimoisson. Troop C secured the village of Reiz. In one day the Squadron had advanced some 50 miles into enemy territory. Off to the right were the French Alps. To the Squadron's left was the Rhone River. More than 50 miles to its rear was the bulk of VI Corps and in between was most of the German XIX Army.

In the planning of Task Force Butler, Truscott had asked Hodge how long he thought it would take for the force to reach Sisteron. Hodge estimated, "three days, possibly two". Truscott indicated he considered that an optimistic estimate and he settled for an assurance that Reiz would be taken by the end of the first day. Hodge knew the capability of his outfit. He had planned and commanded the 959 miles dash the Squadron made in _____ moving from Algiers to Marrekech in less than two days.

Barring opposition greater than intelligence indicated, Hodge was confident the Squadron could push to Sisteron in less than three days. As it was to turn out, Hodge had given Truscott a sound estimate.

As the Task Force moved northward, it was joined by increasing numbers of Marquis, units of which were assigned to the various elements of the Force. Butler, in reviewing the successful operation of his Task Force, wrote that "it is only fair to state that without the Marquis our mission would have been far more difficult, if indeed not possible".

Butler's plan for the second day of operation called for the main body to move on Sisteron. Troop B, under Wood's command and reinforced with elements of the Assault

troop and the Tank Company, was given the mission of taking Digne. Wood also had attached Marquis under command of an American paratroop officer who had jumped into the country and had been working with the Marquis for some weeks. By the end of the first day, the Force had advanced beyond the point of radio contact with VI Corps. Butler was planning his operation with no knowledge of the overall Corps situation.

By early morning of 19 August, a warm sunny day, Troop B was closing in on Digne in the face of heavy resistance. Its patrols had been to the outskirts of the town and had drawn heavy small arms fire. The infantry attack of the Marquis had faltered in its first try but was being reformed. A second attack would be made at noon. Meanwhile, the main body with A Troop out in front had reached the bridge across the Durance River at La Brillane. Coming upon the bridge it surprised a small German patrol which was quickly driven off before it could further damage the structure which had already suffered from air attacks. It turned out, that despite its damage, the bridge could hold the heaviest vehicle in the column and there was no delay in crossing. Later attempts were made by the Luftwaffe to knock out the crossing. Advancing north along the west bank of the river, Piddington's column ran into heavy enemy resistance on the outskirts of Chateaux Arnoux. After shelling enemy positions, Piddington sent a Marquis into the town to demand its surrender. Out came 150 Germans and, it was agreed, they would be prisoners of the Americans, not the French. The handling of prisoners in such large numbers was a problem neither Hodge nor Butler had expected and they moved to get rid of those captured as quickly as possible. Once past Chateau - Arnoux, A Troop moved rapidly and reached Sisteron by 1800.

Troop B by noon had become engaged in a heavy fight with the strong enemy garrison at Digne. A fire fight there lasted for more than six hours. By 1800, Wood had forced his way into the town, taking captive a force of 600 Germans, including a Brigadier General. Score for the 117th Squadron in two days of operations, two German Generals. While the bulk of B Troop was engaged at Digne, its first platoon, under _____

was encountering resistance at nearby Malijai where it finally forced a crossing of the Eleone River and took the village.

To help out the hard pressed First Platoon of Troop B at Malijai, Butler dispatched a company of infantry and one of medium tanks. Their arrival on the scene prompted the enemy to flee into the hills. Tanks and infantry then moved to the north of Digne to aid the main body of B Troop. Their arrival of the larger force there also disheartened the enemy to the point of surrender. Wood moved his troop to Sisteron to rejoin the Squadron, leaving Digne to the Marquis.

Meanwhile Troop C fanned out to the west, protecting the left flank of Butler's fast moving caravan. Its first platoon reached the village of Banon and outposted it for the night. The bulk of the troop went further north to the town of St. Etienne-Orgues, moving against only slight enemy opposition. The main body of the Task force moved into Sisteron. It was then end of the second day and perhaps Hodge's estimate had even been conservative when he told Truscott his command would be there in "three days, perhaps two."

Butler was still out of contact with VI Corps and had little knowledge of the overall situation. He was thus hardly prepared to plan the third day's operation. Should he go north to Grenoble, or move west to the Rhone. Of only one move he was certain. He directed a move against the town of Gap and for this Hodge picked Troop A and attached to Piddington's command additional tanks and infantry, including Marquis.

On Sunday, 20 August, the third day of operation for Task Force Butler, the 117th except Troop A and most of Brown's Assault Gun Troop which were engaged at Gap, carried out limited reconnaissance and waited orders for further action. Back at VI Corps

headquarters, Truscott, as he wrote later, found this to be a day for decision. Aerial reconnaissance reported there was as yet no general withdrawal of the German XIX Army; most of it was still east of the Rhone. He was concerned that the 11th Panzer Division, one of the German's best divisions, had moved southward in the days following the Allied landings. It was the 11th which was to prove in the next few days to be the toughest force the 117th was to encounter throughout the war. Truscott was certain the Germans were beyond concentrating for a major counterattack. The German move, Truscott was convinced, would be withdrawal to the north through the Montelimar Gap. He dispatched this message to Butler by a senior staff officer, Colonel Theodore J. Conway:

"You will move at first light, 21 August with all possible speed to Montelimar. Block enemy routes of withdrawal up the Rhone Valley in that vicinity. 36th Division follows you."

Actually Butler had his force better dispersed to move north to Grenoble. The Force and Squadron CP had been moved to Aspres from Sisteron. It was 90 miles from Aspres to Montelimar, a considerable distance to cover in one day, but those were the orders Butler sent for Hodge and directed him to move at the first sliver of dawn. The route to Montelimar was over a mountain range and the road was narrow ledge cut in the side of the mountains. Troop B was leading the column and by midafternoon it had reached the highest point in the area, overlooking Highway 7 on the east bank of the Rhone. Wood established his CP at Marsanne. He moved two platoon south to the outskirts of Montelimar and established a line running through the villages of Savasse, Condillac and Mirmande. In the valley below, along Highway 7, the advance elements of the German XIX Army were already moving northward. The light tanks and armored cars opened fire on the enemy column, throwing it into utter confusion. So swift had been

the squadron's move that the Germans were caught completely unaware. Their planes were still taking off from the airstrip at Montelimar and were taken under fire by the armored cars and tanks. Had it been possible to move strong reinforcements into the area, it is probable the entire XIX Army would have been destroyed. But the bulk of VI Corps was still well over 100 miles to the rear and it would be several days before all of the 36th Division could be deployed in the area. As it turned out the fighting around Montelimar continued for many days and was probably the major action in the operations of the Seventh Army in Southern France. Immediately ahead lay nearly a week of bitter fighting for the 117th and the other elements of Butler Task Force.

Troop C, with _____ commanding, pushed through Crest, along the north bank of the Drome River where the second platoon took escaping Germans crossing a ford under fire and destroyed several vehicles, thus blocking the ford. First another platoon ran into a column of enemy vehicles on a highway in the area and "with all guns blazing, drove through twisting and dodging enemy vehicles along the way." By the time they had blasted their way through, the troopers had destroyed more than 50 enemy vehicles. The third platoon, under _____ advanced north from Crest to Peogier to protect the right flank of the force. Hodge set up his CP at Marsanne. By nightfall the enemy launched a counterattack and it was necessary to pull back elements of Troops B and C. The Squadron CP was blasted by artillery during the night and was forced to relocate. By nightfall, Piddington closed his reinforced A Troop into the area and as events were to prove it was none to soon, for Butler was facing an enemy force that was building up and was determined to keep open its only escape route. The Germans continued strong patrols throughout the Squadron's first night at Montelimar. By the following morning Butler had his entire Force deployed in the area. Most of his infantry battalion was in the Condillac Pass, the 117th Squadron was maintaining a line of outposts and operating strong patrols. From its positions it was able to mass fire on the fleeing German column in the valley. Piddington's still reinforced troop was at Puy St. Martin, Butler, writing about the action, described the present situation:

"Although we did not hold the main east bank highway along the Rhone during the daylight hours of the 22nd, little lived to escape on that road. The artillery covered the road in the vicinity of Montelimar as well as the streets therein. Tanks, tank destroyers, armored cars, even ground mounted 57's of the infantry were pouring aimed fire at the dense traffic. In addition the 59th Armored Artillery by excellent shooting and good luck bagged several trains and the railway on the east bank was blocked."

By afternoon of the 22nd, the situation was serious. Five Mark V tanks supported by Panzer grenadiers crossed the Roubion River, running into Troop A positions. With its attached Sherman tanks, Piddington managed to rout the enemy force but not before his Third platoon under _____ was surrounded. After destroying its equipment, including two armored cars and three jeeps, the platoon fled on foot into the hills and escaped capture. All of the platoon found their way back to the Squadron the following day. The enemy proved to be elements of the 11th Panzer. Other tanks plowed into Troop B sectors but were repelled.

Troop C and Troop E were holding the north flank along the Drome River from Loriol east to Grane. Omer Brown had his assault guns in position dominating the entire escape corridor. He poured murderous fire at 2500 yards, setting afire hundreds of enemy vehicles. This was the vital and commanding ground in the area. By holding it, the retreat of the entire XIX Army could be delayed, even cutoff completely. The Germans could not permit this and nothing short of a major effort to displace the American force could be expected.

Meanwhile back at Corps headquarters, Truscott was concerned about the situation developing in the north. The 36th was slow in reaching Montelimar, and nothing less than a division could hold out for long. As Butler commented later, there is a vast difference between getting an advance guard of light, fast-moving armor into an enemy stronghold, and having a stranglehold on that enemy. Task Force Baker was almost surrounded by an enemy that was building up his forces, obviously to make the effort

necessary to hold open the Gap at Montelimar, so vital to his escape. Truscott went to Aspres to check on the progress of the 36th. The division commander was at Gap, but Truscott learned that the RCT that should have already been at Montelimar had not yet moved out. Truscott made known his displeasure and ordered the RCT and a battalion of artillery to move to Montelimar immediately.

On the 23 August, the Squadron was deployed with Troop C and elements of E and the Tank Company, reinforced with tank destroyers and infantry, was on the northern flank. Troop B was attached to a battalion of infantry of the 36th Division which had just arrived during the day was in the southeast corner of the Force sector. Troop A, reinforced and with Marquis attached was on the south flank and there was engaged for the second time by a strong enemy force which it again turned back. Troop B was attacking Montelimar along with a battalion of infantry and force of Marquis. Late in the day, command of the task force passed to the commanding general of the 36th Division. Its mission accomplished. The Force had seized and held the high ground at Montelimar as Truscott had directed, but for some days to come the 117th, attached to the 36th Division was to fight in the area of Montelimar.

The invasion of Southern France and the operations of the Seventh Army did not receive the attention in the press or from Army historians to compare with the extensive press coverage of the Normandy invasion and the Italian campaign. It was initially a one crops operation with later employment of units of the reconstituted French Army. For this reason the Task Force Butler operation, certainly one of the most colorful and dashing ventures of the entire war, went almost unnoticed. It was a classical cavalry operation. In four days, the 117th Squadron had advanced 235 miles, sweeping through several thousand square miles of enemy held territory and liberating many towns and villages. It had captured a corps commander and his entire staff and more

C I T A T I O N

For the Award

POSTHUMOUS, OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

JAMES L. HOBBY; 20 453 723, Corporal, Cavalry, Troop C, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized), for extraordinary heroism in action on 15 August 1944, near St. Maxime, France. During a reconnaissance mission, Corporal Hobby's squad ran into a strongly defended and well concealed road block consisting of five enemy pill boxes, only one of which was clearly visible. When his squad was fired upon from these enemy held positions, they left their vehicle and took cover in a ditch. An armored car from the main body of the patrol soon arrived and, unaware of the existence of the other pill boxes, concentrated its fire on the one which was visible. In order to allow the remainder of his squad to escape, Corporal Hobby jumped from his covered position, manned the machine gun on his vehicle, and opened fire on the nearest pill box. At the same time, he picked up the radio handset and informed the armored car commander of the position of the four concealed pill boxes. Calling for supporting fire from the armored car, he alternately fired his machine gun and adjusted the fire of the armored car by radio. Corporal Hobby continued to fire on the enemy positions until he was mortally wounded by a burst of enemy fire. Next of Kin: Mrs. Carrie Hobby (Mother), 1009 Angier Avenue, Durham, North Carolina.

HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH ARMY
OFFICIAL SEAL

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

Raymond J. Glass
RAYMOND J. GLASS
1st Lt., Cavalry
Adjutant

than 2500 prisoners. In the final action, before passing to control of the infantry division, more than 1000 German vehicles had been destroyed and the retreat of an entire German Army stalled.

In his observation of the feat, Butler gives much credit to his corps commander. He wrote:

"General Truscott visualized the tactical possibilities of such a group. It was his sound decision that sent it into the valley of the Rhone instead of on to Grenoble for a hollow but sweet sounding achievement. It was a cavalryman, Truscott, who stipulated that the Group would be built around the Corps Reconnaissance squadron - the 117th."

Part 2.

The Butler Task Force

Task Force Butler

by Brigadier General Frederic B. Butler

PART I

This is the first of two articles on the operations of a Provisional Armored and Mechanized Cavalry Unit in exploiting the invasion of Southern France. Through the valuable medium of personal experience we mold our basis for improvement of our Army of the future. We have some interesting reading to boot.

(Introductory Note: On August 15, 1944 the U.S. Seventh Army landed on the coast of southern France in the area between Toulon and Cannes. The U.S. VI Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Lucian K. Truscott, made the initial assault at 8 A.M., with the 3d Infantry Division on the left in the St. Tropez area, the 36th Infantry Division on the right in the Frejus area, and the 45th Infantry Division in the center near St. Maxime. Already a Provisional Airborne Division had been dropped several miles inland and was cutting the German communications with the beach area. The highly successful landings were followed by an immediate consolidation of the beachhead, movement west by the 3d Division to isolate Toulon and Marseille, east by the 36th Division to the Italian border, while the 45th Division made contact with the airborne troops and drove northward in the center. Following the American units over the beaches on D + 1 the French II Corps consisting of two infantry, one motorized and armored divisions landed in support of the U.S. VI Corps. According

to the plan the French were earmarked for the assault on the ports of Toulon and Marseille; the rapid advance of the Americans during the first two days made this assault imminent. The release of the French stripped VI Corps of its only armored division and caused the Corps Commander to bring into being as planned a provisional armored group composed of corps armored units under the command of the Assistant to the Corps Commander, Brigadier General Frederic B. Butler. This article is General Butler's personal memoir of the operations of the task force that was to bear his name. General Butler served as Assistant Division Commander, 34th Infantry Division, and Assistant to the Corps Commander, VI Corps. He is now Sixth Army Engineer.

This account of his experiences was written from memory while he was crossing the Pacific in 1946. The undersigned as a member of the Army Historical Division borrowed the manuscript for research and secured General Butler's permission to edit and publish it.—Major James D. T. Hamilton.)

I was to change direction. What is more I was to be on my objective before dark that night! I was better poised to continue north but that was my fault. I had made my dispositions for valid reasons and now I must work myself out of the existing situation and roll into the next. Grenoble dangled on a thread. Yet it was not to be ours. The little bug in the mission was that my objective was 90 miles from Aspres—quite a day's run even if we were all together! However, by this time we were a team, not merely an aggregation of units. Despite my bi-hourly reports, Corps had no knowledge of my dispositions or the local situation when the decision was made to head me for Montelimar.

My outposts to the north should not be abandoned. If my French colonel was correct in his estimate that Col Bayard (Bayard Pass) was the key terrain of the whole area it should be seized and held forthwith. Discussing the matter with my Corps representative, we evolved a plan of action. The 36th must relieve me towards Grenoble at the earliest possible moment. I would start at daylight with the bulk of the force and the outpost elements would follow as quickly as relieved. My position with respect to issuing orders as a Corps representative might be questioned. It was true that my normal assignment as assistant to the Corps Commander would have given me authority under the circumstances to issue orders in the name of the Corps Commander but in my actual capacity at the moment as a unit commander I hesitated to barge in on Stack with specific orders, especially since he apparently had definite instructions from somewhere to get on to Grenoble. However, I felt at perfect liberty to outline a plan for Colonel Conway to transmit should he, in his latest knowledge of the Corps Commander's plan, feel that it was consistent with the over-all scheme of things. This proved to be the case. While the Force headquarters turned to getting out orders for the morrow, Conway turned back to Sisteron and then to Corps. At Sisteron he passed orders in the name of the Corps Commander to Stack to relieve my outposts without delay.

For three successive days we had made forty-five miles per day and on this, the fourth day, we were to make 90 miles and end up astride the enemy's main axis at a point a hundred miles or more behind the front. Fortunately Hattox had us well supplied with fuel now and I had a good reserve—ample to carry the Force 90 miles and still give a reasonable combat reserve. We were building up on ammunition as the heavy expenditures at Digne had more than been replaced.

It was necessary to reorient the Maquis, and my French colonel was available immediately, having bedded down at our CP at my request. It would be daylight before we could move and we needed all the daylight possible. Would that the days were longer! At first light the point was on the move and thus, another day. Hardly had the movement to the west gotten under way when the Gap command reported that patrols had observed enemy movement through the Col Bayard. Three

scout cars and either a tank or self propelled gun were reported as observed. And here I was committed to move to the west, with 1500 prisoners of war in Gap in our technical custody, but actually in the hands of the French. An attack on Gap at this time would have been a spark in a powder keg. I therefore immediately ordered artillery, tank destroyers and cavalry to advance, seize and defend Col Bayard. Maquis provided the infantry cover. With heavy armor by his side, Maquis was worth a lot. No sign of the 36th and they could not be raised in our radio net. I hoped for an early relief so that I could arrive on my objective with my full strength. But I was not sanguine.

The enemy force north of Gap developed into nothing more than a patrol and was driven back vigorously and successfully. Whether more enemy would have followed this single patrol had we reacted with less show of force, I do not know.

The movement towards Montelimar continued. The route lay over a formidable mountain range with a twisty road cut into the side of the cliffs. Movement of the road would have been impossible. Our path could have been blocked in any one of scores of places, but no enemy action developed, nor had demolitions been executed. Whether we have the Maquis to thank for this free open road I do not know, but open it was. As soon as the point reached the summit I closed out the headquarters at Aspres and leapfrogged on to Die. I was horror-struck at the grade and nature of the road but all elements had made excellent time and none of the heavy vehicles had succumbed.

At this point it is well to comment on the performance of our vehicles. Several of the light tanks had fallen by the wayside and a few of the armored cars were out of action. The heavy tanks were doing well but the diesel driven tank destroyers were giving trouble. The artillery brought through every single one of its self-propelled guns and that in itself was an achievement for this splendid battalion. The ordnance company assigned to the Force followed our path closely, and sent disabled vehicles on up to us remarkably quickly. This rat race was a test for the mechanical sturdiness of American armor and the efficiency of our mobile maintenance. Both came through 100% plus. Though thin of skin and lightly gunned, our tanks were good travellers.

By midafternoon Troop B, which led the advance, reached the high ground overlooking Highway 7 on the east bank of the Rhone. It was in this area that the fight now known as the Battle of Montelimar was to develop as the U.S. Seventh Army cut the line of retreat of the German Nineteenth Army. The location was well suited for the action. Here two tributaries enter the Rhone River from the east, the Drome River on the north and the Roubion on the south, forming two sides of a battle square with the Rhone forming the west side and the foothills of the French Alps on the east from which we were entering. In the southeast corner is Montelimar, the chief communications center of the

troop list as constituted for the American VI Corps for the invasion of Southern France included a floating reserve a combat command of a French Armored Division. At a staff meeting less than a week prior to the Corps loading out from the Naples area for the invasion, General Lucian K. Truscott, the Corps Commander, announced that he feared the French armor would be taken from him and returned to French control shortly after landing. Such a move, he said, would leave him without a force capable of exploiting a success. In order to overcome this deficiency, he announced that he planned to constitute a Provisional Armored Group from elements of the Corps. Turning towards me, he added, "And if there is such a force, you will command it." He then directed that I prepare a tentative organization, building it around the Corps reconnaissance squadron, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz). I was then serving in the capacity of Assistant to the Corps Commander.

After the conference, a detailed conversation developed the possible missions of the force. Most probable, and the one for which the Force was designed, was to sweep to the north towards Lyon, proceeding initially to Sisteron on the Durance River and from thence to be prepared to turn west or to continue northward.

Time was short. My first step was to select a staff from amongst assistants in the various Corps staff sections. Next, a provisional troop list was prepared. Then as the staff was assembled, various studies were assigned—detailed map reconnaissances of routes, terrain appreciation, air-ground cooperation, Maquis liaison, and most pressing of all, a communications plan. I realized that the success of any such operation was tied to a successful communications plan.

In evolving a command and communications plan, I entertained two considerations, one to draw on the Corps Signal troops, the other to superimpose my headquarters on the Reconnaissance Squadron and develop my communications around its net. The former plan drew so heavily on Corps that I abandoned that plan and decided to build around the latter scheme. Commanders of all units were called in, the plan was explained, and communications officers were closeted with the Force Signal Officer. An SOI was produced and mimeographed.

The Force as approved consisted of the following:

- 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron
- 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
- 753d Tank Battalion (less one Medium and one Light Tank companies)
- 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry Regiment
- Co. C, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion
- Co. F, 344th Engineer Regiment
- Co. C, 111th Medical Battalion
- Detachment, Co. D, 111th Medical Battalion
- 3426th Quartermaster Truck Company

Detachment, 87th Ordnance Company
Detachment Military Police (VI Corps)

Subsequent conferences were held with the Corps Commander and prior to sailing, the mission had narrowed to a single possibility, "To proceed to Sisteron and from there, be prepared to continue north to seize Grenoble or to turn west and seize the high ground north of Montelimar." All unit commanders involved were briefed on this, the selected route, and all pertinent details prior to departure from Naples. Division commanders were briefed and the whole plan was approved by Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, Commanding General, Seventh Army.

As indicated, the Provisional Armored Group, subsequently to be dubbed by the correspondents "Task Force Butler," was nothing more than a plan. Late in the afternoon of August 16, after the 45th Division had made physical contact with the Airborne Division in and around LeMuy, General Truscott ordered the Force to assemble during the day of August 17, prepared to pass through the 36th Division at daylight of the following day. The prepared plan went into effect and the assembly proceeded without incident except that Corps G-4 and the Corps Engineer between them could not mobilize the Engineer Company, a unit that had never smelled powder.

Late in the afternoon of the 17th, Truscott issued his oral order to me. Sisteron remained the objective. After some discussion on the subject, I was permitted my choice of routes. Back in Naples, I had tentatively selected the Route Napoleon, which runs from Nice northwest to Digne, then north through Sisteron and Gap to Grenoble, for the route of advance. It had appeared to be the more direct and had the advantage of a protected right flank—Switzerland and the mountains. Every effort was made to secure road data, maps were studied and terrain appreciations prepared. Prior to leaving Naples, I made the decision, however, to direct the main effort of the Force not along the Route Napoleon but along the roads running eastward from Draguignan to Salernes, Riez, north to Oraison and Sisteron. Careful study of the Route Napoleon indicated the terrain so mountainous that a small enemy force with a single self-propelled gun could have made this "cavalry sweep" just another crawling Italian campaign. Developments proved the choice made in Naples to have been a sound one, and if one needs an object lesson on the value of terrain appreciation, no better incident than this need be cited.

Asked for an estimate of time necessary to reach Sisteron, the Group Commander stated three days for sure, possibly two days. Further questioning by General Truscott, who seemed a bit incredulous, guaranteed him Riez, 45 miles from Draguignan, as the objective for the first night.

As soon as commanders could be assembled in the bivouac north of LeMuy, the situation was reviewed, the order was issued. The importance of initiative was stressed. All possible liaison was established with the

36th Division to assure a smooth passage through the outposts to the north and east. Daylight of the 18th was set for the passage of lines.

The column started before daylight next day, August 18. A reinforced troop of the Reconnaissance Squadron was sent north through Draguignan with instructions to proceed toward North Castellane and develop the enemy situation. This troop, the first scheduled to start, cleared Draguignan without delay and left the routes clear for the main body. The 36th Division had outposted the town the day before. Having watched the efforts of the 142d Infantry the previous day to break through the north portion of the town's outskirts fail, I was prepared to hear of early trouble from this direction.

Remaining elements cleared their bivouacs on schedule and the main column appeared to be rolling. No report came over the command net and as I bowled along a clear road to catch the advance guard of the column, the sun rose and this seemed, after all, to be the sort of expedition we wanted it to be—a rat race.

Joy was short-lived. On the western outskirts of Draguignan I began to run into a stalled column. What was the difficulty? The commanding officer of the Reconnaissance Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Charles J. Hodge, was soon found in his radio command car. The point was held up at the first bridge out of town. The outposting troops had set up a road block at the bridge, and this little obstruction had to be removed before the "charging" troops could advance! And what a block it was! It took a half hour's feverish work to clear a lane. The 36th did not take a chance. The ban-shee itself (were we in Ireland) could not have come in to disturb the sleep of the lads from Texas. As minutes passed and as good time slipped by, I became concerned and went to the bridge myself, and with my own eyes saw the *friendly* obstacle that held up our progress. There must have been two hundred pounds of TNT in that little bridge—not to mention antitank mines, posts, rails, boulders, and cable! Oh, it was a masterpiece but very disconcerting in the early morning—under the circumstances, and especially after precaution had been taken to post the 36th Division on the plan and ask their cooperation in clearing our columns through the outposts. But those things happen even in a well-ordered war.

I remained on the scene, fuming, fretting, and beleaguering, until I saw the lead vehicle underway. I then got off the road to check the column past and join my squadron leader at his radio car—the nerve center of the whole command—as it came along. But soon vehicles ceased to move. I hurried back to the unfortunate colonel's scout car and very quickly and pointedly brought up the question of the stalled column. "But the column is moving, Sir." Well, I knew more of the movement—and lack of it—than the radio had disclosed to the CP.

"What of Troop C—the flank column?"

"Sir, they report their head clear of the outpost but

held up by AT fire. They are sending out dismounted patrols and placing the attached guns in position."

Well, I hadn't expected much progress from that element but was concerned over the slowness of the main column. We needed progress to get at the subsidiary roads ahead of us so that the Reconnaissance Squadron could fan out. Then we would make better time. Also, it was necessary to clear a certain road junction north of Draguignan by 8:30 A.M. A regiment of the 45th Division was to follow us and I guaranteed General Truscott that, barring enemy action, this would be done.

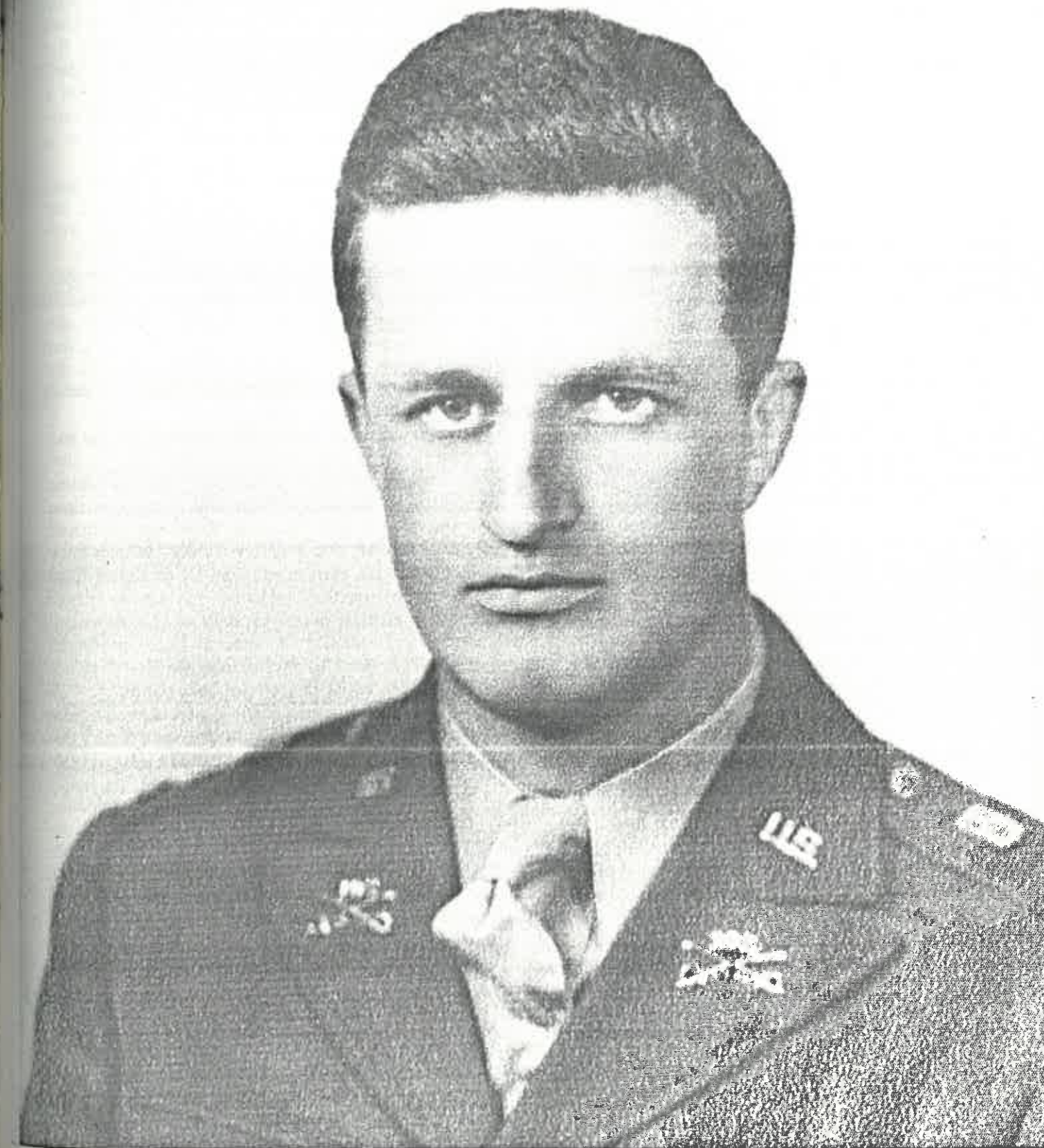
Radio communication was perfect. The head of the column was moving again, but obviously with too much caution. My poor young colonel had a very trying quarter-of-an-hour while I stayed at his still stationary radio car. Leaving interim instructions with him, I made off to the head of the column to give the point commander a few simple fundamentals in methods of bold rapid advance. The 117th was a young unit, having had only limited experience in Italy and never confronted with a wide open situation like this offered to be.

Things began to move a bit better. I made my way back down into town once more. The squadron headquarters had advanced some but was stopped again. Once more I started for the head of the column. It had progressed not more than a mile when my attention was attracted by a madly careening screeching jeep coming up behind me. It was Hodge madly waving and shouting.

I stopped. He stopped. With the restraint and composure of a young actor, and making every effort to be military—but unconcerned—Hodge reported that Troop C on the right had broken through the resistance earlier reported, had taken prisoners and equipment, including one corps headquarters complete with one lieutenant general, his pistol, brandy and staff! The (German LXII) corps commander, Lieutenant General Ferdinand Neuling, was under escort back to the square in Draguignan to be held there for formal surrender to a general officer. Naturally there was no word as to the cache of brandy that had been taken!

This set up young Hodge. His troop really had done a job, had succeeded where the infantry had stalled.

Going back into Draguignan, I met my first German general, after close association with the German army since December of 1942. He was seated on a park bench having a nice quiet dignified weep. With the general was his orderly, general's suitcase in hand. They were in the custody of a cavalry corporal from Troop C and surrounding the pair was a circle of dismounted tankers whose column had moved into but not yet through the town. These tankers were holding back the excited mob of French villagers. The old general was a fatherly appearing soul and I have often wondered the cause of his tears—whether it was chagrin and disappointment, or living fear of the howling mob.



NAME	ASN	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	NEXT OF KIN
Brown, Omer Forrest	O 392 025	22 Mar 16	25 Aug 44 KIA	Mrs. Frances S. Brown (W) 240 Second Street Dunellen, New Jersey

As kindly as was the general's appearance, I take it that he was something of a Hun in his dealings with the populace—and how they were calling for his blood! I had with me a French lieutenant as interpreter. This officer, in addition to speaking English, spoke some German; he was Jewish. The LXII Corps commander rose on my approach and rendered me a military salute, holding his salute until I returned it. The German army had ceased the "Heil Hitler" business. Receiving the surrender and making some statement as to the fight the general's troops had made, I informed the prisoner that I was sending him under officer escort to my corps commander, and thereupon our new acquisition embarked upon his first jeep ride under the chaperonage of a Frenchman—furthermore, and of Jewish background.

Ridding myself of our prize package, I hastened up to the advance guard and now the whole column was rolling—but the head was beginning to falter. Things were beginning to click, however. Hodge was able to give me the picture. The artillery battalion's cub plane had gotten up and was giving the point aerial reconnaissance. The cub had spotted a demolished bridge, had reconnoitered a by-pass through some hills to the north and the only delay experienced was that caused by the narrow winding road. The radio nets that had been set up in our planning back in Naples and on shipboard were working.

By making our detour we by-passed a village into which a small German delaying force had just moved. The French reported this but our column could protect itself from such on the march and I trusted to the Maquis to handle the situation, which they did. These stalwart sons of France, and sons of the Blue Devils, the Chasseurs Alpins of World War I fame, proved invaluable to us. They reinforced the meager infantry in critical situations and guarded our life line to the rear. These splendid patriots had carried on literally bare-handed since 1940 and only recently had been armed and organized by the United States and England by means of personnel and matériel parachuted in to them. This business of building up the Maquis had developed quite an organization. As indicated earlier, prior to our departure for France I had secured from the Seventh Army officers of this Maquis contact organization to accompany my column and assist in directing Maquis assistance to my effort. As a commentary on this underground organization, it must be recounted that word of the Group had gone on ahead and our advance was eagerly awaited, but so well controlled was the information that the Germans always were in complete ignorance of our moves. It is only fair to state that without the Maquis our mission would have been far more difficult, if indeed not possible. And contrariwise, the presence of our armor and guns added immeasurably to the strength and assurance of the Maquis.

I noticed here the same French reaction to armor that had impressed me in the early days in Tunisia. At

one period during that campaign I commanded an international force in the defense of Gafsa. The French under my command were terribly afflicted with "Tankitis." The German armor in France in 1940 had impressed the French Army, the French nation, the French Empire. With this phobia (more than fear) went the conviction that French arms possessed not a single weapon to combat a tank. And at this stage anything that chugged on wheels was a "tank" to a Frenchman.

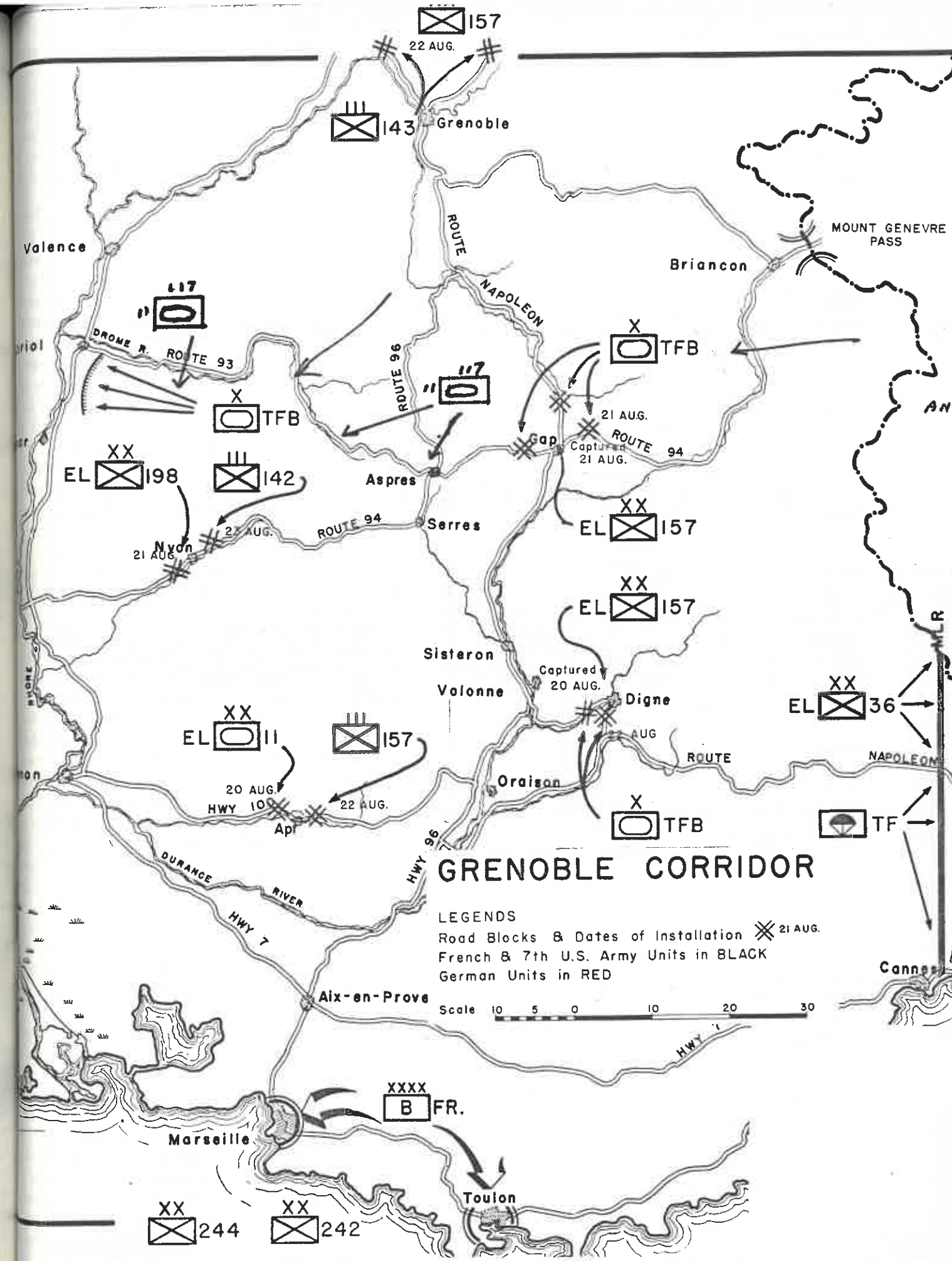
Contrariwise their morale went sky high when anything "anti-char" was produced. In Africa, I issued my French batteries high velocity 75mm ammunition with which they felt perfectly confident. Even our little 37 millimeter, so-called and obsolete before manufactured, anti-tank guns gave them confidence. A French soldier with confidence is the equal of any soldier in the world. And so with the Maquis. Our heavy tanks, our artillery and our self-propelled anti-tank guns sent the guerrillas into ecstasy. And how the Germans dreaded the fierce Maquis!

The German dread of the Maquis came to the surface continuously during our race into the interior. Really, some of our adventurous young officers became quite persuasive salesmen. Many and many a garrison was taken after a few shots—an American advanced under a white flag, and a parley. If the German commander could be convinced that he and his force would become American prisoners and not be turned over to the French, surrender usually was accomplished forthwith. Occasionally it took a little additional shooting on our part. In no instance did the Germans ever violate our white flag or the "negotiator."

Later when skirmishes and rapid advances piled the two armies together in the Battle of Montelimar, this sensibly pleasant process of war naturally gave way to killing and torture. And with this turn in the battle died a fearless officer and forceful conversationalist, Captain Omer F. Brown, the commander of the assault gun troop of the Reconnaissance Squadron. He was killed along the banks of the Drone near Grane when his guns made a valiant stand against a determined tank attack by an element of the 11th German Panzer Division.

The work that the little cub planes did for us was as remarkable as any this little brave part of U.S. Army did amongst all its unbelievable exploits. How or why the cub plane survived will ever be a mystery to me. Of course their principal mission was artillery observation and as an infantryman I soon learned that they brought us double comfort. They directed fire—but best of all, they kept down enemy fire merely by being in the air. German gun and mortar crews lay "doggo" when the little fellows were on the prowl. The smart gun crew knew that a battery seen was a battery destroyed when a "Maytag Bomber" was aloft.

In planning my Force, I included a liaison plane from the Corps pool of L-5s. I felt such a craft would help me. I had used the equivalent of one early in



Africa when things were on an extended scale and I knew there was use for one on this mission—if we got into the open spaces. The more eyes the better and surely it would serve in a crisis if radio with Corps failed—which it did. I had asked for a certain type of radio equipment, a "299," in setting up my organization but Corps felt that the "big picture" would not permit my having what I asked for. Accordingly I left my own radio, which was part of the Corps command net, back at our starting point as a relay station and sent my messages all during the first and second days from my forward position by scout car radio to my aide who was with my Corps radio vehicle and he in turn, moving forward, kept in touch with me and attempted to relay to Corps. Naturally the system did not work. At the end of the second day I received a handwritten note from Truscott. It was written the evening before and he burned me up for not keeping him informed. It was a hot note and I was glad there was no telephone communication between us. Amongst other things, he directed me to report by radio every two hours—but he also sent me the equipment I needed.

While the artillery cub worked like fury the first day, the one pilot being in the air over 10 hours, the Corps plane let me down. The artillery pilot did not do a single piece of artillery spotting but he literally towed us along behind him. He would buzz a road and give his report to the advance element commander who then could sweep on if an "all clear" was the report or act with swiftness where trouble existed. My Corps lad however reacted to his mission in a different way. He had not reported to me in person but worked under the personal supervision of the Corps Chief of Staff and was to "liaison" with me.

Like many young officers who find themselves around higher headquarters, this pilot had ideas of his own as to his object in life. He never did come into my radio net that first day nor did I ever see him or have a report that he was over the main body. However, he was over the area, this much we know, for late the second day, several hours after we had reached Sisteron, I received my first radio from Corps—the very first radio I had had from Corps since we took to the road. Presumably it was from the Chief of Staff. It reported that as of such and such a time at such and such a location, Corps Liaison plane such and such had reported elements of the Reconnaissance Squadron proceeding in an overly cautious manner. I was to take corrective action! The elements in question and at the time given had been off as flank guards and had done a good job! Anyhow that was yesterday morning and this was this evening and we were 75 miles forward of where the "offending" troops had been sighted. I took appropriate action and heeled the message into the dust.

The young aviator was more interested in running home and telling "teacher" what he saw than in telling the troops what he saw. His radio was on our net if he wanted to communicate with me and in any

event he could have dropped a message.

Our enlisted artillery pilot was different. He appreciated ground action. He hunted, he saw, and he communicated, and that is how he towed us along with his "kite." I cannot help but mention this incident because it is so typical of what one invariably may expect from the youth and inexperience who out of a clear sky become headquarters johnnies—and this includes some aides.

To return to the chronology of the day: For the main column, the sun shone, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, the French went mad, and the vehicles rolled on. Occasionally there was a stray enemy staff car or motorcyclist to be dispatched, but otherwise the advance was a parade until the point approached Quinson. Our energetic artilleryman in his chug-chug cub had reported a formidable bridge destroyed just south of the town—and our engineers still miles away. The lead vehicles got across a ford but jeeps stuck. The town of Quinson was pressed into service and men, women and children turned out to maintain a ford for us. Not only did they maintain it, they even improved it and all vehicles crossed as the enthusiastic French pushed and heaved and with knowing eyes carried select flagstones to dump flatwise into the swirling current. In no time at all they had transformed the bouldery bottom. Maintaining a ford for heavy tanks is no mean problem, but those French were willing—and so happy.

From these good souls we learned how the fine modern reinforced concrete bridge had been destroyed. In the pre-invasion air preparation that was to "isolate" the landing area, our bombers had gone after the bridge time and again but never registered a hit. So alas, a bridge so important that it must thus be bombed at time and time again must be destroyed. If the American air is so unfortunate as to miss this bridge—eh, enfin—the Maquis will do it. Has not explosive been dropped for this purpose? Voila, the bridge, he is no more—and do not bother any more. As a matter of fact, our progress was most seriously impeded by damaged or demolished bridges that the Air had missed but which the Maquis had not.

After Quinson, we rolled on and on. At each halt the road was cleared and all vehicles got under cover in the woods and brush. No air, friendly or enemy, had come over but we just naturally took to the shade. And later it was well that we did.

With still four hours of daylight before us the point reached Riez—the town I optimistically had picked out for my first day's destination. We were there and ahead of time. Should we go on, or should we hole up for the night and sacrifice those remaining hours? I decided to hole up. The vehicles had about five hours gas left in their tanks—and armor without gas is a poor fighting tool. I could not cut down less than that and still fight the vehicles if need arose. We had strapped on to the vehicles anything that would hold gas that we could lay hands on but even so the heavy grades, the de-

Event:

Gap, France

Date:

20 August 1944

Location with Preface:

On 20 August 1944 Troop A supported by Troop E (assault guns) departed the Squadron assembly area in the vicinity of Sisteron and headed northeast to Gap with a mission to pick up small groups of Maqui on the way and attack at 1700 hours. Upon arrival on the high ground overlooking the town of Gap, Troop E assault guns knocked out the radio tower on the first shot. Next Troop A moved to the edge of Gap with a platoon of light tanks. The Maqui force was sent to the flanks and rear of Gap.

Captain Omer Brown indicated to me that he would be willing to seek surrender of the German Garrison at Gap. This act, if successful, would eliminate many casualties. I agreed and called Squadron to put off the attack until 1800 hours. Squadron approved. Capt. Brown was off with jeep, driver of a french gendarm with white flag for the town city hall.

During the discussion with the German Garrison commander, Capt. Brown explained that his force was surrounded. He outbluffed the German. The result was about 1100 prisoners. This negotiation between Brown and the German Commander was touch and go. Finally the surrender was accomplished. Many lives were saved that day. It would have been bloody. The community of Gap was probably around 10,000. Many of these people would have suffered.

Captain Omer Brown made it possible and deserves to be recognized for his initiative, imagination, calmness and above all his great courage. He was a very brave man. Sometime later in another combat operation he was killed in action.

Personal observations by Captain Thomas C. Piddington, Commanding Officer, Troop A, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized).

Signed:

Thomas C. Piddington
Thomas C. Piddington
Captain 0425249

tours and the long miles run, had eaten into the gas. Our supply trucks had delivered us our refill late the night before and then returned to the beach for a new load. The precious gas refill could not rejoin until after dark. The column therefore was closed up, the bivouacs set up for instant defense and the whole area outposted—the cavalry out at a distance on the roads and the infantry close in. The tankers took their turn too.

As the main body advanced on Riez this first day Troop C off to the east, after its first haul of a Corps headquarters, kept working to the north opening roads and taking prisoners. Despite my friend's observation in the Corps liaison plane, they were very active on their main axis. So also were the sections and platoons that scurried over roads and trails between the main body and Troop C, working and probing always to the north so that no undetected enemy movement could come from that flank to interrupt the speedy advance of the Force it protected.

In like manner the cavalry scurried to the west and northwest prying, peeking, reporting. One platoon of Troop A, reinforced with a section of tank destroyers was given the specific mission of reaching Barjols to the west and blocking that important road center. The town was entered as so many towns were entered by armor, only to find itself in a drove of pestering, buzzing sniping enemy infantry. And in this particular town the enemy wheeled out his own self-propelled guns. Under such circumstances, armored cavalry, if discreet, withdraws, even if covered by one's own, very own, tank destroyers. The mission of the platoon was first, information; secondly to block egress from the town until relieved by Infantry. The little force accomplished its mission and knocked out two German self-propelled guns to boot. I had promised my little flank patrol that the infantry would be out to relieve them by dark, and a motorized combat team of the 45th Division made the vicinity of Barjols that night over the way our force had cleared. The infantry arrived none too soon for our small force was in serious trouble. It was running out of ammunition and with the coming of darkness German riflemen were working out of town in force. Barjols was building up. The 45th made a brilliant fight there and for two days a full scale scrap raged before the Germans would fold up even though cut off and surrounded.

By the time reports by radio came in from Barjols that first evening, from constant reports from the east and from information picked up from the Maquis, I had the first semblance of an outline of the probable situation confronting me. Accordingly I called in Troop C from the east instructing them to leave an outpost above Ampus, some 10 miles north of Draguignan until the 36th Division moved up and to turn the prisoners over to the infantry. Our force being as small as it was I anticipated that I could not spare a man for prisoner-of-war care. The pre-jump-off solution for this anticipated situation was simple. All units were instructed to interrogate prisoners by sampling and then

turn them over to the French. But when my young crusaders developed their hidden forensic powers of persuasion and the Germans with vigor set down a condition of surrender that stipulated that the Reichswehr was to board with the U.S.A., my plans were upset. However, we had to sweep on. My usual solution involved a technicality. I would direct that an American noncommissioned officer would command the prison guard of French. We just could not stop nor could we set up PW enclosures all along our extending route. There were more buzzards on ahead!

The decision to stop at Riez was a happy one. No sooner were we off the roads than a flight of German bombers with fighter escort was over us. No sign of us did they see and they continued on to the beaches for a bombing that was costly to the elements still in process of landing. By now too the Germans were panicky. Before we got to the Riez telephone exchange the mayor had a call from the German headquarters at Digne—just 12 miles away. The German general had heard rumors of Americans coming north from Draguignan. "Was it true?" Communications were out everywhere. Those Maquis! Since Riez had maintained its lines there would be no reprisals there, but "take heed!" Apparently the mayor's report satisfied our neighbor for not a single German patrol came near an outpost that night. But "those Maquis." Germans never did like a dark night when Maquis were on the prowl. They stayed locked up in their barracks.

The arrangements that had been set up for Maquis contact were working. Soon there were leaders reporting for instructions. Identities were authenticated. The most welcome and most valuable visitor that first evening at Riez was an American captain—a paratrooper. He was one of several teams who were dropped in prior to the invasion. With him he had a tough little Frenchman, a sergeant. The Frenchman was in the uniform of a Blue Devil, beret and all. And was he a tough bunny—about five feet tall and five feet broad. He was a World War I veteran, but a regiment of his like would wrestle tanks!

About this time an excited civilian dashed into my headquarters circle. "German tanks were at Quinson." We had patrols about there in all directions and none had reported enemy contact. My aide had just come through, complete with radio jeep and my lumbering Fifth Army type caravan. The French can be like that. When they want protection, they see shadows. However, those stalwart citizens of Quinson had worked hard at the ford and no engineers had appeared even yet. In order that the good people would rest that night in peace and be fit for another grueling day at the ford, I sent an outpost back to the town.

Plans were set for the next day. The main body moves on Sisteron. Troop B, reinforced with light tanks and assault guns (105 howitzers mounted in MIV tanks) and with organized Maquis under my American Captain's command as the infantry component, was given the mission of capturing Digne

where some "several" hundred Germans were quartered.

The Maquis under my hardy paratroop captain also were given the job of establishing and defending a road block on the Route Napoleon at an impregnable position southeast of Digne. It would be embarrassing if Germans from the south poked into our little Battle of Digne of the morrow.

Radio contact with Corps was out and we were unable to pick up any German traffic. It was a little spooky that dark night and even "Sally and George" who had become our radio friends at Anzio would have been reassuring. Oh for Lilli Marlene!

In order that the Corps would have full information on the events of the day and be cognizant of plans for the morrow I dispatched an officer courier to report in person to General Truscott at the same time hoping that on his return to me, my courier would bring me the Corps situation and future plans. Also, could he please find our engineers! So off went my courier in the dark, without light—and without the foggiest notion as to where Corps could be found. My lad found Corps, the staff protected the General's rest, my report was rendered and my courier returned without information—and without engineers. Best news of the night was the arrival of our supply column and the precious gas.

I had gambled on the first refill the supply column carried. Extra rations were carried on the combat vehicles and we started out with an overload of ammunition. Therefore that first day nothing but gasoline was carried in the supply column and well it was. We had plenty of food, ammunition expenditures had been light and we still had basic loads. Next day it might be

different. Organic supply vehicles dumped their loads and went back to the beach dumps for more ammunition to be shuttled up against an emergency. No rest for the drivers.

The patrols were active during the night and the outposts alert. There was little business. Anyone approaching an outpost from the enemy side was carried immediately to headquarters. In every case where parties were thus picked up they proved to be Maquis bringing valuable information. No person was allowed to pass outward through our outposts unless passed by Force headquarters and there were no persons picked up under this control.

In all it was a quiet night and by now the prospects of the venture were in everyone's blood. Foot patrols had worked forward towards Digne and with first light the reinforced Troop was off on its mission to hit early and hit hard. The Maquis were at the appointed assembly areas.

At daybreak the advance guard of the main body advanced through the outpost on the Riez-Oraison road and all was set. Patrols were sent out to the southwest. The main body, consisting of the infantry, tanks, artillery and tank destroyers, was prepared for instant start and held in their bivouacs. I was in my own country now and it was unnecessary to clear roads for any following elements. The enemy, weather and terrain were all with which I had to concern myself. The weather was fine—warm but not hot. The country was beautiful though not too well suited for armored action cross country. The enemy had been bowled over by surprise and was proving not too tough. This was war de luxe and we had not yet had a casualty.

(To be continued)

BOOKS FOR THE HORSEMAN

Horsemanship and Horsemastership, Vol. I . . . \$.85	The Horse of the Desert, Brown . . . 10.00
Horsemanship and Horsemastership, Vol. II . . . 1.10	A Horseman's Handbook on Practical Breeding, by Colonel John F. Wall, U.S.A., Retired (3d edition) . . . 4.00
Horsemanship and Horsemastership, Vol. III65	Thoroughbred Bloodlines, Wall . . . 25.00
Horseshoeing45	Breeding Thoroughbreds, Wall . . . 3.75
Gaits and the Horseman60	The Horseman's Encyclopedia, Self . . . 5.00
Seats, Gaits and Reactions85	Fun on Horseback, Self . . . 3.00
The Military Seat15	More About Riding Forward, Littauer . . . 3.00
Care of Leather25	Position and Team Play, Devereaux . . . 1.50
FEI Rules (International Equestrian Federation) .45	Horses, Self . . . 3.00
Thoroughbreds2.05	The Western Horse, Gorman . . . 3.00
Deep Through the Heart2.45	Training and Gaiting, Scharf, 2 volumes . . . 4.00
Black, Bay and Chestnut2.45	Heads Up—Heels Down, Anderson . . . 3.00
Riding and Schooling Horses, Chamberlin . . . 4.00	Riding and Training, Farshler . . . 5.00
Trail Dust and Saddle Leather, Jo Mora . . . 3.00	Light Horses, Rooks . . . 2.00
The Horse of the Americas, Denhardt . . . 5.00	

Armored Cavalry Journal

1719 K Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

Task Force Butler

by Brigadier General Frederic B. Butler

Part Two of a story covering the operations of a provisional armored cavalry unit in exploiting the invasion of southern France

MY plan was now to move the Force by bounds—the cavalry scouting, advancing, securing, and the heavy column running for it when the selected area was covered. That kept us on the road a minimum of time, saved gas and provided better insurance against enemy air observance. The first bound would take us to Oraison. The second bound would be to Sisteron itself. From Oraison the action against Digne could be supported, if necessary, or, if trouble came ahead, the weight could be thrown towards Sisteron, the day's objective.

Troop B, en route to Digne, reported resistance. Advance elements had been in town but had drawn heavy small-arms fire and withdrew. The Germans had thrown no artillery, tank or mortar fire. Scout cars and tanks were pouring machine-gun fire into the town. The Maquis attack had broken down but was reforming. Another push would go in at noon.

Troop A, pushing ahead on Sisteron reached the bridge across the Durance at la Brillane and secured it. The bridge had been damaged by bombing but the armored cars crossed. The river was a formidable obstacle and it was the bridge—or else. Our engineers still were unreported, and anyway, the river would have been too much for them. So try out the bridge we did and determined that it still had enough strength to carry our heaviest tanks. Thank Heavens for conservative French design. The only other bridge that we could have crossed on had been destroyed. I was to find out later that neither at this time nor for days later, was there a single piece of hasty bridging equipment available in the whole Seventh Army, not even an assault boat! And here we were entering the best watered section of Europe! Well, you see, in Africa and Italy the engineers never used assault boats, rafting material and the like, so they were deleted from the tables by the planners.

Squadron and Force CP opened at Oraison. Radio contact was good. We were in touch with all elements. A patrol had been sent to Malijai, thence to swing east to join Troop B at Digne. Trouble ahead! Malijai was defended. No parleying this time, and Jerry had armored cars, too. Also, he was more stubborn today. We were now shooting it out.

The platoon that had been sent off to the southwest toward Vinon reported no contact and remained in observation. The troop that had crossed to the west bank of the Durance proceeded to the outskirts at Chateau Arnoux and ran into trouble. The time had come to close the main body into the vicinity of Oraison. This was accomplished with only the mad enthusiasm of the French populace impeding progress. They actually blocked roads and streets showering the troops with fruit, flowers and wine. Discipline as to the latter held and the men were temperate to an exemplary degree.

When I say "shower" in connection with the above I mean just that. The effusive Latin spirit led to action more precipitate than wise. Did you ever try to catch an apple tossed to you as you drove by at even the moderate pace of fifteen miles an hour? Or did you ever catch a tomato square in the face doing ditto?

These pleasant demonstrations added up to a costly delay. Some vehicles still were on the road when planes came overhead. We could see they were ours—two of them—and we could hear them, too. There was an air ground liaison team, radio and all, with us. We could hear the pilots talking to each other when they spotted our vehicles. Unfortunately, and tragically, our ground-air liaison transmitter proved to be dead—we could hear but could not talk. The pilots were a glib pair and one was for peeling off immediately. The other said he couldn't see the markings and maybe they were American trucks. And in vain the frantic operator shouted into his set. Yellow smoke went out—but went unseen. The pair in the air decided to drop their belly tanks and if the column scattered it must needs be German. Rather naive reasoning and of course the column took to the fields. And down came the planes. Score: three vehicles and thirteen good American youths.

But what about our three little wars with the enemy? Digne was going again but still tough. Prisoners had been taken, including the divisional area commander—a mere brigadier general. We were slipping; by this time yesterday we had a lieutenant general complete with staff. However stout the resistance, small arms and machine guns together with an abundance of grenades was all the enemy was showing. Grenades thrown from upper floor windows somewhat restrict the effectiveness

of light armor. Put yourself in a sarong and close the lid and see how it is for yourself. The platoon at Malijai had knocked out the German scout cars, cleared the south bank of the River Bleone, which flows into the Durance at Malijai, and prevented the Germans from blowing the bridge, but the enemy fire was too hot to permit a crossing. The Germans had dug in on the upper slopes of the hill that rose above Malijai and more power was needed there as at Digne. The fight at Chateau Arnoux had reached the parley stage.

I thereupon picked up a company of medium tanks and a rifle company from the infantry battalion and sent them off under the infantry battalion executive to clean up Malijai, then swing east and attack Digne from the west and north in conjunction with Troop B, already there and fighting in from the south. Malijai folded up on sight of the Shermans with many Germans taking to the hills. Those who were blasted out of their positions were left to the Maquis who drove into the brush like bird dogs. A small German group with two vehicles retreated on Digne. There was a large ammunition dump between Malijai and Digne and this the Germans blew while their own troops were passing—fortunately before our column had caught up, they being slower as they checked the road for mines and traps.

The big tanks reached Digne, formed up for an attack, and the infantry deployed with them. Before this force fired a shot white flags went up. Once more the all wise German warrior showed his respect for overwhelming power and this small group of attackers had over six hundred prisoners on its hands. These the French got without strings. Order was restored, troops fed, vehicles serviced and the job done. Back came this little band of warriors to the fold. Our losses for the day in this action were two slightly wounded. No vehicles were disabled.

This action across the river at Chateau Arnoux required a little shelling but the finale was SOP. Score: 150 Wehrmacht. These we had on the usual terms and evacuated them on the supply trucks. Troop A continued on and reached Sisteron—our goal for the moment—at six of a gorgeous late summer evening. Patrols and outposts were set. Troop C fanned out to the north and northwest, covering us from Banon and St. Etienne-les-Orgues.

The fate of Digne having been settled, the remaining elements of the Force moved from Oraison to Sisteron with all groups not on outpost or patrol ordered to rejoin there as well. It is always a relief to get the tag ends in and count the chickens. Dispersal is essential on this type of mission but there is always a sense of relief when dispersed units "home."

I had all my units within my communication net but still was lost from Corps. What was worse, we had run off our maps! Army didn't count on movement, at least in this direction and this fast, and sheets for farther on, to the North or West, just didn't exist when we started off. There were a few small scale maps and

some road maps (thank you, Mr. Michelin) and these must suffice.

Just before dusk, August 19, a liaison plane came in and landed. It was our plane from Corps—the first seen of it in two days. I thoroughly expected some instructions and, most of all, maps. It will be recalled that my orders were to proceed to Sisteron and from there be prepared to move either to the west or north. Well, here I was and every one was raring to go. The air courier had a note for me from General Truscott, written the night before, apparently after my courier had reached Corps, but of this no mention was made. Truscott had the impression I intended to by-pass Digne. Well, Digne was in the bag but I could not tell him, as much as I wanted. I had no communications yet. I kept the plane with me overnight for I might have use for it in the morning.

For security of our line of communication I depended on the Maquis, and my group from Army who were Maquis "specialists" were on the jump morning, noon and night. How effective my L of C defense would have been I do not know. I am thankful it was never put to test. But I could afford no other and our supply elements reported no friendly troops following.

An outstanding individual in the Force was Major James G. Hattox, the supply officer. For two days he worked miracles and for days to come he would continue accomplishing feats. I do not think he ever slept. Even at Sisteron, 90 miles from our jump-off, we were 125 miles from the dumps and Hattox was on the road continuously. He secured one of the two decorations I was able to secure for members of the Force. The other was awarded an officer who under fire and with extreme danger to himself rescued a wounded soldier from an exposed position.

The Reconnaissance Squadron was now a veteran unit and I doubt if any other unit of its type found a job better suited to its organization and equipment than the mission in hand. This is what Reconnaissance Squadrons were designed for and for this they were a sound unit. The 117th from the beginning functioned perfectly in communications and to me this was ninety per cent of the problem. They were perfect now in the technique of reconnaissance and they certainly could carry on persuasive conversation! Their personnel was largely still of the old swank Essex Troop of the New Jersey National Guard and was plenty courageous and daring. And, too, they had learned to live in the field. It was on Saturday that we reached Sisteron. While Headquarters went about the details of outposts, patrols, supply, prisoner evacuation, checking the town and communications and establishing contact with the Maquis—the Headquarters cooks were at their task. It was late before we could break away for dinner—eleven o'clock as I now recall, but what a meal! We started off with a fine French soup, the contribution of the family on whose estate we set up. Then came fried chicken, grand french fired potatoes, hot biscuits, a gorgeous salad, crepe souzette, and coffee. Brandy and

ling, late of the LXII German Army Corps. The wife and daughter of the estate joined us. These brave ladies were running the farm as the husband-father was absent in Germany. So many times we encountered this situation. Sometimes the absent one had become a prisoner of war in 1940, sometimes it had been a mere case of kidnapping or impressment during the intervening years. I would like someday to tour that beautiful country and revisit the, I hope, reunited families who befriended us and so many of our aviators who had been forced to land here before liberation.

We began to pick up these stranded flyers about this time and it has always been a regret that we could not have done more for them. The press of getting on ahead and maintaining the integrity of the Force was paramount and consumed our every thought and our full time and energy. We could feed these lads, however, and evacuate them, but that was about all. On the whole, the men were in good condition, the French having done a splendid job caring for and protecting them. As for the French themselves, in this section they were well nourished and reasonably well clothed but distraught with anguish, both personal and national.

Our second night in turn was quiet. Our high powered radio from Corps arrived and we were in contact—and I was reporting every two hours. The traffic was all one way, except for the message that told me some of my patrols yesterday morning had been overly cautious. The aviator who made this report was the one who had just arrived and when I showed him this message he was very sheepish and full of stammers. I let it go at that. He was an intelligent young man and one lesson was enough.

I was desperate for instructions. It might be disastrous for a force such as mine to just sit, deep in enemy territory. I turned in after midnight without receiving the message I thought must come at any moment. Information of enemy dispositions kept building up. There was an outpost south of Grenoble. There was a large garrison—"many hundred," in Gap. Which way was I to go? I wanted to get there.

Before turning in I made arrangements for my operations officer, Major Kermit R. Hansen of Omaha, to take off at first light, shortly after five, in the liaison plane for Corps, if by that time no word had come as to our future movements. Promptly at five the efficient and dependable Hansen woke me and told me nothing had come in from Corps. He and my aviator friend were off in a jiffy. I figured that with good luck Hansen could be back from Corps by ten but evaluating all factors involving travel and a Corps Headquarters, I really did not expect him back until noon. However, I did anticipate that his visit might produce radio orders that would reach me sooner.

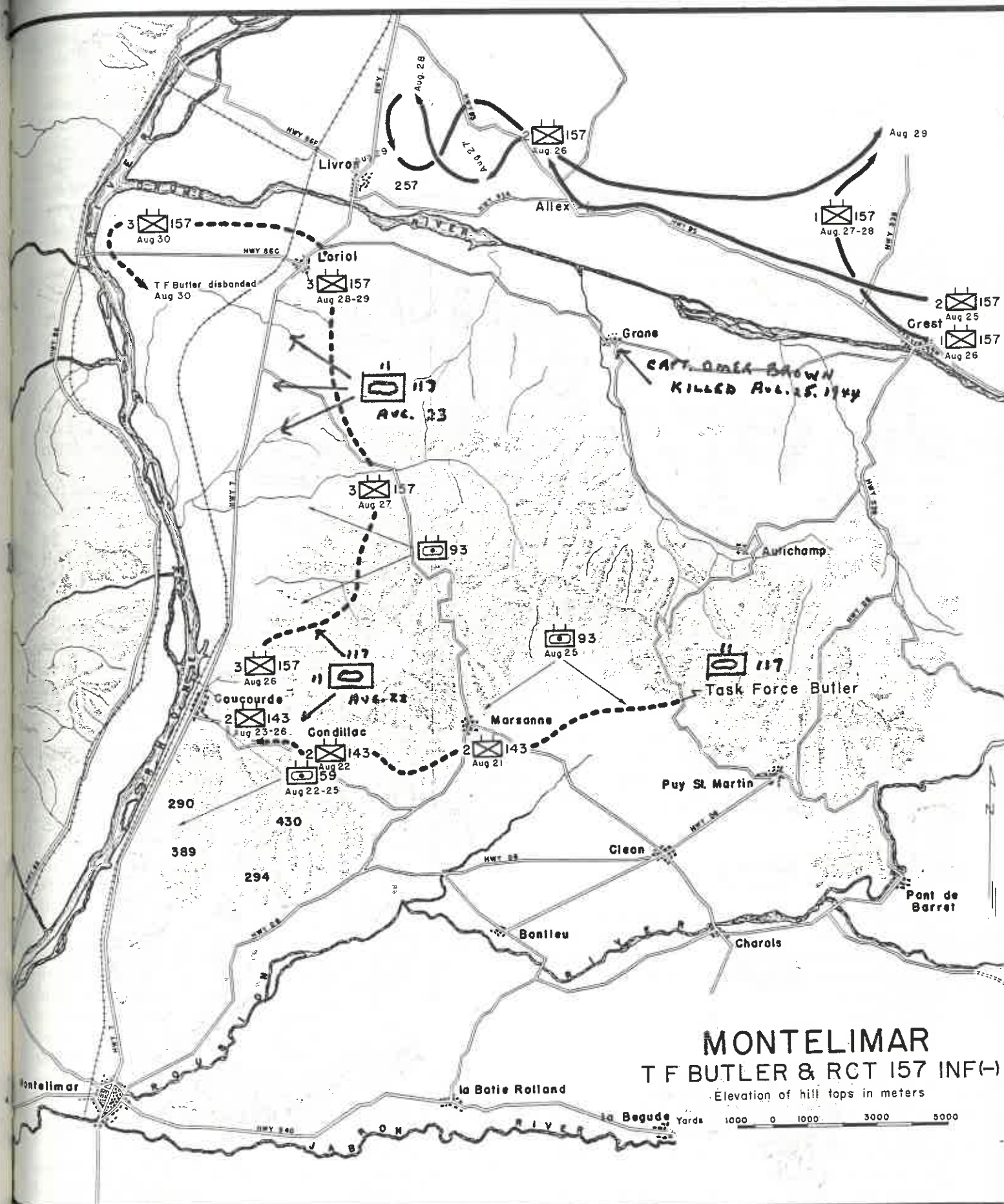
In the meantime, orders or no orders, there was work to be done. The artillery cub spotted some German

southward a few kilometers below Grenoble. Our maps such as they were showed difficult country between Aspres, some forty miles north of Sisteron, and Grenoble. Certainly the pass through the mountains was not to be given to German arms merely through inaction and want of orders. I therefore gave instructions to extend our outpost line to Col de la Croix Haute on the Mountain Road between Aspres and Grenoble and took provision to make this outpost a good strong one including infantry and artillery. We gained the pass long before the Germans approached it, and by armored patrols kept the enemy close to Grenoble. The country was so rough and mountainous that vehicular movement was confined to roads. The enemy outpost was located and routes reconnoitered which would have permitted the infantry to have taken the position from the rear. We were at the gates of Grenoble and had the plan set to crash the gate.

Ten o'clock passed; noon passed, and still neither radio from Corps nor Hansen. In the meantime, the situation in the vicinity of Gap needed attention. To be taken by surprise is as unpardonable as is the sin of passing opportunity for initiative to the enemy. The adage of my old division commander and dear friend, Charles W. (Doc) Ryder, is sound; "No Man's Land is our Land." We knew Gap was outposted and we knew there was a sizable German garrison in the town. We knew also that the chances were very strong that the Germans in Gap still were in ignorance of our proximity. At least they had apparently sent out neither patrols nor agents. The Maquis were all ears now—and so were our men. Information of any movement came quickly to me.

Under these circumstances I decided to send a strong patrol towards Gap "to protect the right flank of the Force." Aside from its garrison, Gap was critical to us in view of the network of roads that converged there. The patrol was built around Troop A and was the miniature of an armored division. Early in the afternoon the outpost position was located and successfully overrun. The Germans were caught flat footed and surrendered without firing a shot as the light tanks crashed across the trenches. Apparently there was no communication between the outpost and the garrison and the latter remained undisturbed in its Sunday afternoon's leisure.

The attacking force quickly and quietly was moved into position to assault the town. Gap is quite a sizable town surrounded by hills. Even with partisan support a fight in the town would be long and costly and an ordeal for the civilians. Captain Brown once more took it upon himself to try his hand at talking and drove in a jeep to the German Barracks. He explained to the commandant that a superior armored force was prepared to attack, and furthermore sixty Flying Fortresses were gassed and bombed up to hit the town on call! The Germans again showed their fear of the Maquis and wanted to haggle and bargain, of which Brown would have none. He broke off negotiations.



withdrew a short distance, and called for fire. By arrangement, forty rounds of 105 HE landed in the barracks area in less time than it takes to tell. That was enough. White flags appeared all over. Brown went in and accepted the surrender—and then pandemonium broke. The French were hysterical.

The denouement of this happened without my knowledge. I maintained headquarters back in Sisteron waiting for a radio from Corps or at least Hansen's return. No radio came, ten o'clock came, twelve o'clock came, two o'clock came. We worked Corps on the radio and asked if Hansen had arrived. I never did get a reply to that query. Word came in from the Gap force that the outpost had been overrun and that the elements were deploying to take the town—and then silence from there. I alerted the remainder (and by now minor element) of the Force to be prepared to move to Aspres-sur-Buech and took off for Gap myself.

If we were to go north, I would be that much farther along. If I were to go west into the Rhone, we had now determined that the only practicable route was eastward from Aspres. Further, through our supply grapevine we had a rumor that part of the 36th Division was beginning to move up behind us, so therefore a move to Aspres seemed the play.

I could not account for Hansen's failure to return. I feared that the plane had crashed. Leaving the CP en route to Gap I received confirmation of the move of the 36th. On the road I met the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Robert I. Stack, who was in an uproar. On the basis of the report I had had via my grapevine I had sent back MPs to hold any northbound traffic other than Force traffic at a certain point until road clearance could be established. Under the existing conditions I had to have freedom of movement on the roads. Two columns do not mix well, especially when one is armor. General Stack was terribly upset that his column had been held up. His column was some six jeeps of staff, but I was greatly pleased to hear that a combat team was following and would close in Sisteron that night. This was the most welcome, in fact the only, news of our side that I had had in days.

I explained the situation to Stack and asked him what his orders were. "To go to Grenoble," he said. I explained my predicament as to absence of orders. I told Stack I envied him the definiteness of his mission. I could not account for his having received definite instruction hours ago while I who was directly under Corps was scurrying about on my own rather than sit and let trouble brew. I was holding the bag.

Rushing off towards Aspres and Gap, I was soon passed by an L-5, our liaison plane. I could not see the faces but Hansen spotted me on the road and set down in the next field ahead. Was this a relief! But he had no mission for us.

Shortly after this my radio picked up a report from Gap. The town had capitulated and we bagged 1500 supermen. Under the surrender, the German commander was obliged to take parties to all outposts and

deliver them. This he did. Reaching Aspres I turned Hansen loose with instructions to set up a CP there and move the element of the force still at Sisteron on up to Aspres. Oh yes, the engineers were now with us, too.

Despite my order to proceed to Sisteron and there await further orders, I had my force more dispersed now than it ever had been during the previous two days of the campaign. However, I believe it would have been unpardonable to have left the Col de la Croix Haute to the Germans for the taking, and, equally, it would have been foolhardy to have let word slip into the Germans in Gap so that they could organize themselves. If this were unsatisfactory to Corps, I was prepared to take the censure.

When I reached Gap, I saw immediately why the radio had remained silent. The attacking force was swamped and beside itself organizing the prisoners and extricating itself from the population, which literally had gone mad. I got more infantry in as quickly as I could. By midnight order was restored and our outposts beyond Gap had been established with dependable communications functioning all around.

Earlier in the day I had received a French officer, a Colonel Saint Savour at my CP at Sisteron. Officers of the old French Army were coming in now and the assistance of these trained officers was invaluable. This same officer came to my CP at Aspres late this same night and, assuming a continued advance to the North, he made all advance arrangements through the Maquis underground. He also took over Gap from me, and largely through his personal effort, order was reestablished. It was not our function or mission to keep order in France, but for security and for free movement we were much better off that way.

My French colonel was thoroughly familiar with the country and very much concerned over the Col Bayard north of Gap. We had not pushed out that far after taking Gap. I really felt that this was sound military advice that my colonel was giving me, though I hated to disperse any part of my small force that much. There was the off chance too that my friend might be just a bit on the side of shadow seeing. As previously stated, if one were to act on all French information at this time, one would run his legs off in twenty directions at once. Nothing, however, could be done at the hour of darkness, as it now was past eleven, but I did send for Colonel Hodge and instruct him to patrol the pass as soon as it was light enough to see. I turned in. Were we secure? Whither would we move? What about the pass north of Gap? Was the enemy re-advancing south of Grenoble? The last radio check reported all well. With that, and a new day showing on the calendar, I turned in.

About four o'clock in the morning Colonel Theodore J. Conway of VI Corps Headquarters arrived with General Truscott's instructions. Go west, your man, go west! It was to be the heights above Montelimar after all, and at this moment of dispersio

na, and from there Highway 7 and the railroad, the German line of retreat, runs north through the narrow gorge at Coucourde to Loriol near the influx of the Rhone and the Drome. The eastern points of the square are Crest on the Drome and Charols on the Roubion. The hills near the center the road junction of Marsanne is connected with Highway 7 by Condillac Pass. Troop B established headquarters here near Marsanne and swept two platoons south to the outskirts of Montelimar. Thus the screen through the villages of Sasse-Condillac-Mirmande was forming, behind which the rest of the force was moving. Below the villages on Highway 7 German traffic was heavy and the light tanks and armored cars immediately went into action. The confusion of the enemy as well as the destruction inflicted was indescribable. Even German planes taking off from the nearby airfield were taken under fire. Shortly after dark the enemy counterattacked in force and Troop B was forced to draw back and consolidate, but not before it had done mortal damage.

The next troop in the column, Troop C, was pushed straight through Crest along the north bank of the Drome. This column reached the bridge near the mouth of the river, to find it blown, but observed an enemy column crossing by ford lower down near the confluence of the Drome and Rhone. One platoon drove to the crossing, took the column under fire, destroyed the vehicles and blocked the ford. Another platoon moved north on the main highway and broke into still another enemy column. Threading its way through the German trucks and with all guns firing, this platoon destroyed and set afire over fifty vehicles. What the German personnel losses were was never established. Here again the enemy reacted at nightfall and it was necessary to concentrate the Troop for effective outpost duty in protecting our right flank.

The bulk of the infantry battalion, the artillery and the engineers followed closely in column and were placed in position to cover the Condillac Pass, west of Marsanne. This was my point of strength and through this pass I expected to cut the main highway. That first night we did cut the road but were unable to defend the block. After a bitter fight we fell back onto the pass, but the enemy was held at bay. This seesaw continued for two days. We just did not have the strength to force and hold and we were too tenacious to be driven away from the high ground above the road, which thus was always under our aimed fire.

Dark was closing in on us this fourth day of our mission, and with darkness there was no respite in our activity. On the move up and on arrival at the Marsanne position, my own small staff was completely occupied. As for myself, I was concerned over the infantry dispositions at Condillac and the plans there for the night. The headquarters commandant of the Reconnaissance Squadron had shown extreme judgment in picking out CP's to date so I instructed the Squadron commander to have selected a position for the night. When time finally came for me to "home" to the CP,

my heart sank and sank as I drove on in the dark and followed my direction by the stars. As my heart went down, my blood pressure went up. Reaching the CP I asked the squadron executive, the senior present, how long it would take to move the CP. "Forty-five minutes, Sir," he replied. "You'll be out of here in ten" said I, and out they were. The lad who selected the CP had had a better sense of comfort and the aesthetic than he had tactical judgment. He had picked out for our headquarters an ideal position for a key element in our outpost system!

Troop A of the 117th closed in on us from Gap that night but the tanks and tank destroyers had been so delayed by the slowness of the 36th making the reliefs that they did not make it—and when they did, it was almost too late.

I still was shy some of my precious few infantry, a company that I left behind in the Gap area. There being no engineer work in hand other than road demolitions which the riflemen themselves would handle, I attached the engineer company that night to the infantry battalion. This was the first experience these men had had near or under fire and it was indeed their first exposure to enemy contact. It was a sad night for them. As a result of their own buck fever they shot themselves up and suffered more casualties than the infantry. However, as American troops will, the unit survived to eventually accomplish first rate work as infantrymen.

In a note I received from General Truscott, in addition to giving me my mission of seizing the high ground north of Montelimar, he told me that my action was to be such as to give the impression to the Germans that an armored division, or at least a major portion of an armored division, was operating in their rear. This I believe I did for in the next days the enemy reaction was fierce and determined. Just how to evaluate actual relative strength to that of an armored division calls for many processes of arithmetic—ratio of men, ratio of tanks, ratio of guns, and ratio of guns to men to tanks. Off-hand I would say I had available to me from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the fighting strength of an armored division.

There is a vast difference between getting an advance guard of light, fast-moving armor into an enemy stronghold, and in having a stranglehold on that enemy. Our light force had gotten on to its position and was dish-ing out destruction by the barrel. But for how long? The Third Army learned too in its break-through from Normandy that it was one thing to get a reconnaissance platoon into the outskirts of Brest, and another thing—in that instance, another forty-odd days of hard fighting—to master the enemy force.

The German is a fine soldier. By the time the Americans entered this war he was an experienced veteran. Where there was the will, he reacted quickly, soundly and effectively to an emergency. When he so acted, there was hell to pay. This, many high and intermediate American commanders never knew, appreciated,

or understood. They were too far away from the realities of the battlefield. This in turn is as it should be for had it been otherwise, the impossible never would have been demanded—and having been demanded, never would have been achieved by groggy, dazed, hungry and battle weary troops.

If I had had an armored division at the time, I believe the 19th German Army would have been annihilated. Even had the 36th Division swung in behind me rather than continue north to Grenoble the effectiveness of my position would have been enhanced by geometric progress. As it was, the Germans were building up against me faster than were our forces building up. Before the battle was over, some ten days later, the whole of the 36th and part of the 45th Division were pushing at the escape route and still dismounted enemy personnel were escaping. As the main highway became blocked with wreckage and death the Germans took to paths and lanes between the highway and the river and it was humanly impossible to block movement by day, much less by night. But our fire took an appalling toll.

Morning of the fifth day broke and we were still intact. This was to prove a field day for the artillery and a nightmare in broad daylight for the command. Had there been greater infantry strength, a position closer to Montelimar could have been secured and held, but with the force available the best tactical distribution seemed to be that which we had. Our small ground-holding element, the essential doughboy, was best used in the positions covering the Condillac Pass. The outposts of the cavalry were well located as points from which patrols could operate and from which heavier elements could function to deliver direct fire on the visible roads. Protection of the left flank along the Roubion was assigned to the Cavalry. The front was long and it could be covered by patrols only. The force coming in from Gap and the Col de la Croix Haute was directed to Puy St. Martin where, upon arrival, it was to constitute the Force reserve under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph G. Felber, the CO of the 753 Tank Battalion. Our artillery cubs (two now) besides spotting for the guns were keeping an eye to the south to assist the cavalry in watching the long line of the Roubion.

Although we did not hold the main east bank highway along the Rhone during the daylight hours of the 22nd, little lived to escape on that road. The artillery covered the road in the vicinity of Montelimar as well as the streets therein. Tanks, tank destroyers, armored cars, even ground mounted 57's of the infantry were pouring aimed fire at the dense traffic. In addition the 59th Armored Artillery by excellent shooting and good luck bagged several trains and the railway on the east bank was blocked. We never were able to block the west bank road or railway, but touched it up plenty. Even the "flak wagons" with the artillery battalion got in on the shooting.

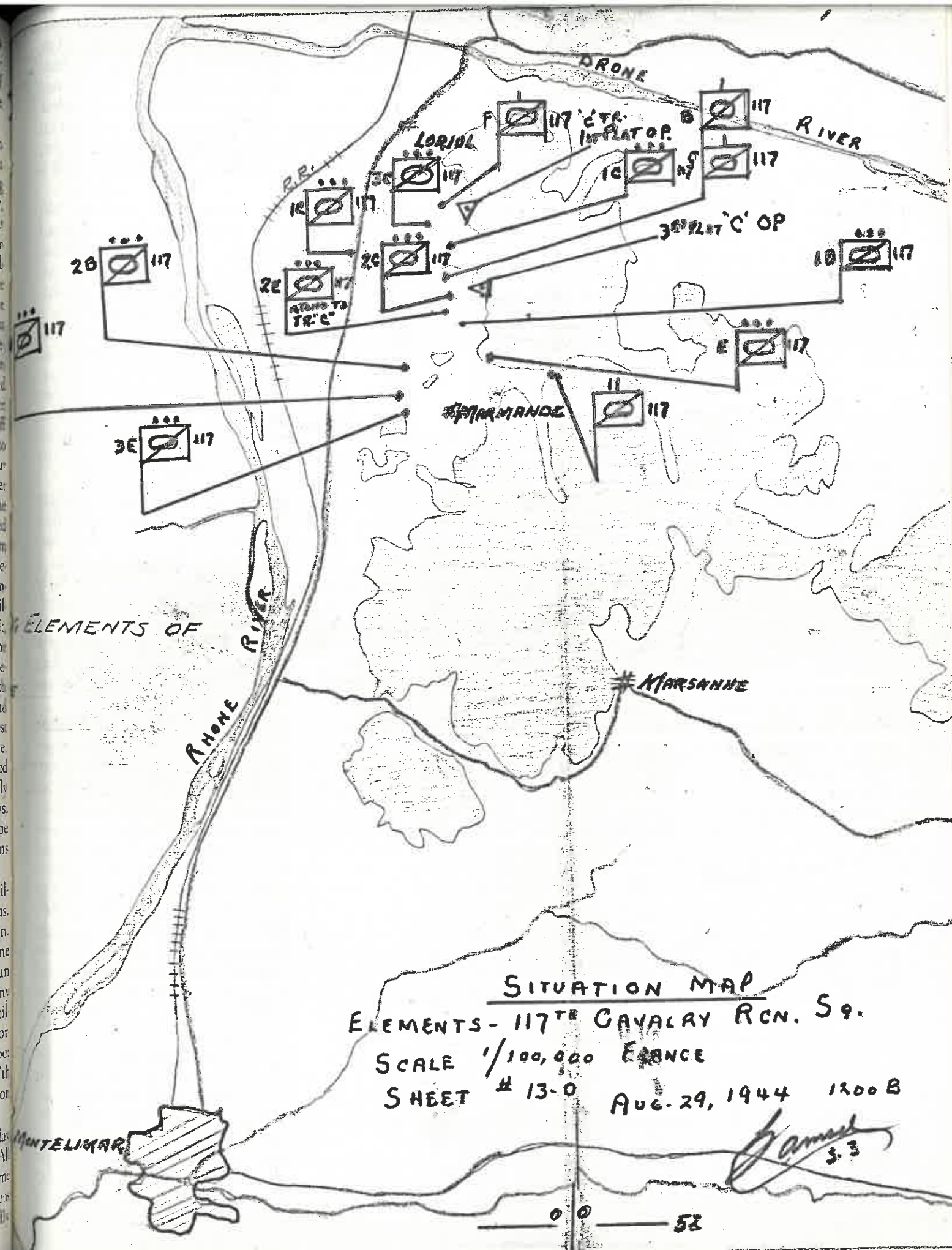
Among the successful targets of the artillery that first

morning were two railway artillery trains. And what show those trains put on as cars burned and ammunition blew up. I always wanted to see what was left of the tracks where these trains stood but never had the opportunity to satisfy my curiosity.

The Germans were probing everywhere. Early in the afternoon we got a real scare. Five Mark V tanks supported by panzer grenadiers succeeded in crossing the Roubion near Cleon. Troop A fought skillfully knocking out several of the supporting vehicles, but became cut off and surrounded. The Germans even worked into Puy St. Martin, where Felber had his headquarters. This was the time and place to use my reserve and, anticipating enemy power in this area, this was the location I had picked out from which the reserve was to operate. But the slowness of the relief at Gap had delayed this vital element of the command. It still was on the road. The tank destroyers that Felber had did excellent work and stemmed the advance. More power was needed. One platoon of Troop A still was cut off and had lost two armored cars and three jeeps. Due to the hilly nature of the country we could not raise our advancing column by radio. Its commanding officer had driven on ahead and was at the CP. Now the Germans were between us and his troops. He estimated the column could not be more than thirty minutes from the point where they would contact the enemy. Forewarned would be forearmed. Our only chance of communication was a dropped message from a cub. An artillery plane was called in, given the message, dropped it, and our rescue column arrived for a movie finish. The German tanks which had crossed the Roubion were destroyed, the infantry were driven back and on the south bank several fires burned merrily where our guns had found trucks and light vehicles. It was a good honest fight. The reserve had arrived in the nick of time. Enemy identifications made in this encounter showed we were up against the 11th Panzer Division. As "Sally and George," the German broadcasters of Anzio days, would say, "Danger Ahead!" The 11th proved to be very tough cookies here and on several later occasions on the VI Corps route to Germany.

When this situation was in hand I sent for my artillery commander to determine his ammunition status. He quoted me a stock of around sixty rounds per gun. This was much lower than had been indicated to me earlier. I thereupon set a reserve of fifty rounds per gun to be used on my clearance only. Just to add to my sense of security, half an hour later McLean, the artillery commander, reappeared with the humble information that a gun by gun check showed 25 rounds per gun on hand! Fire had ceased! The 105's of the 117th were short too. Already Hattox was concentrating on ammunition, but how soon would it arrive?

Closer to Montelimar Troop B had had a lively day of it with German patrols poking at it incessantly. All were turned back without too much penetration. Some unaccompanied enemy tanks broke into the rear area but no crews survived to return. More 11th Panzer!



nightfall the sector was still intact, but what of the morrow?

Troop C, protecting the north flank along the Drome now had the complete Assault Gun Troop with it and enjoyed the shoot of the day. The 105's were delivering aimed fire at enemy columns west of Lorient and at a range of 2500 yards. Firing high explosive and phosphorus these guns accounted for hundreds of vehicles setting them ablaze and sending occupants scurrying. The armored cars of the troop were closer in and further harried the dismounted enemy with machine-gun fire. That night heavy enemy movement could be heard. There could be no artillery firing until ammunition was up again. During the night when the resupply finally arrived the artillery interdicted the ford across the Drome and other key points. Numerous fires indicated the concentrations were getting results.

The night was reasonably quiet and nothing transpired to lead to a crisis. By now, however, the troops were tiring. This was the 22d of August, the eighth day of continuous action for the troops. True, much of the time had been mere riding. There was the exhilaration of accomplishment and advance which serves as a stimulant of incomparable efficacy on tired soldiers. Troops can be worn to a bone by a prolonged, withering fight. The long, gaunt faces will appear. The eyes will begin to pop. But make a breakthrough and sprint and the most tired will be in the van. It is a remarkable human reaction.

Be that as it may, the men were beginning to show the effects of the strain. The morale was high. There never was a thought of giving an inch of ground. Had not every enemy thrust been turned back? Tails were in the air. Then too, the "high command" was feeling better. The whole Force was in hand. Thanks to the artillery battalion we had wire telephone connection to all major units. Further, word had come that on the morrow I would receive a regiment of the 36th. Somehow or other this regiment, the 141st Infantry, was in Grenoble and was doubling back to me immediately.

Incidentally, the trip of 141st Regiment from Grenoble to Marsanne is one of those things that can happen in war. The regiment's route practically paralleled the route of the retreating Germans and passed within gun shot of an airfield which was well protected by small caliber anti-aircraft guns. For two days our patrols had been dueling with this field, and with noteworthy success! Ignorance is bliss and down came the 36th convoy into our lines without an incident.

We were set for trouble the next day. I expected an attack in any one of my critical outpost positions, if not in all three. We knew the enemy was very interested in our extreme left flank. If he could break through there we were cut off. The Condillac sector still was a hot spot but oddly enough the Montelimar corner seemed quiet. After Troop C's execution yesterday at Lorient I expected trouble there.

The first action of the day came to our left flank in the vicinity of Cleon. Troop A now had attached to it

about 200 Maquis. This is the sector in which the 11th Panzers made their first attack. Today we were better organized and had our full force. The attack was spotted before it reached the Roubion and broken up somewhat by artillery fire. What was left of the attack was broken up by our tanks and tank destroyers. It was a short fight, good communications were in, and the Panzers took a shellacking.

While this fight was brewing, Colonel John W. Harmony of the 141st Infantry arrived and reported his column approaching Crest. I immediately gave him his dispositions. I wanted extra strength on the north flank and instructed him to attach his cannon and anti-tank companies to the Drome river force and sent a field officer to command this sector. One rifle battalion I directed to seize and hold the high ground south of Condillac and physically block the main highway. With this accomplished, the next task for the regiment was to launch a battalion attack to drive the German defenses back into Montelimar and occupy commanding ground immediately covering the town and its northern exits.

During the morning the 36th Division Headquarters also arrived. This very situation had been envisioned by General Truscott before I left the beachhead and in the event things worked out along these lines, I would pass under the command of the 36th. Major General John E. Dahlquist, the commander of the 36th arrived with just such instructions. However, he asked me to continue direction of the action until later in the day while he was absorbing the situation and getting organized. I explained my plan and he asked for no changes.

Late in the afternoon, after the Division had taken over, I made a round of the battalions and watched closely the efforts of the battalion attempting to advance on Montelimar. I had been misled as to the location of the battalion, and found the attack was poorly organized and poorly led. It looked to me then, and later proved to be a fact, that our attack had run head on into a German advance in this sector. The situation was badly involved, with the Germans in my judgment having the better of it. The 141st had not yet reached the cavalry outpost line and this had been cut through but the platoons were intact and fighting well. My immediate recommendation to General Dahlquist was that the attack be stopped, the infantry reorganize and dig in on their position, and the cavalry screen be withdrawn through the infantry. This he approved.

The real story of the Force ends with the assumption of command by the 36th Division. The mission of the command was to advance inland and then to seize and hold the high ground north of Montelimar. This the Force did. The morning after the 36th took command, General Dahlquist dissolved the Force. The units as such went back to direct Division control. However, later the same day, the Corps commander directed that the Group be reconstituted and in a fashion it was. The original units did not come back; nor could it be an

Event:

Montelimar, France

Date:

22 August 1944

Location with Preface: On 21 August 1944 the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.), the key part of Task Force Butler, VI Corps, was directed to block enemy routes of enemy withdrawal up the Rhone Valley in the vicinity of the Montelimar Gap. The Squadron occupied the high ground and established a line through the villages of Savasse, Condillac, Mermande with points established in Montelimar. In the valley below, along highway 7, the advance elements of the German XIX Army (19th) were already moving northward. The armored cars, light tanks and assault guns opened a devastating fire on the German column causing utter confusion. The Squadron moved with such speed the Germans were caught completely by surprise. This was a perfect cavalry action. Had the planned reinforcements, consisting of the 36th Infantry Division, been able to be there at that time it is possible that the XIX German Army could have been overwhelmingly destroyed at that time. Even a part of the reinforcements for the Squadron could not possibly be there for several days. Therefore, it was up to the Cavalry to fight with all it had. However, the enemy was just as determined to keep their Army's escape route to the north opened.

On the 22nd of August Troop A, commanded by Captain Thomas C. Piddington had the mission to protect the left flank or southern line of the Task Force to the east of the Montelimar sector along the Rubicon River with strong points at Charols and Cleon.

After Troop A secured the approaches to the east of Montelimar, a strong attack by a German mechanized force at Cleon with heavy patrols moving on all road nets. All three platoons were heavily engaged.

Individuals involved in actions at the Montelimar area.

1. 3rd Platoon, Lt. Rodaler, Platoon Leader, was cut off at Charols and the platoon continued to fight in small piece meal sections:

Sgt. Mike Aun, armored car section engaged a German armored column of vehicles from a well selected, undetected position on the right flank of the column. By superior marksmanship and courage to stay his ground he destroyed eighteen (18) enemy vehicles. This helped at the beginning to cause confusion among the enemy forces facing Troop A, 117th Cavalry. By hit-run tactics all over the area the enemy thought we were a superior force. Sgt. Aun had my approval to destroy his equipment and retreat to the hills if necessary. Instead he fought gallantly and foxed the enemy. He was a courageous soldier.

Cpl. Herman, Half Track Leader, reported to me at my CP west of Cleon, France with enemy information so important to the task force and me. He worked his way through approximately 500 German infantrymen (about a battalion size unit). In order to accomplish this he had to hide his half track. Cpl. Herman indicated to me he could bring his half track safely through the enemy lines, I said go, and he did just that. Herman was a fine soldier with courage and great spirit.

Lt. Rodaler, Platoon Leader, was cut off from his scattered platoon after a sharp firefight but was able to work his way through german lines to my CP. He had been wounded as his face was filled with pieces of shrapnel and metal apparently from a potatoe masher type grenade. He wanted to return to the fray. Rodaler passed through the enemy lines again, and eventually assembled his whole platoon with very little lose of equipment and causalities. He was a very fine brave officer. Several months later he was killed in action.

2. 1st Platoon Lt. Ken Cronin, Platoon leader, was backed up near port de Bonet and defended a bridge. He was in a severe firefight and needed help. By his tenacity and courage he kept the enemy armored column at bay. I organized all my people in Troop headquarters to assist him. Eventually I was able to get the Task Force to support him with a medium tank unit. However, by then Cronin had things in control. He did a superior job and showed great courage.

Sgt. Joe Poirier, Troop A, Supply Sargeant, was placed in charge of a provisional armored section (1 armored car, 2 jeeps, 1 half Track) from the remnants of Troop A Headquarters. I stripped the entire CP keeping only my radios vehicles, and a maintenance half track with my 1st Sgt acting as executive officer. Poirier's mission was to join Lt. Cronin of the 1st Platoon and give him what support he could. On the way near Manus he ran into a large enemy armored column. With his small force he took cover in court yard of a french type row house. Camouflaged his vehicles with any thing available such as flower pots, etc. He relayed the count of enemy vehicles, crews, etc. This was greatly needed and helped us to further confuse the enemy. Sgt. Poirier reported personally to me dressed in a french cloths with black beret with detailed enemy information. He showed great initiative, imagination, judgment and courage. In the meantime the 1st Platoon received medium tank suport.

2nd Platoon, Lt. Carl Ellison platoon Ellison was defending, Cleon which was only a few miles south of the all important command post at Butler's Task Force and the 117th Cavalry HQ along with the Task Force's vital supply dumps. The platoon had engaged a mechanized enemy column attempting to enter the small town of Cleon. I personally observed Lt. Ellison with a mounted machine gun jeep dash up one street, fire at the approaching enemy, then switch to another street and do the same thing. He did this repeatedly. This caused considerable confusion to the enemy. Again, they thought we had a vast superior force. Eventually we gave Ellison 105 artillery support which interdicted the main enemy approach to Ellison position. His forward observation of the effect of the fire was superior. Again he served as an outstanding leader in all areas. He was a fine brave soldier. He had initiative and staying ability on the battle field. There is no doubt in my mind that if Ellison failed to cause this superior enemy force to turn back that the Command Post and supply dumps would have been wiped out in a short period of time. Several months later he was killed in action, too.

Personal observations by Captain Thomas C. Piddington, Commanding Officer, Troop A, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized).

Signed:

Thomas C. Piddington
Thomas C. Piddington
Captain 0425249

ARMY SERVICE FORCES
Eighth Service Command
Army Service Forces Training Center
Camp Claiborne, Louisiana

(ASFTCA)

31 August 1945

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Unit Citation

TO: Commanding Officer
117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron
APO 758
c/o Postmaster
New York, N.Y.

1. It is desired by the undersigned that the necessary papers and documents be prepared for a Unit Citation for the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron for its participation in the operations of the so-called Task Force Butler. The necessary records are not available for this recommendation to be prepared locally and the request is made, therefore, that if favorably considered by the Commanding Officer of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, recommendation and supporting papers be prepared in his Headquarters and forwarded to me for presentation to the War Department.

2. The recommendation should stress the bold aggressive reconnaissance that the squadron made, the long distances that it operated in small units behind the enemy's lines and the difficulties of supply and communication. It should be stressed further that the squadron supplied the communications and Headquarters control for the Task Force, *the* number of prisoners taken including special mention of the high ranking personnel captured should also be made. No hesitation should be made in the recommendation that the success of the operation is due largely to the aggressive action of the squadron.

3. It will be appreciated if I be supplied with the present address of Colonel Hodge in order that I may communicate with him for additional details and assistance when the requesting papers are received by me.

F. B. Butler
F. B. BUTLER,
Brigadier General, USA
Deputy Commander

HEADQUARTERS VI CORPS
APO 46, U. S. Army


31 August 1944

My dear Colonel Hodge:

I wish to pass on to you and your officers and men the high esteem I have for their assistance in the recent operations of the so-termed Provisional Armored Group. Your men spearheaded the advance, engaged in critical combat and supplied essential communications, all with credit to themselves and to their organization. It is no exaggeration to state that this successful operation can be attributed largely to the assistance your organization rendered.

I wish you would take occasion at the earliest opportunity to acquaint your officers and men with my appreciation and to express to them my hearty thanks.

Very sincerely yours,


F. B. BUTLER
Brigadier General, U. S. Army

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Subject: Recommendation for Unit Citation

To: Brig. Gen. F.B. Butler, Deputy Commander
Eight Service Command,
Army Services Forces Training Center,
Camp Claiborne, Louisiana

I. In pursuance of Army Regulations based upon your recommendations the enclosed documents and supporting maps are submitted for recommendation of a Unit Citation for the 117th. Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (mecz.) for their actions in combat while participating as part of the "Butler Task Force" in the invasion of Southern France during the period 15-30 August 1944.

2. The 117th. Cav. Ron. Sq. landed with the assault echelons of the 3rd., 36th., and 45th. Infantry Divisions on the enemy held beaches of Southern France shortly after "H" Hour, 15th. August 1944. Upon completing the missions assigned to the various elements of the squadron, the unit was assembled in the vicinity of Le Muy, France 17th. August 1944. Orders were received from VI Corp attaching the squadron to the Provisional Armor Group under command of Brig. Gen. F.B. Butler, Deputy Corp Commander. Utilizing the splendid radio facilities of the squadron, General Butler superimposed his small staff on that of the squadron staff for means of control, operations and communication both to higher and lower echelons.

Making full use of the capabilities of the light and fast armored reconnaissance units of the squadron, these patrols by their bold and aggressive actions, thoroughly disorganized and disrupted the enemy's communications and prevented any semblance of an orderly retreat or withdrawal. Soon outstripping its own lines of communication and supply the squadron, employing its tremendous fire power and extreme mobility combined with acute resourcefulness and daring of its leaders, soon overran thousands of square miles of Southern France. Many towns and villages were liberated from the long years of the enemy's hold.

During the first day of operation of the Provisional Armor Group the squadron affected the capture of the Commanding General of the German LXII Corp along with his entire staff. On the following day, the 19th. of August 1944, elements of the squadron seized another German General Officer.

The squadron penetrated more than 125 miles from the beach head in a few days. On the 20th. of August, one troop of the squadron by bold and aggressive action forced the surrender of the entire garrison of 1500 enemy soldiers with its commanding officer in the town of Gap. The American force did not consist of more than 140 men and officers.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Taking advantage of the favorable tactical situation and the demoralized state of confusion within the ranks of the enemy, the squadron penetrated deeper into the heart of the enemy's territory. Thousands of German prisoners were captured and hundreds of pieces of enemy equipment were destroyed.

Within four days the squadron advanced over 190 miles into enemy held territory succeeding in reaching the junction of the Rhone and Drone Rivers before the main elements of the retreating 19th. German Army. There the enemy was caught by complete surprise as evident by the routine take offs from the airfield just north of Montelimar which resulted in several German planes being hit by patrols. As the route along the east bank of the Rhone River was the last escape route remaining to the, orders received from higher headquarters was to block and cut this escape route where ever possible.

The German 19th Army was spearheaded by the crack and seasoned 11th. Panzer Division who orders were to keep the escape route open at all costs. Notwithstanding the 117th. Squadron pressed their attack relentlessly and was able to contain the this superior attacking enemy force within the Gateway of Montelimar until reinforcements arrived from the 36th. Division.

3. Throughout the entire operation of the Provisional Armor Group the 117th. Cav. Rcn. Sq. by its display of discipline and a high state of training was able to operate more than 150 miles from its source of supply with the greatest possible operational combat results. Engaging the enemy wherever he could be found and inflicting heavy and disastrous damage against his communications and supplies, this force made it possible for the rapid and astounding advance of VI Corp. Although suffering from fatigue from continuous operation day and night, never once did the spirit or will to engage the enemy ever falter by the officers and men of the squadron. Attacks repeatedly against numerically stronger enemy forces and superior tanks of the enemy, the squadron pressed their attacks to destroy the enemy with every means at their disposal.

By their aggressive actions the members of the 117th. Cav. Rcn. Sq. contributed immeasurably toward the successful operation of the Provisional Armor Group, thereby reflecting great credit upon themselves and the military service.



Harold J. Samsel
Lt. Col. Cavalry
Commanding

Encl's.

1. Detail account of operations "Butler Task Force.
2. Proposed Citation
3. Supporting maps.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Proposed Citation

The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (mecz) is recommended for a Presidential Unit Citation for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy from 15-30 August 1944 in Southern France. As part of a Provisional Armor Group under Command of Brig. Gen. F.B. Butler, the 117th Cav Rcn. Sq. spearheaded an amazing advance from the beachhead of VI Corp north through enemy territory to cover 190 miles within four days. The bold, aggressive, courageous, and continuous action of the squadron inflicted heavy and disastrous damage against German communications and supply routes, and so disrupted the German 19th Army that their efforts at orderly retreat were paralyzed.

Despite fatigue from three days of continued fighting and patrolling to secure the beachhead, the 117th Cav. Rcn. Sq. launched a three pronged assault against a known enemy Corps position on the morning of 18 August 1944. The attack was pressed with such vigor, speed and daring that Troop "C" broke through the line of defense and captured the entire Corps staff, including the commander, Lt. Gen. Neuling. That afternoon Capt. Omer Brown of Troop "E" drove into town by himself and with spectacular audacity forced the surrender of a garrison of 150 enemy soldiers. The following day at Digne in a brilliant example of maneuvering and fire fighting, 60 men from Troop "B" forced the surrender of a garrison of 600 German soldiers including its commanding officer a Brigadier General. Meanwhile, Troop "A" was similarly engaged at Chateau Arnaud where it shelled a garrison of 150 enemy into submission. By now the group was beyond radio communication distance from Corps headquarters, had advanced beyond the area covered by its maps, and had an unprotected supply route of 90 miles. But the squadron continued the advance and the next day, captured tons of supplies, and by a daring show of strength and fire power, despite dwindling ammunition supplies, one troop again forced the surrender of a stubborn and greatly superior force of 1200 enemy at the town of Gap. Orders were received by cub plane so that on 21 August 1944 in a remarkable and spectacular dash the entire squadron drove seventy miles to the west in six hours and threw itself into the pass north of Montelimar to stop the retreating 19th German Army.

For eight days the squadron was committed to action against greatly superior enemy forces, but by advancing to points where weapons could engage the enemy in direct fire, by constant and brilliant maneuvering, by unceasing patrolling and probing, and by using every available man and vehicle the enemy was contained, harassed and reduced until reinforcements could arrive.

In four days the 117th Cav. Rcn. Sq. covered 190 road miles against opposition, captured more than 3500 prisoners, liberated approximately 6645 square miles of French territory, killed hundreds of the enemy, demolished scores of their vehicles and material, captured tons of vital supplies, permitted the rapid advance of the VI Corps, and prevented the withdrawal of the major part of the German 19th Army. At no time during this action did the strength of the squadron exceed 650 men and officers. This amazing action in the face of fierce and numerically superior enemy opposition and despite great fatigue is a brilliant achievement and upheld the highest traditions of the service in aggressiveness, courage, resourcefulness and discipline.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Operations of the 117th. Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron
in Southern France 15-30 August 1944 against the 19th German Army.

The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) was assigned to the American Seventh Army in Italy 1 July 1944 to prepare and train for the invasion of Southern France. The squadron was attached VI Corps for tactical operations and assembled in the vicinity of Naples, Italy, for training from 5 July to 2 August 1944.

The plan of employment of the squadron in the forthcoming operation was to attach to each of the three infantry divisions comprising VI Corps, a reinforced reconnaissance troop. Each such troop comprised a reconnaissance troop reinforced with one platoon of light tanks and one section assault guns (M-7 105mm Howitzer).

On the 3rd of August 1944, Troop "A" was attached to the 36th Infantry Division, Troop "B" was attached to the 45th Infantry Division and Troop "C" was attached to the 3rd Infantry Division. Each troop reported to their respective divisions and continued training to perfect the combined teamwork of each of the division task forces.

All elements of the squadron less the rear echelon sailed from Naples Harbor 13 August 1944.

15 August 1944 "D" Day

The invasion armada approached the shores of Southern France on the early morning of the 15th of August 1944. "H" Hour was 0800 and Troop "B" was the first unit of the squadron to land on the beaches. Troop "B" landed with the initial assault waves of the 45th Division at Hour plus 70 minutes in the vicinity of St. Maxime (510230) and moved rapidly inland. The troop screened the advance of elements of the 45th Division meeting light enemy resistance. By nightfall had reached the vicinity of la Garde-Freinet (350215).

The landings of the 3rd. Division were temporarily held up due to a large sandbar which prevented the assault craft from approaching the assigned beaches. However the sandbar was soon breached and Troop "B" landed with the assault waves at "H" Hour plus 5 hours south of St. Tropez (513112). Rapidly advancing inland, elements of the troop met determined enemy resistance in the vicinity (440178) and in a sharp engagement had a armored car knocked out and destroyed. The troop moved northwest and by dark had reached the vicinity of Grimaud (305168).

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

The strongest enemy resistance at the beaches was met by the 36th. Infantry Division and it was necessary to land at an alternate beach east of St. Raphael (610335). Troop "A" hit the beaches immediately behind the assault waves and was soon engaged by the enemy. The German resistance was fierce and determined however by nightfall the troop outposted in the vicinity of (602346). A number of casualties was suffered by Troop "A" during the days encounters.

Squadron Headquarters landed in the vicinity of St Maxime and a CP. vicinity (495213) by 1500 hours.

16 August 1944 "D" plus 1

Troop "A" advanced toward Le Muy (420390) meeting scattered enemy resistance and contacted elements of the American air borne troops which had dropped during the early morning hours of "D" Day. Troop assembled late in the evening vicinity of Paget-sur-Argens (516377).

Troop "B" continuing to reconnoiter ahead of elements of the 45th. Division advanced toward the northwest, reaching points at LeLuc (220295) and Vidauban (315335). Enemy resistance continued to be light and ineffective and by close of day a considerable advance had been made.

Troop "C" made the longest advance of the day, moving due west protecting the right flank of the 3rd. Division which was moving along the coast road toward la Londe-les-Maures (170008). Troop "C" advanced along the axis Grimaud west toward Collobrieres (225119). During the early afternoon the 2nd. platoon reached Pierrefeu (092100) and shortly thereafter started to shell the airport at (072125) and soon captured it intact. By dark the leading platoon had advanced as far west as Cuers (030112) and sent patrols to the north and south.

17 August 1944 "D" plus 2

The squadron was ordered to assemble in the vicinity of Le Muy and by early afternoon all units were closed in and bivouaced in the area of La Motte (384313). Orders were received attaching the 117th. Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron to the Provisional Armor Group. The squadron's mission was to act as spearhead for the task force which was commanded by Brig. Gen. F.B. Butler, the deputy commander of VI Corp. The elements of the armor group in addition to the squadron were the 2nd Bn. 143rd Inf., one company 753rd Tank Bn. (med.), 69th. Arm. FA. Bn., one platoon 759th Tank Destroyer Bn. and a small medical detachment.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

The mission of the Provisional Armor Group was to advance aggressively toward Sisteron and thence either;

- (a) Seize and hold the high ground north of Grenoble; or
- (b) Seize the high ground immediately south of Lyon astraddle the Rhone River; or
- (c) Advance to the high ground on the east bank of the Rhone River between Montelimar and Livron.

It was hoped that by accomplishing anyone of the above objectives, to sever the enemy's communications from the Riviera to the north. Each reconnaissance troop had attached one platoon of infantry and one platoon of light tanks from Troop "F".

Final plans were made and disseminated to all leaders and ranks. General Butler decided to use squadron headquarters for the operation of the task force. Leading elements were to start the advance at 0530 hours 18th August 1944.

18th August 1944 "D" plus 3

Troop "C" jumped off at 0530 hours 18th August 1944 and soon engaged with the enemy in the vicinity north of Draguignan (305482). After a short sharp encounter the 3rd platoon captured the Commanding General, Lt. Gen. F. Neuling and the entire staff of the 62nd German Corp. Troop "C" continued to meet fanatic enemy resistance, particularly from hostile anti-tank fire from the vicinity (290490). By noon the enemy resistance was overcome and the troop continued to advance northwest, protecting the right flank of the task force. At Ampus (275535) the commanding officer of Troop "E", Capt. Omer Brown who was killed in action a week later, while reconnoitering for positions for his guns, entered the town and forced the surrender of the entire garrison, including the commanding officer and 150 of the enemy. Capt. Brown effected this surrender with the assistance of his driver.

With Troop "C" protecting the right flank the balance of the squadron advanced along the axis Draguignan west toward Salernes (14548) then northwest to Fox Amphoux (043497) and north toward Quinson (980617). The 3rd Platoon of Troop "A" was ordered to proceed toward Barjols (965465) to protect the left and rear flank of the task force. This platoon met strong enemy opposition including self-propelled anti-tank. A section of TD's was dispatched to reinforce this platoon. A fire fight ensued which lasted until darkness, after which the platoon outposted Barjols to contain any possible threat to the task force.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Troop "A" spearheaded the advance of the main column of the squadron and met only light and scattered enemy resistance. The stone bridge at Quinson had been destroyed but with the splendid assistance of the French Maquis in the vicinity, a ford was hastily constructed and the entire column was able to continue its advance. At Quinson, Troop "A" advanced northwest toward Valensole (932775) protecting the left flank. The main column advanced along its main axis from Quinson toward Riez (601755) with Troop "B" preceding the advance.

By 1800 hours Squadron Headquarters was established on the north eastern outskirts of Riez. By nightfall Troop "A" outposted the area north of Valensole while Troop "B" outposted north of Puimoisson (045807). Troop "C" was recalled from the right rear flank and outposted the town of Riez.

Thus at the end of the first days' operation of the Provisional Armor Group, the squadron had spearheaded the advance and penetrated approximately fifty road miles into the enemy's territory. The spirit of the entire command was exceedingly high, perhaps with the realization of an historic military operation in the making.

The French civilians were delirious with joy as town after town was liberated. Their genuine welcome and high enthusiasm was a sight to behold, older people wept unashamedly with tears of joy, while the younger men and women showered the American liberators with wine, melons, fruits and in many instances personal gifts. Perhaps such awe inspiring demonstrations by a down trodden people who felt the yoke of the German heel, gave greater strength and provided a higher incentive to all ranks to fulfill their mission in destroying the machine responsible for the devastation which the enemy left in its wake.

19th August 1944 "D" plus 4

The day's objective was Sisteron (883172). Troop "B" continued north toward Digne (123068) with the 1st Platoon advancing along the right bank of the Durance River toward Malijai (960006). Enemy resistance was encountered at Chateaufort (105978) but was soon overcome. Advancing north toward Digne the strongest enemy resistance as yet encountered was met. The German forces were engaged shortly after noon on the southern outskirts of town and fire fight continued for the next six hours. At 1800 hours Troop "B" less the 1st platoon, forced its way into town and forced the surrender of the entire garrison of 600 Germans including the commanding officer, a Brigadier General.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

The 1st Platoon of Troop "B" also became engaged with the enemy south of Malijai (958008) where they destroyed an enemy armored car and drove off two others. By night fall this platoon succeeded in crossing the Bleone River and occupied Malijai.

Troop "A" led the advance of the main column followed by Troop "C" along the axis Riez northwest toward Valensole thence to Oraison (876860). Troop "A" sent one platoon southwest toward Vinon (800640) to protect the left rear flank. The bridge over the Durance River at (805732) was found to be destroyed.

Troop "A" discovered that the bridge crossing the Durance River at la Brillanne (860868) was partly destroyed but would carry the weight of the heaviest vehicles of the task force. A small German patrol who probably was attempting to completely destroy this bridge, was driven off at the far end of the bridge. Later the enemy attempted to hit the bridge with dive bombers but failed in the attempt. Advancing north along the west bank of the Durance River Troop "A" met strong enemy resistance on the outskirts of Chateau-Arnoux (940060). However the troop commander, Capt. Piddington, after shelling the enemy positions sent in a French Maquis to demand the surrender of the German forces. The German commander agreed to surrender but only on the condition that the German garrison become prisoners of the Americans. The terms were accepted and over 150 prisoners were taken. Troop "A" continued its advance toward the north and reached Sisteron by 1800 hours, outposting the northern outskirts of town.

Troop "C" was assigned the mission of protecting the left flank and crossed at la Brillanne advancing due west then north. The 1st platoon reached Banon (640883) without meeting any resistance and outposted the town for the night. The balance of Troop "C" proceeded due north and reached the town of St. Etienne-les-Orgues (760997). Patrols encountered only scattered resistance a few miles north of this area.

Squadron Headquarters was established on the southern outskirts of Sisteron, advancing approximately another forth road miles during the day. Up to this point the strong enemy resistance was encountered on the day since landing on the beach head. Over a thousand prisoners had been during the last two day's operations.

Radio communication to VI corp Headquarters was no longer possible due to the great distance which separated our headquarters. It was necessary to use liaison cub observation planes to maintain this vital communication.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Available maps of the area became another problem as we had outstripped the planned schedule and an emergency call was made for the vital maps to continue and exploit the disorganized state of affairs of the enemy. It was necessary to operate from the small scale road maps during the next day's operations.

20th August 1944 "D" plus 5

Troop "C" starting in the early hours of the morning spearheaded the advance of the squadron. Advancing along the main axis Sisteron-Monteglin (780298)-Montrond (713370)-Aspres-sur-Buech (715526) the troop encountered but light and ineffective enemy resistance. The 2nd. platoon reconnoitered to the west of the town of St. Vincent-sur-Jabron (728133) while the 1st. platoon advanced to Barret-le-bas (712237). Troop "C" was ordered during the early afternoon to advance due north toward Lalley (645782). Upon reaching that point the 3rd. platoon continued northward and by dark reached Clelles (598860) and outposted the town. The 2nd. platoon which had now rejoined the troop continued northwest to Mens (700854) where strong outposts were stationed. Troop "C" established their CP at la Croix Haute (653720).

Troop "A" was assigned the mission of protecting the right flank of the squadron. Advancing along the main axis moved northeast from les Blanchés (727506) toward Bap (970678). Approaching the western outskirts of Gap, the leading elements of Troop "A" encountered dug in enemy positions which were only lightly manned. The enemy only offered light resistance and soon retreated toward town. The troop commander deployed his platoons to effectively cover the town. The commander of Troop "E" who was supporting the operations of Troop "A" with two M-7 105mm Howitzers, volunteered to enter Gap and demand the surrender of the German force occupying Gap. Advancing under a white flag of truce, Capt. O. Brown entered Gap and demanded to see the Commanding Officer. At first the German Commander was not disposed to surrender, however, when he was informed that a superior armored column was on the outskirts of the town and with the further threat that if he did not surrender, that sixty Flying Fortresses would bomb the town at 1700 hours, the German commander somewhat wavered.

After an hour's discussion, the German commander decided that the French Maquis who were strongly entrenched in the surrounding hills would ambush his force, refused to surrender. Capt. Brown safely returned to his command and ordered his two guns to fire on the radio towers at the southern edge of town. After forty rounds were fired, white flags appeared in town. Capt. Brown returned to Gap where the German commander agreed to surrender.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

To the amazement of everyone a total of 1200 enemy prisoners were surrendered to an American force of less than 150 men. Assistance was requested from Squadron to handle the large amount of prisoners. With the additional assistance of Polish nationals who were part of the German garrison, the prisoners were marched back in a column of fours to the airport at Aspres-sur-Buech. Troop "A" remained at Gap and outposted the town. It was reported that an enemy column of 1000 soldiers was marching on Gap from the northeast. However, there was no further enemy reaction that night.

Troop "B" rejoined the squadron, moving up from Digne and outposted Aspres-sur-Buech where the CP of Squadron Headquarters was established. Another fifty miles advance was made by the squadron and by the close of the days operations a deep thrust had been made into the heart of the enemy's territory.

21st. August 1944 ("D" plus 6)

Orders were received from VI Corp Headquarters to execute plan "C" of the original mission and advance to the high ground on the east bank of the Rhone River between Montelimar (920530) and Livron (983778) and cut the main road leading to Valence. It was believed that this was the main escape route of the retreating 19th. German Army.

Troop "B" was assigned the mission of spearheading this new advance and starting shortly after dawn moved aggressively northwest from Aspres-sur-Buech along the axis Luc-en-Diois (473618)-Die (402772) then west to Crest (128736) thence southwest to St. Marcel-les-Sauzet (960583). By this rapid advance Troop "B" reached the high ground at Magranon (935600) overlooking the main road on the east bank of the Rhone River running between Montelimar and Livron. The 2nd. and 3rd. platoons of Troop "B" advanced to the northeast outskirts of Montelimar, the first allied troops to approach this key town which was to become the outstanding engagement of the Southern French Campaign. Already the advance elements of the retreating German 19th. Army were moving north along this escape route and were taken under fire by the armored cars and light tanks of Troop "B". The confusion of the enemy paralyzed the German column; they could not believe that American units had penetrated so deeply in such short time. German planes were still taking off from the airfield north of Montelimar (906563) and were fired upon by the armored cars of Troop "B". The first platoon of Troop "B" enjoyed a fine day at the expense of the bewildered German column which only a few miles before were leisurely marching along in column. Shortly after dark the enemy countered with strong forces and it was necessary for the troop to consolidate and wait for reinforcements to be rushed up. However, the 1st. platoon held its commanding position and remained in observation.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Troop "C" followed behind Troop "B" having assembled at Aspres-sur-Buech. The entire troop occupied Crest with the 2nd. platoon pushing on to Livron where it was ascertained that the bridge south of Livron was blown. The enemy was already fording the Drone River at the vicinity of (945773) and the 2nd. platoon took this enemy column under fire with their armored cars, obtaining excellent results. The 1st. platoon of Troop "C" advanced northwest from Livron cutting the main highway in the vicinity of (986823). There the platoon engaged another strong enemy column by surprise and when the smoke had cleared away more than fifty enemy vehicles had been destroyed, many more damaged and the German column was completely disorganized and scattered. The remaining platoon of the Troop, the 3rd., advanced north from Crest to the vicinity of Peogier (123767) to protect the right flank of the troop. Again with available reinforcements to hold their exposed positions, it was necessary at nightfall to withdraw the 1st. and 2nd. platoons and consolidate Troop "C" in the vicinity of Crest. Strong outposts were maintained as the Germans had strong patrols operating in the vicinity.

Squadron and Task Force Headquarters established its CP at Marsanne (013635) where it immediately came under heavy enemy artillery fire. It was necessary to move the CP where it was out of observation. Troop "A" was recalled from Gap and arrived that evening, near the vicinity of Squadron Headquarters.

It was apparent that the retreating 19th. German Army had been caught by surprise and if strong American reinforcements could be rushed to this key sector, it might be possible to cut the last escape route remaining open to the Germans. This sudden and speedy exploit which Troops "B" and "C" so brilliantly executed was the climax of one of the most rapid advances made in military history. In less than six hours the three platoons of Troop "B" had covered a distance of more than seventy five miles. As a result of this classic dash and dash, so characteristic of cavalry, the scene was set to destroy the bulk of the German 19th. Army. It remained only for the main body of the American VI Corp to exploit this sudden success and rush sufficient troops and armor to effectively destroy this army before the larger part of the enemy force would escape.

Unfortunately the brilliant spearhead of the Provisional Armor Group had raced so far out ahead that the bulk of the American force was still over 150 miles to the rear. Thus by "D" Day plus six the Task Force had advanced the amazing distance of over 250 miles since landing on the beaches of Southern France, 15th. August 1944. Had not the highest qualities of leadership been displayed by all leaders, particularly those of junior rank, the successful accomplishment of this mission would not have been possible. The highest state of morale and esprit de corps prevailed throughout the operation and was an important contributing factor toward this great achievement.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

22 August 1944 "D" plus 7

With the realization that supporting troops would still take another day to reach this sector and determined to hold at all costs this vital gain, the squadron employed its maximum strength. The plan was to attempt to block all key roads to the right flank of the German escape route between Montelimar and Lorient (970756).

Troop "A" blocked all roads leading north across the Roubion River from St. Jacques (992590) east to Mamas (100594). The enemy however had succeeded in already crossing the river and the 1st. platoon became heavily engaged with a superior force of enemy Mark V tanks supported by panzer grenadiers. It was soon ascertained that the IIth. Panzer Division were opposing our elements. This platoon was surrounded but continued to offer fierce resistance until two armored cars were destroyed and three jeeps seriously damaged. Reinforcements were rushed to this position and with the assistance of two tank destroyers, the platoon was able to contain this threat. The enemy continued to probe this entire area but by nightfall, Troop "A" effectively prevented any enemy penetrations.

Troop "B" continued to block in the sector north east of Montelimar and east along the main highway from Montelimar to Livron. The enemy likewise was determined to hold this escape route open and sent strong patrols supported by tanks against this sector. However Troop "B" by determined resistance repulsed and contained these probing enemy patrols. However a few enemy tanks did succeed in penetrating but were not successful in achieving effective results.

Troop "C" supported by the guns of Troop "E" was assigned the mission of securing the north flank along the Drone River from Lorient east to Grane. The "E" Troop guns were placed in position on the high ground overlooking Lorient at (990750). Dominating the entire escape corridor of the retreating German Army which by now was moving in three columns abreast along the main road leading to Lorient, Troop "E" poured a murderous fire into the bewildered German column, firing direct at 2500 yards. Hundreds of German vehicles were set ablaze and destroyed. The enemy frantically attempted to take cover but the enemy column was effectively blocked on the road and Troop "E" enjoyed a field day. There was no question but that the terrain held by Troop "E" and the 1st platoon of Troop "C" was the key terrain feature of this battleground. As long as it was held it would prevent the enemy from escaping across the Drone River to safety.

At the close of day the enemy had penetrated only slightly into our lines. However it could not be expected that the enemy would permit our occupying the dominating features and thereby preventing him from keeping this vital escape route open, without first making a strong and determined effort to destroy this threat.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

23rd August 1944 "D" plus 8

On this day the Provisional Armor Group passed to the Command of the 36th. Division.

Troop "A" was now reinforced with a company of medium tanks and a force of two hundred French Maquis who volunteered their assistance. Elements of the IIth. Panzer Division made another strong bid to penetrate through "A" Troop's screen. A sharp encounter soon ensued but with splendid artillery support backed by the medium tanks, the enemy force of infantry and tanks were repulsed. Troop "A" continued to defend along the Roubion River and prevented the enemy from turning the flank. The CP of Troop "A" was situated at Cleon Andrian (062601).

Troop "B" was attached to a battalion of the 141st. Infantry who had orders to attack Montelimar. Troop "B" protected the left flank from enemy infantry patrols which were always supported by tanks. The American infantry force suffered heavy losses and was forced to give some ground. Enemy patrols were more determined and infiltrated through Troop "B" positions and constantly harassed the reconnaissance platoons. The engagement continued after dark with the result that the enemy and our forces were completely mingled with one another with no established line of any kind. The situation was decidedly fluid with the Germans determined to roll our forces back.

Troop "C" with support of a company of infantry continued to protect the right and north flank of the sector south along the Drone River. Enemy patrols infiltrated along the bank of the Drone attempting to reach Grane. No other action was taken by the enemy during this period.

All indications pointed to preparations by the enemy to attack with great strength to open a vital escape route for the 19th. German Army. As yet sufficient reinforcements had not arrived in this sector to wholly contain this large German Force. As a result, the German columns advanced along the axis of the main highway between Montelimar and Livron using secondary roads and trails wherever possible. At night the enemy moved the heaviest equipment and it appeared he was succeeding in escaping across the Drone River.

24th August 1944 "D" plus 9

Troop "A" maintained strong defensive positions along the northern bank of the River Roubion. These positions were held until 1300 hours when the troop was relieved by Troop "B". Troop "A" was ordered to assemble in the vicinity of Aspres-sur-Buech (715528) and report to the CG of the 45th. Division for instructions. Troop "A" upon arrival at that point was assigned to a small task force consisting of a company of infantry and a company of 4.2 chemical mortars.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mech.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Their mission was to reconnoiter aggressively toward Briancon (395973) which is situated near the French-Italian border deep in the Alps. This force assembled in the vicinity of Chorges (I30568) late in the evening and prepared to move out at daylight the following morning.

Troop "B" while still engaged with a determined enemy north-east of Montelimar, was ordered to relieve Troop "A" from their position along the River Roubion. This relief was affected by 1300 hours and Troop "B" maintained strong blocking positions.

Troop "C" protected the north flank maintaining strong position on the south side of the Drone River. Strong patrols were constantly probing toward the north to determine the intentions of the German Force. The 2nd. platoon reached Alex (045772) and a strong roadblock was established. The 1st. platoon advanced north to Tromparant (I23787) and sent light patrols to the north and northwest. No enemy resistance was encountered in this sector.

The squadron CP was established in the vicinity of Puy St. Martin (087639).

25th. August 1944 "D" plus IO

At daybreak the enemy launched strong attacks along the north and south banks of the Drone River east from Loriol and Livron. This attack was supported by several enemy Mark V tanks and our light elements were forced to give ground. The enemy succeeded in taking Alex before and by 1300 hours Troop "C" was engaged with the enemy on the western outskirts of Grane. Attacking with infantry supported by five Mark V tanks the enemy again forced the platoon defending Grane to fall back. The enemy succeeded in occupying Grane and established road blocks leading east and south. In this engagement Capt. Omer Brown who had distinguished himself on many occasions during the operations throughout the Southern France campaign, was killed in Grane attempting to direct his assault guns in a vain effort to prevent the enemy tanks from seizing this vital town.

It was apparent that the enemy's intention was to protect his right flank and insure an uninterrupted movement of his columns over the Drone River. Again elements of the IIth. Panzer Division were identified the unit which was launching these determine attacks.

Troop "B" was ordered to the high ground southeast of Loriol to relieve the pressure against Troop "C". However, the enemy had already seized this key terrain feature which was originally held three days previously. It was indeed a tactical mistake when higher headquarters ordered the elements of the squadron to another mission which forced the giving up the most important terrain feature of perhaps the entire Montelimar battleground.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mech.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

Troop "A" was detached from the Provisional Armor Group and served on the Swiss border with O.S.S. and the French Maquis. As part of the Bilbo Task Force moved out from Chorges spearheading this newly organized task force. The 1st. platoon was ordered to proceed to Barcelonnette (437408) and contact elements of O.S.S. who were reported operating in that vicinity. The bridge at (I51499) was found to be destroyed and as a result the platoon made a wide swing and returned to the Gap-Aspres-sur-Buech-Monteglin-Sisteron route and crossed the Durance River at Chateau-Arnoux. Moving east through Malijai to Digne the platoon turned north to La Javie (2I2I60). Continuing due north to Seyne (205358) the platoon reached Vincent-les-Forts (2I2455). No sign of the enemy was observed in this sector which contained many well organized group of French Maquis, some of whom joined up with the platoon. The platoon reached Barcelonnette and contacted a group of O.S.S. elements. The platoon remained there that evening after covering a distance of 135 miles. Troop "A" less the 1st. platoon continued northwest toward Briancon through Embrun (30I598) then north to Mont-Dauphin where the column turned south toward St. Paul (507555) to contact the 1st. platoon. By nightfall the troop reached la Salce (462630). No enemy resistance was encountered although reports were received from Maquis that strong enemy forces were holding the important road junction at la Seare l'Aoula.

26th. August 1944 "D" plus II

Realizing that the 19th. German Army still was escaping north by fording the Drone River west of Loriol, higher headquarters sent strong reinforcements. However, it appeared that the enemy employing the IIth. Panzer Division in protecting the enemy's right flank was succeeding in keeping the only available escape route open. Already one American road block was destroyed which tried to cut the road east of the Condillac Pass. The enemy attacked with strong infantry forces supported with six Mark VI tanks. Unless this escape route could be successfully cut at Loriol and west to the Drone River, the bulk of the German Army would escape.

Troops "B" and "C" were employed along a line from (I00720) east to (I55710) and from (0I2739) southwest to Blanchan (034718). One platoon outposted Crest supported by three guns of Troop "E". The light tanks of Troop "F" were assembled for the first time as a troop since landing on the beaches. The troop was attached to a task force that was to attack through the Condillac Pass (960633). The attack was to cut the main road and then drive north toward Loriol cleaning out whatever enemy resistance in the sector. However the enemy was strongly entrenched in depth at the foot of the pass and by dark the main road outside of the pass was still firmly in the hands of the enemy.

*I2-

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mech.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

The Squadron and Group CP moved to the vicinity of (967638) where it was heavily shelled for thirty six consecutive hours. The enemy continued to ford the Drone River despite the heavy shelling which resulted in the loss of many enemy vehicles.

Troop "A" operating near the Italian border ran into strong enemy resistance at la Seare l'Aoula. The enemy appeared determined to hold this pass. The 1st. platoon of Troop "A" attempted to contact the remainder of the troop advancing from the north. The resistance was too strong for the platoon. The enemy was engaged from both the north and south and many casualties were inflicted on the enemy with only light damage to the vehicles of the troop. Strong organized support was received from local Maquis groups who were supported by the O.S.S. Their splendid assistance although ill equipped indeed an inspiration to the American force and spur their efforts to greater heights. By nightfall however the enemy still held the pass. It was expected that elements of the Air Borne Task Force moving up from the Riviera might arrive by the early morning.

27th August 1944 "D" plus I2

The American plan was to attack through the Bessou Pass (984703) and drive north toward Loriol. One battalion of infantry supported by medium tanks and Troop "F" with their light tanks was assigned the mission of breaking out through the pass. Another task force composed of a company of tank destroyers, a battalion of infantry and Troop "C" was to attack west from Grane toward Loriol.

The attack started at dawn and immediately met strong enemy resistance, however the Germans soon showed signs of giving ground. Fire fights ensued throughout the day and limited gains were made. Troop "E" with its seven M-7 105mm howitzers were emplaced in a commanding position at (983705) overlooking the main highway just south of Loriol. Shooting direct at about 2500 yards the troop destroyed a large number of vehicles including a number that were painted with red crosses, but which blew up with terrific explosions when hit. They were supposed to be medical ambulances but were without question carrying ammunition. By the close of day it appeared that the enemy's escape route would soon be cut. However the enemy continued his attempts to ford the Drone regardless of the losses.

28th August 1944 "D" plus I3

The American forces with determination were steadily closing on Loriol and cutting the enemy's last escape route in The Rhone Valley south of the Drone River. The enemy attempted to delay the advance but continued strong pressure was exerted and the Germans steadily gave ground.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mech.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

With task forces driving from from the east and south it appeared that the final gap would be closed. Troops "B" and "C" supported both these task forces while Troop "F" light tanks supported the attack from the south.

Troop "A" on the eastern border of France turned north toward Briancon where strong enemy resistance was met. The chemical mortar company attached to the task force suffered heavy casualties in the days operations. A patrol from Troop "A" succeeded in entering Briancon after dark and brought back valuable information of the enemy's dispositions. The troop less the 1st. platoon outposted the southern approaches to the town. The 1st. platoon continued to maintain pressure against the enemy awaiting relief by the ABTF before rejoining the troop.

29th. August 1944 "D" plus I4

The final stage was set and before noon the last escape route was cut thereby trapping many hundreds of German vehicles and thousands of German troops. Thus after eight days when elements of Troop "B" first surprised a bewildered enemy, the trap was sprung on the remnants of the 19th. German Army. Thus the Montelimar campaign came to a successful close. It will stand out as one of the most important turning points for the Seventh American Army in their operations in France.

Briancon was finally occupied by the Bilbo Task Force and Troop "A" prepared to rejoin the squadron the following day near the vicinity of Grenoble.

30th August 1944 "D" plus I5

With its mission complete the Provisional Armor Group was dissolved. The squadron less Troop "A" assembled and prepared to move north of Grenoble. Late that afternoon after a road advance of more than 110 miles the entire squadron assembled near the vicinity of Moirans (523423). A new mission was anticipated momentarily which would take the squadron once again in pursuit of what remained of the 19th. German Army.

Final Summary

The operations of the 117th. Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (mechanized) for the period 15th. August 1944 to the 30th. August 1944 in Southern France constituted two phases.

The first phase covered the period from "D" Day, 15th. August 1944 to 17th. August 1944. In this period of operation each of

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mech.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

The Squadron and Group CP moved to the vicinity of (967638) where it was heavily shelled for thirty six consecutive hours. The enemy continued to ford the Drone River despite the heavy shelling which resulted in the loss of many enemy vehicles.

Troop "A" operating near the Italian border ran into strong enemy resistance at la Seare l'Aoula. The enemy appeared determined to hold this pass. The 1st. platoon of Troop "A" attempted to contact the remainder of the troop advancing from the north. The resistance was too strong for the platoon. The enemy was engaged from both the north and south and many casualties were inflicted on the enemy with only light damage to the vehicles of the troop. Strong organized support was received from local Maquis groups who were supported by the O.S.S. Their splendid assistance although ill equipped indeed an inspiration to the American force and spur their efforts to greater heights. By nightfall however the enemy still held the pass. It was expected that elements of the Air Borne Task Force moving up from the Riviera might arrive by the early morning.

27th August 1944 "D" plus I2

The American plan was to attack through the Bessou Pass (984703) and drive north toward Loriol. One battalion of infantry supported by medium tanks and Troop "F" with their light tanks was assigned the mission of breaking out through the pass. Another task force composed of a company of tank destroyers, a battalion of infantry and Troop "C" was to attack west from Grane toward Loriol.

The attack started at dawn and immediately met strong enemy resistance, however the German soon showed signs of giving ground. Fire fights ensued throughout the day and limited gains were made. Troop "E" with its seven M-7 105mm howitzers were emplaced in a commanding position at (983705) overlooking the main highway just south of Loriol. Shooting direct at about 2500 yards the troop destroyed a large number of vehicles including a number that were painted with red crosses, but which blew up with terrific explosions when hit. They were supposed to be medical ambulances but were without question carrying ammunition. By the close of day it appeared that the enemy's escape route would soon be cut. However the enemy continued his attempt to ford the Drone regardless of the losses.

28th August 1944 "D" plus I3

The American forces with determination were steadily closing on Loriol and cutting the enemy's last escape route in The Rhone Valley south of the Drone River. The enemy attempted to delay the advance but continued strong pressure was exerted and the Germans steadily gave ground.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mech.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

With task forces driving from from the east and south it appeared that the final gap would be closed. Troops "B" and "C" supported both these task forces while Troop "F" light tanks supported the attack from the south.

Troop "A" on the eastern border of France turned north toward Briancon where strong enemy resistance was met. The chemical mortar company attached to the task force suffered heavy casualties in the days operations. A patrol from Troop "A" succeeded in entering Briancon after dark and brought back valuable information of the enemy's dispositions. The troop less the 1st. platoon outposted the southern approaches to the town. The 1st. platoon continued to maintain pressure against the enemy awaiting relief by the ABTF before rejoining the troop.

29th. August 1944 "D" plus I4

The final stage was set and before noon the last escape route was cut thereby trapping many hundreds of German vehicles and thousands of German troops. Thus after eight days when elements of Troop "B" first surprised a bewildered enemy, the trap was sprung on the remnants of the 19th. German Army. Thus the Montelimar campaign came to a successful close. It will stand out as one of the most important turning points for the Seventh American Army in their operations in France.

Briancon was finally occupied by the Bilbo Task Force and Troop "A" prepared to rejoin the squadron the following day near the vicinity of Grenoble.

30th August 1944 "D" plus I5

With its mission complete the Provisional Armor Group was dissolved. The squadron less Troop "A" assembled and prepared to move north of Grenoble. Late that afternoon after a road advance of more than 110 miles the entire squadron assembled near the vicinity of Moirans (523423). A new mission was anticipated momentarily which would take the squadron once again in pursuit of what remained of the 19th. German Army.

Final Summary

The operations of the 117th. Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (mechanized) for the period 15th. August 1944 to the 30th. August 1944 in Southern France constituted two phases.

The first phase covered the period from "D" Day, 15th. August 1944 to 17th. August 1944. In this period of operation each of

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

the reinforced reconnaissance troops attached to an infantry division landed with the assault forces and screened the advance of their divisions. When a firm and well established beach head was assured and the landing operation was an overwhelming success, higher headquarters planned to exploit the disorganized state of the enemy. A hard hitting and highly mobile force was needed to exploit the initial success and harass and disrupt the enemy's supply and communications.

Possessing the necessary requisites of extreme mobility and long range radio communication and tremendous fire power, the 117th. Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was highly capable of spearheading a task force and exploiting to the fullest degree and to the disadvantage of the enemy.

The Butler Task Force was organized and on the 18th August 1944 the second phase was commenced. Taking advantage of the excellent radio communication facilities of the squadron, higher headquarters was constantly in touch of the situation at all times. Operating over great distance, the failure or lack of long range radio communication would not have made it possible for the higher command to follow up and consolidate the rapid gains made by the squadron. The operations of VI Corp were planned by the intelligence furnished by the squadron as to the enemy's dispositions, state of morale, type of terrain and road net condition of bridges and due to a large extent the disruption of the enemy's communications.

The successful operations of the squadron can be attributed to a large extent to the material aid and assistance provided by the French Maquis. These patriots provided valuable information concerning the whereabouts of the enemy and their strength. They also guided units of the squadron to by passes and river fords where the Germans had destroyed all bridges in the vicinity. Many of the Maquis volunteered their services to fight the common enemy and attached themselves to the various troops. Time and again they contacted other Maquis groups operating ahead of our forces to tell them of our approach. When receiving this information the Maquis would boldly strike at their hated foe. In many instances our forces came upon such engagements and successfully completed the route of the enemy.

This most valuable assistance given by the Maquis was indeed an inspiration; their deeds of valour were in keeping with the tradition of free loving people, who unhesitatingly gave of their life's blood to free their country of their hated oppressors. Mere words cannot adequately describe their contributions to the cause of democracy. Their valiant deeds will always remain in the memories of every member of the squadron.

HEADQUARTERS
117th CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (Mecz.) N. J. N. G.
Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, New Jersey

The high morale and esprit de corp which existed within the squadron was a contributing factor to the amazing advance. The high quality of leadership demonstrated by all ranks particularly the junior officers and non-commissioned officers were exemplary. On many occasions platoons and sections operated by themselves for periods of several days at great distances from higher headquarters. Numerous decisive actions were fought and serious obstacles overcome by these small units. Had anything less than the highest qualities of leadership existed, it would not have been possible to achieve the resultant successful operations of the squadron.

It is estimated that approximately 6645 square miles of Southern France was liberated by the 117th. Cav. Recon. Sq. from 18th. August 1944 to the 21st. August 1944 when the squadron reached the north eastern outskirts of Montelimar. The road distance from the beach head to this point as followed along the main axis of the squadron was approximately 185 miles.

In over running such a large portion of Southern France in so short a period when supplies lines were stretched to the straining point reflects the highest standards of training and discipline. At no time did the total strength of the squadron exceed more than 650 officers and enlisted men. Losses in personnel and equipment was not considered high in keeping with the scope of the operations.

More than 3500 enemy prisoners were taken by the squadron including three general officers, one a Lt. General commanding a Corp. In addition many tons of supplies were captured or destroyed and hundreds of enemy vehicles destroyed.

In closing it may be said that the highest traditions of the service were upheld and that the squadron can justly be proud of its contributions to victory and its outstanding performance of duty during its operations in France.


Harold J. Samsel
Lt. Col. Cavalry

In the field, Germany
26 April 1945

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Guerre 1939-1945

CITATION

D E C I S I O N N° 267

Sur la proposition du Ministre de la Défense Nationale,
LE PRESIDENT DU GOUVERNEMENT PROVISoire DE LA REPUBLIQUE

C I T E :

A L'ORDRE DE L'ARMEE

117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron

"Elite unit which, from the time of the landing in Provence, fought without respite, in the advance guard of the Seventh U.S. Army, up to the borders of Lorraine.

Reconnaissance group of the Seventh U.S. Army Corps, landed successfully on the beaches of Sainte - Maxime and Sainte - Tropez. From the second day, gave proof of the finest tactical skill and contributed to the success of the action of the Corps, notably in the annihilation of important enemy forces in the region of Montelimar.

Under the impetus of an energetic and remarkably audacious Commander, did not hesitate to advance 120 miles beyond the Corps in order to occupy by surprise the strong points and communication centers of this region, inflicting on the enemy, afterwards, severe losses in material and capturing more than 2,500 prisoners, including three Generals.

During all this period, worked in close liaison with local resistance groups and efficiently coordinated the activity of the Maquis which joined its ranks."

THIS CITATION INCLUDES THE AWARDING OF THE CROIX DE GUERRE WITH PALM

EXTRAIT CERTIFIE CONFORME

PARIS, le 2 OCT 1980

Pour le Ministre et par autorisati

Le Chef du Bureau des Décorations

PO/Le Chef de la Section "Décorations Diverses"

PARIS, 22 JULY 1946

Signed : BIDAULT

J. FRAGNOH

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Guerre 1939-1945

CITATION

D E C I S I O N N° 267

Sur la proposition du Ministre de la Défense Nationale,
LE PRESIDENT DU GOUVERNEMENT PROVISoire DE LA REPUBLIQUE

C I T E :

A L'ORDRE DE L'ARMEE

.....
117e Squadron Cavalry Reconnaissance U.S

"Unité d'élite qui, depuis le débarquement en PROVENCE a combattu sans arrêt à l'avant-garde de la 7e Armée U.S jusqu'aux marches lorraines.

Groupe de reconnaissance du VIe C.A.U.S a débarqué avec succès sur les plages de SAINTE-MAXIME et de SAINT-TROPEZ. Dès le second jour il a fait preuve des plus belles qualités manoeuvrières et contribué au succès de l'action de ce Groupement, notamment à l'anéantissement de forces ennemies importantes dans la région de MONTELMAR.

Sous l'impulsion d'un chef énergique et avec une audace remarquable, n'a pas hésité à devancer son groupement de plus de 180 Kms pour occuper par surprise les positions dominantes et les noeuds de communication de cette région, infligeant ensuite à l'ennemi d'importantes pertes en matériel et capturant plus de 2500 prisonniers dont 3 Généraux.

Pendant toute cette période, a travaillé en liaison étroite avec les éléments de résistance locaux et a heureusement coordonné l'activité des maquis qui se sont joints à lui".

.....
CES CITATIONS COMPORTENT L'ATTRIBUTION DE LA CROIX DE GUERRE
AVEC PALME.

Fait à PARIS, le 22 juillet 1946
Signé : BIDAULT

EXTRAIT CERTIFIE CONFORME

PARIS, le 2 OCT 1980

Pour le Ministre et par autorisation

Le Chef du Bureau des Décorations

PO/Le Chef de la Section "Décorations Diverses"

J. FRAGNON

Col. Thomas C. Piddington, (Ret.)
Route 1, Box 819
Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

August 31, 1983


President Ronald Reagan
White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I appeal to you as President, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and as a human being to ask your help in obtaining recognition for meritorious service performed by members of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized) during World War II in defense of this country and the freedom which we and other free world countries value so highly. We are not asking that a monument be constructed in their honor nor that their names be inscribed on brass or in stone to be preserved for posterity. We are asking simply that their heroic efforts to preserve liberty and freedom be recognized by their government. While this will not bring back those who are no longer living, it will give their families and those who are still with us who have formed the 117th Cavalry Association the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts were not in vain.

My efforts to obtain recognition of the unit in the form of the Presidential Unit Citation through other channels (encl. 1), despite the fact that a unit citation request was submitted prior to May 2, 1951 (encl. 2), have been unsuccessful and I find it ironic that the French Government saw fit to honor the Unit (encl. 3), while the government for which they fought so gallantly will not do so for a purely arbitrary reason.

You are our "Court of Last Resort" and although we feel strongly that there is plenty of evidence to support a Presidential Unit Citation, we are nevertheless confident that, regardless of the final decision, our request will be given thorough and careful consideration.


Thomas C. Piddington
Colonel, (Ret.)

3 Enclosures:

encl. 1 a/s
encl. 2 a/s
encl. 3 a/s

CC:

Senator Jesse Helms
Col. Harold J. Samsel, (Ret.)
President 117th Cav. Assn.

Part 3. Action At Montreval, France

The Squadron was relieved of attachment to Task Force Butler on the 30th of August 1944, and continued an aggressive advance north on the right flank of the harried German 19th Army.

Again under direct control of VI Corp., the Squadron was completely assembled in the vicinity of Moirans, which lies approximately 275 miles from the Beach Head of Southern France.

On the 25th of August 1944 Captain Omer Brown, Commander of "E" Troop was killed in an enemy tank action at Lorient, France. Omer was a very close friend. Having joined the National Guard in Westfield, New Jersey at the same time, I had also joined up. The sad part of this story is, that Captain Brown had a ninety-day leave to the United States which he was to take upon completion of our assignment to "Task Force Butler", only five days away. When I went to recover the Essex Troop ring he was wearing to return it to his family, it was missing along with his finger. We buried him in Lorient, France with full honors and many tears. Incidentally, we had both received our Essex Troop rings together.

The next advance of the Squadron was thirty miles north of Lyon to the vicinity of Chalamont, where hard fighting continued. The Germans were determined to protect the route of March of their 19th Army back toward their Homeland.

On the first of September 1944, the Squadron was screening the 45th Infantry Division as the Allies kept stabbing at the flanks of the German Army fastly retreating to Germany. The enemy attacked savagely with tanks in greater numbers and our casualties increased.

The large Town of Bourg was now under heavy attack by the Allies, and the Squadron swung to the north to again cut off the leading elements of the enemy.

Late on the 2nd of September 1944, orders were received from VI Corp. Headquarters to move during the night and seize the Town of Montreval, France. This was to be an end run, to get ahead of the leading columns of the 19th German Army and cut them off or blunt their movement toward the west and away from their escape route to Germany.

Major McGarry was placed in direct command of all Squadron Units reaching Montreval, which we seized by daylight 3rd of September, 1944. It was to be a day no member of the entire Squadron will ever forget.

Shortly after occupying the town of Montreval, the Germans attacked with their 11th Panzer Division (The Ghost Division) and soon overwhelmed the men of Troops "A" and "B". The Heroism of the individual Officers and men were outstanding and they fought

valiantly against superior forces. The personal bravery and aggressive action were of such magnitude that the German Commander was amazed at the small numerically force opposing him and without any heavy armor. In an unusual gesture, the German General issued orders that the captured American Soldiers were to be treated with respect and allowed to keep their personal equipment.

In this engagement the entire Personnel of two magnificent Troops "A" and "B" were either killed, wounded or captured. No one escaped from these Units, and both Captains were wounded and captured. When the Tank Troop "F" attacked later to relieve the pressure on Troops "A" and "B" every tank was either knocked out or hit and damaged. The Leader of this attack was killed and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. The Nations second highest Award.

In an earlier action in which Lt. Lee of "A" Troop distinguished himself, he was awarded the "Congressional Medal of Honor" by President Truman. Copy of his Citation is attached. It was the only medal of Honor to be awarded a Cavalryman of a Mechanized Squadron in World War II.

Perhaps the actions of the 117th Mecz. Cavalry Squadron at Montreval, France on the 3rd of September 1944, is best told by an after action report. I prepared for the Historical Record. It was indeed surprising that this action report which was filed with VI Corp. that never a word was mentioned by anyone from Corp. Headquarters. Perhaps it may have been due to the truthful facts and that the Corp. Commander Lt. General Lucien Truscott, an old Cavalryman, was nominated to succeed General Mark Clark as Commander of the Fifth Army in Italy. Lt. General Edward Brooks succeeded General Truscott as head of VI Corp.

Fortunately, Major McGarry was able to escape late in the day from Montreval, but in a very dazed and shocked condition. Most of us were also in an emotionally charged state, due to the great losses the Squadron suffered, which was devastating to say the least.

However, by the next morning, we recovered, regrouped and on the 4th of September 1944 with maked shift armored sections, the Squadron continued to press the attack against the flanks of German 19th Army.

The following pages of the "Action at Montreval, France" tells the full and real story of this Heroic Action in full and complete perspective.

"A Day to be Long Remembered!"

ACTION AT MONTREVAL, FRANCE

2-3 September 1944

117TH MECZ. CAVALRY SQUADRON

The story of Montreval began on the evening of 2 September 1944 when the Squadron received the following message from Brigadier General Carlton, VI Corps Deputy Commander.

"Seize and hold Montreval by daylight, establish road blocks on the roads leading into the town from the South, the East and the North so as to cut off the escape route of the 19th German Army.

Lead with Troop "B" followed by Troop "A" supported by Troops "E" and "F".

Orders for mission were promptly prepared by Major Samsel and delivered by Colonel Hodge to Captain Wood of "B" Troop and Captain Piddington, Troop "A".

Troop "E" less one section and Troop "F" less one platoon supported this action.

Radio contact was maintained between Squadron Headquarters and Troop "B" during the early hours of 3 September 1944 while occupying Montreval. However, Troop "B" was not received too well while Squadron Headquarters was receiving 5 x 5.

It was soon apparent in early morning from direct radio conversation with Captain Wood, that infantry assistance was urgently needed.

Upon radio instructions from Colonel Hodge, Major Samsel personally visited VI Corps Headquarters and apprised the Chief of Operations of the exact situation. Requested that infantry support was urgently needed if the forces of the 117th were to hold Montreval.

No direct assistance was given by Brigadier General Carlton, but instead the writer and Colonel Hodge were told separately to contact Commanding General of 45th Infantry Division and see if he could render any support.

After several critical hours of conversation, the 2nd Battalion of the 179th Infantry was placed at our disposal, without transportation and twenty miles from Montreval.

Also, at noon 3 September 1944, Troop "C" was relieved of their assignment and reverted to control of the 117th.

The writer assembled this entire force, mounting the infantry on Troop "C" vehicles and those of Squadron Headquarters and proceeded under forced march to the vicinity of Montreval.

Our mission was to attack and relieve the pressure on Montreval.

En route, I picked up a heavy armored patrol including two (2) Tank Destroyers - all from the 3rd Infantry Division.

This entire force arrived on the outskirts of Montreval at approximately 1530 after a rapid forced march.

An immediate attack plan was prepared by the Battalion Commander of the 2nd Battalion, 179th Infantry, Major Samsel and Captain Nugent of Troop "C".

Time of departure was set for 1600 hours.

At exactly 1555 on 3 September 1944, a message was received from VI Corps not to attack and move our forces to high ground, East of Montreval.

Needless to say, even if our attack had been launched, it would have proven indecisive. All elements of the 117th had already been killed, wounded or captured.

At about 1700 hours, Major Samsel advised VI Corps of the situation and extent of our heavy losses.

Early that evening, General Carlton visited our Headquarters to launch an informal investigation of the entire affair.

One of General Carlton's main criticisms was that the 117th did not leave an escape route open and withdrew when it was apparent that the squadron was against superior forces.

However, the writer strongly opposed this view inasmuch as General Carlton's order read "Seize and hold". The order did not permit a commander to exercise any discretion or possible withdrawal.

The real criticism should be directed at VI Corps for assigning a mission without the full infantry and tank support so vitally essential when opposing an enemy force led by an outstanding armored division; also the indifference of General Carlton to his responsibilities and lack of comprehension of the vital time elements highly essential in exploiting the initial success of the 117th in seizing Montreval by daylight.

A very major successful action could have been achieved at Montreval if VI Corps had truly evaluated the situation and thoroughly planned this operation with full and adequate troop participation.

Instead, a Mechanized Cavalry Squadron of limited strength, men weary, the vehicles and equipment below standard, was sent on a mission more in keeping with horse cavalry techniques but fighting against a highly trained, heavily armored German Panzer Division.

Both General Truscott and General Carlton wilfully sacrificed a brave and efficient Cavalry Squadron on the altar of their Fort Riley Cavalry School ego.

It never occurred to these Cavalry Generals that a Cavalry outfit ever could possibly face defeat.

The shame of this Montreval action was the failure of those in command who ordered this mission, to fully project the full scope of the enemy's potential capabilities and determination not to permit Montreval to block the retreat of the entire 19th German Army's march back to Germany.

The enemy reacted violently and attacked in strength with his most capable troops, the 11th Panzer (Ghost) Division.

The moment the original order was received at Squadron Headquarters, it was apparent to all officers of the 117th, regardless of rank, the full meaning of this mission.

It was quickly recognized that, without complete support, our mission would be difficult indeed.

That this situation was likewise not recognized by responsible experienced officers of VI Corps, is difficult to comprehend. The intelligence furnished by the 117th alone was sufficient to apprise the staff of VI Corps, an accurate and up-to-date battle situation.

Perhaps some other interesting intelligence was the personal habits of our generals indulging too strongly in the grape at a time when vital decisions were being made.

General Carlton could easily be considered an outstanding host with the unhappy faculty of trying to out-drink his guests.

Perhaps the action of the 117th Cavalry Squadron at Montreval can best be summed up by the fact that the leadership displayed won a Medal of Honor and three Distinguished Service Crosses, innumerable Silver Stars, Bronze Stars and over 150 Purple Hearts.

Also, every tank of Troop "F" was disabled from enemy action.

Nevertheless, on 4 September 1944, the 117th Cavalry Squadron maintained its continuous combat record, by taking to the field reorganized with six battle sections comprising all elements of the Squadron.

PREPARED BY;

Harold J. Sammel

HAROLD J. SAMSEL

MAJOR, CAVALRY - S-3

PLANS AND OPERATIONS OFFICER

117th MECH. CAVALRY SQUADRON

VI CORP - SEVENTH ARMY

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE - 3 -

SEPT. 15, 1944

Event:

Montrevel, France

Date:

3 September 1944

Location with Preface: In the evening of 2 September 1944 at the Command Post (CP, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized) located just east of Marboz, France received orders from 6th Corps, 7th U.S. Army Southern France to seize and hold Montrevel, France at dawn on the 3rd of September 1944. Troop B commanded by Captain John L. Wood was to lead the attack. Troop A, commanded by Thomas C. Piddington was to keep lines of communication opened rendered support as required. Major Robert McGarry, Executive Officer of the Squadron was designed overall commander of this small force.

At about 2200 hours on 2 September Platoon leaders and key NCO's of Troop B and A held a meeting in a small farm house (20 miles or more east of Montrevel) to review the orders and scout reports. Troop B scouts indicated that the 11th Panzer Division was east of Rhone River in great force. Excellent reconnaissance by Scouts of Troop B were conducted throughout the entire day of the 2nd of September. 6th Corps Intelligence indicated this report of Troop B scouts was not true.

During his assignment as Commander of Troop B he displayed poise, initiative and above all great courage while preparing and executing a mission which all involved considered that it would fail.

Captain Wood said we must get on with the mission, regardless of the consequences and odds. He imbued confidence in sagging morale. Finally under his determination all agreed to complete the mission with a will.

The attack of Montrevel was accomplished in a surprise move at dawn on the morning of 3 September 1944. Approximately 60 german prisoners were taken by Troop B from the 11th Panzer Division. Several B Troopers became casualties after a brisk fire fight directed by Captain Wood. The town was quickly outposted and occupied. In about two hours a regiment of the 11th panzer division pinched off the routes in and out of Montrevel. We were blocking the Panzer Division main supply route which was heavily engaged with the 45th Infantry Division (American) at Borg France many miles south of Montrevel. Captain Piddington, commander of Troop A, with a part of the 1st Platoon and radio cars broke through to render assistance and support to B Troop. The force in Montrevel was quickly surrounded and the attack by the Panzer commenced in earnest.

Captain Wood displayed outstanding ingenuity in setting up defense obstacles throughout the area. Unfortunatley 37 men guns and 60 mm mortars were no match for German 88 guns and large calibre self propelled artillery backed by Tank and Infantry units.

The casualties began to mount up tremendously by early afternoon. Captain Wood constantly assured the wounded that all will end well. At that point we expected a relief force.

We received word later that all relief forces were cancelled by 6th Corps and that we were on our own.

At the final defense bastion in the Montrevel school house enemy tanks (88 guns) were firing within 50 yards of our position with protection and support of Infantry. Of a force of about 135 we figured that about 25 or 30 were left to defend the school. All others were killed, wounded or captured throughout the day.

The remaining troopers all armed themselves with any weapons available. Captain Wood maned a light machine gun. Captain Piddington fed the remaining belt of ammunition into the gun. Wood tried to keep the enemy infantry in cover as well as a few shots at the tank guns. Enemy tank fire was aimed at our machine gun position. I, Piddington had to drag Wood away from the gun because the next shot would destroy our position-which it did. The gun was in pieces. Several other troopers became casualties throughout the lower part of the school.

Captain Wood was ready to make the supreme sacrifice at the moment. He showed great courage and deserves the highest praise for his heroic deeds.

Personal observations by Captain Thomas C. Piddington, Commanding Officer, Troop A 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized).

Signed:

Thomas C. Piddington
Thomas C. Piddington
Captain 0425249

Major Padraig M O'Dea
NRI Dept, USAARMS
Fort Knox, Kentucky

20 February 1959

Lt General L. K. Truscott, Jr
c/o E. P. Dutton and Co, Inc
300 4th Avenue
New York 10, New York

Dear General Truscott:

I have read for the second time "Command Missions" and I have found it most interesting reading. Especially so, since I have had personal contact with several of the events discussed. In an instance or two, I wish to offer, for what it may be worth, corrective comment.

More particularly: on page 439, in your aide's journal notes for Monday, 3 September, 1944 (should be Sunday, 3 September, 1944) appears the following statement: "Debacle at Montrevel when 1½ companies 117th Cavalry go to sleep and are surrounded and captured. C/S goes to find out what happened. Gen talks to Major McGearry Exec of 117th in War Room after dinner. Still no explanation, but remnants pulled out and sent north." Several lines later in the explanation of the journal notes you say, "This detachment had obviously grown somewhat careless, because when the 11th Panzer (my note, "Geist" or "Ghost") Division withdrew during the night, these two companies were surprised and overrun, and most of one and a half companies were captured." The above statements are a sad commentary on the gallant efforts of the men of the 117th Cavalry who were in Montrevel, and a poor monument to those who died there.

On 3 September 1944 I was the Executive Officer of Troop B, and I would like to state most emphatically that we were not overrun because we were asleep.

Briefly this is what did happen: On or about 2300 hours 2 September, 1944, the mission for B Troop with A Troop attached, to move into and secure Montrevel, was brought to the B Troop CP by Lt Col Hodge, Bn CO, and Major Samsel, Bn S-3. B Troop with A Troop attached, entered and secured Montrevel on or about 0600 hours 3 September. (It was a clear, beautiful Sunday. Most of the Troop was tired and rather weary as a result of our continuous operations). I say we entered rather than captured the town, because the Germans in it were completely surprised and offered little opposition. We opened the ball by capturing between 90 and 100 German troops.

20 February 1959

Units of the 11th Panzer Division began attacking Montrevel on about 0800 hours, initially with infantry, later with infantry and armor. These attacks were repulsed, but continued relentlessly throughout the day; later including MARK V (Panther) tanks.

The troop repeatedly requested artillery support, including 155 mm gun. When we received our mission we were told a battery of 155 mm guns was in position to fire on targets in the Montrevel area. No fire support was ever received.

If, again the big IF, we had had anything larger than a 37 mm gun mounted on the armored car in Montrevel that day, the outcome would have been quite different.

My position was overrun on about 1530, final resistance of the American forces in the town was smothered on/about 1800 hours.

One Medal of Honor (Le Lee) and one Distinguished Service Cross (mine) were awarded for actions that day.

We were not asleep!

The last paragraph on page 155 tells how the cavalry escort lost the convoy. This is not quite true. I was the platoon leader of the cavalry platoon, and was the OIC of the escort.

Somewhere south of Ain Beda, after passing a large air field, the column was passing through a very winding road on a decided down-grade. Immediately after crossing a bridge, the 3/4 ton truck carrying General Eisenhower's baggage went out of control, rolled over, and crushed the driver's chest. I was instructed by an officer, Colonel Conway I believe, to take care of the driver while the convoy went ahead. After we righted the truck, did what we could for the driver, the balance of the escort overtook the convoy. Using the scout car reserved for the general, I took the injured driver back to Ain Beda to a British medical facility. After receiving first aid, he was taken to Constantine, operated on, and eventually recovered.

There was one time when the General's convoy and the escort did become separated. That occurred after the meeting described on page 170. I don't believe I'll forget the incident nor the consequences of it.

The last time I had the privilege of meeting you was at Anzio, after the link-up with the forces from the south. I was the officer who delivered to you, at your Battle CP, the message from the CG of II Corps.

R E S T R I C T E DHEADQUARTERS SEVENTH ARMY
APO 758 US Army

24 November 1944

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 115)

Announcement of Assignment of Acting Assistant Chief
of Staff, G-5.

Award of the Distinguished Service Cross, Missing in Action	I
Award of the Distinguished Service Cross.	II
Award of First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star Medal.	III
Award of the Bronze Star Medal.	IV
	V

* * * * *

II - AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS, MISSING IN ACTION.
By direction of the President, under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, the Distinguished Service Cross is awarded by the Army Commander to the following named individual:

PADRAIG M. O'DEA, O1 030 181, First Lieutenant, Cavalry, Troop B, *** Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz), for extraordinary heroism in action on 3 September 1944, at Montrevel, France. By directing effective mortar and machine gun fire from his observation post in the window of the upper floor of a building, Lieutenant O'Dea successfully prevented vastly superior forces of enemy armor and infantry from entering the town of Montrevel until our forces could be withdrawn. When enemy artillery and machine guns began to shell the road into the town, he accurately directed machine gun fire which forced them to abandon their positions. In the face of intense enemy fire, he ran to his Command Post, returned to his observation point with a mortar crew and, by the skillful adjustment of mortar fire, repulsed several enemy attempts to infiltrate infantry and vehicles into the town. Then, enemy tanks and artillery opened fire on his position, systematically attempting to destroy the building. Although he could have withdrawn, he held fast and, by the skillful employment of mortar fire, continued to delay the attacking force until a direct hit by an enemy shell destroyed his Observation Post. Lieutenant O'Dea's heroic actions and complete disregard for personal safety are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army. Next of Kin: Mr. Padraig S. O'Dea (Father), 85 Fourth Avenue, Garwood, New Jersey.

- 1 -

(over)

R E S T R I C T E D

Lt General L. K. Truscott, Jr

20 February 1959

The above comments are made most sincerely, with full realization of the monumental task of writing a book such as "Command Missions."

Sincerely,

PAIRAIG M O'DEA
Major, Armor

Major Padraig M O'Dea
NFI Dept, USAARMS
Fort Knox, Kentucky

23 December 1958

Colonel James B Deerin
The National Guardsman
100 Indiana Avenue Northwest
Washington 1, D. C.

Dear Colonel Deerin:

I have not forgotten your request but have been trying to work on it along with two or three other things. I did get a copy of General Truscott's book and found the portion referring to Montrevel, and the General could not have been more in error. I also found another incident or two in which I was personally involved and in all cases he is not 100% correct. I will probably write to him later.

Paul Seidel wrote me earlier in the week, mentioned your letter, and asked for some information. As long as I am working on the project I am going to try to get the letter out to you now. First a question; do you have available to you any of the official historical records of the squadron for the month of September 1944, or specifically concerning Montrevel? Second, do you have available, or do you know of, a record of the investigation of the Montrevel incident? I am particularly interested in that. Such information as I have been able to obtain over the years does not tell me the exact troop or squadron dispositions or CP locations from the period 31 August to 1 September, 1944. Now that I have finally been able to obtain a good map of the area I am most interested in following up with any of the periodic reports, after action reports, and in particular a report of the investigation of the Montrevel incident. If you have any of the above I would appreciate it; or at the least, the address of where I can request it.

Now to Montrevel. On Saturday 2 September 1944, as near as I can work it out on this map, the CP of troop B was in the vicinity of St Etienne du Bois. The situation was relatively quiet. The platoons were rather extended and were in no trouble. Our CP was located in a French hunting lodge, built in the grand style. At about 2300 hours Lieutenant Colonel Hodge and Major Samsel came to our CP with instructions for "B". Major Samsel had with him a copy of the message received from Corps and he gave us our mission for the next day. Briefly, as I remember it, the mission was: Seize and hold Montrevel, establish road blocks on the roads leading into the town from the south, the east, and the north, so as to cut off the escape route of the 11th Panzer Division. The job looked "hairy". One thing I do remember is looking up from the map at Captain Wood and it seems to me that we both said, almost in unison, "This is it!"

Troop "A" was to join us in the vicinity of our CP and be attached to "E" for the mission. When they eventually arrived, the troop was not at full strength. The vehicles of the force refueled and resupplied at this place.

We moved out some time after midnight, probably between 0100 and 0300 3 September. All that I can remember about that part of the march is that I was devilishly tired and had a rough time staying awake. We moved by a rather devious route led by Lieutenant William B Luty and the 3d platoon to the vicinity of Marboz. I believe we hit the Marboz-Montrevel road somewhere from 1000 to 3000 yards west of Marboz and moved into Montrevel. We arrived in our objective, Montrevel, between 0530 and 0600 with no trouble.

The town was held by approximately 90 German soldiers, who were peacefully sitting outside the school house eating their breakfast when our 3d platoon rolled in. The simplest thing to say about it is that they were surprised. There was no fight. The organization of the town began at once.

Beyond a doubt, the reason our men were treated as they were when they were finally captured was due to the treatment given the prisoners mentioned above. One of Captain Woods' strongest rules was that no prisoner would be mistreated while in our hands. As usual, two or three of the irresponsible EM found in every organization started to strip these prisoners of their valuables, and to abuse them. The First Sergeant, the Supply Sergeant, and I, came upon the incident, stopped it, and had the men return to each prisoner personally, the items taken from him. The prisoners were then placed in the basement of the school, safely guarded but out of the way of any normal incident of the fight. At the end of the day when the tables were turned, the officer in charge of these men remembered how he had been cared for.

Until about 0930 or 1000 there was not much action. There was rifle and machine gun fire, and "they" were able to bring several machine guns to bear on our light vehicles which were on the Etrez-Montrevel road (into Montrevel from the East). I saw Captain Wood once or twice during this time. I was mainly concerned with the situation in the southeast quadrant of the town. The troop CP was in the vicinity of the school house roughly in the center of town. Captain Piddington, and Lieutenant D'Annunzio, the observer from our assault gun battery, were there with him.

The main feature of my location was a large three story white masonry building. The ground around it was slightly higher on the side facing the enemy, the south.

Using most of headquarters platoon and members of another platoon, the position was organized, placing machine guns and rifle-men in front of the building, 60 mm mortars behind it with an armored car or two in hull defilade generally behind the building.

Late in the morning things warmed up when the enemy forces began to try to get through town in earnest. There was considerable firing to the west and south of where I was, small arms, artillery, and tank or AT. Two or three German armored cars made a try at moving around to the left, or east, of where I was, but were repulsed. Then they tried to work in from the south, through a small orchard and across open fields, with infantry supported by at least two Mark 5 tanks. From my OP in the large building I was able to slow up these attacks several times. They also attempted to put a small OP on a little knob no more than 300 yards from my position. I knocked these off with a rifle two or three times.

It was late morning or early afternoon when we were informed by Major McGarry's CP that Lieutenant Paul Siedel was being sent around to the south of town with a heavy section (3) of light tanks. His mission was to relieve the pressure on the town from the south. From where I sat it was just plain suicide. We heard his fire-fight and I saw the resulting clouds of smoke. I found out two years later that Paul's tanks contributed to the smoke.

"He" continued his push on my side of town with tanks and infantry, on at least two occasions bringing his tanks around to my left to fire on and knock out many of our vehicles on the Montrevel-Etрез-Marboz road. By this time the machine gun positions in front of my building no longer existed; all that was left were the mortar positions and one armor car.

During this period of several hours there were two or three times when the armor car that was left to me was forced to engage (?) Mark V tanks. Luckily for us, on all occasions except one, he either couldn't see us too well or just ignored us. On the one occasion when he didn't, after we had pulled the armor car back into its partially protected position, my radio operator, Sergeant Barsby was killed. He was the only one killed at this position.

Also, some time during the afternoon, Captain Wood sent Private Patrick Devlin, one of the older soldiers in the troop, from the CP to my position with a rifle and several AT rifle grenades. Somehow or other Private Devlin made it over to where I was; despite the nasty thigh wound he had picked up on the way. Nevertheless "Paddy" was told to bring those over; he brought them. The rifle however, was useless. A bullet had struck it at the juncture of the bolt and breeching, welding it closed.

Sometime after 2:15 when I was up in the OP they came at us again with tanks. At least one of the tanks picked up my OP and made it unhealthy for me to stay there any longer. I couldn't fire at the moving tanks with the mortars anyway. I went down to the ground, joined the 3 EM left there and did what we could. An armored car and one Mark IV tank with Infantry, came around the end of the house and we were cornered there. There was no place to go. Of the three men with me, two were wounded. That was all there was. Finis!

This ends what I personally know about Montrevel. After fourteen years a lot of it is hazy but in general I will remember the main happenings for a long time. I want to add one more point of view.

In 1953 I was in Munich Germany having my automobile winterized at the exchange garage. The garage was located adjacent to the army airfield, Ober Weisenfeld, which had been the constabulary air field. A young German, old enough to have fought in WW II, was working on my car. We spoke of armor and armor units. He said he had been in armor in southern France and told some of the cities he had been through. The names rang a bell. I asked him what unit he had been in. He said the Recon unit of the 11th Panzer division! Then I asked him if he had heard of Montrevel. He said "Oh! That no good Montrevel! * ! * ! * !. Those stupid Americans inside that town don't know when they get beat. They fight too damned much." I then informed him that I knew exactly what he was talking about, because I had been one of the people inside of Montrevel while he was on the outside. He had been a scout in a recon company driving the German equivalent to our jeep. I always thought that his comments on the town and the "stupid Americans" inside it "who didn't know when they get beat" were most enlightening and gratifying.

Sincerely,

flank and the Vosges their northern. With their flanks secure, the Germans would have the choice of defending the line of the Vosges or escaping across the Rhine. It was probable that the enemy would make some use of both escape routes. Again it was the 11th Panzer Division which was designated to hold back the pursuing VI Corps troops and keep them south of the Doubs and Saone Rivers.

At approximately 0200 hours, 3 September, a special officer-courier arrived at the Seventh Army Command Post at Brignoles with an urgent message from General Truscott. The VI Corps Commander sent an estimate of the situation: The Germans were in full retreat, very much disorganized; and delaying actions at advantageous defensive positions were all that could be expected. The VI Corps, he continued, was in contact with elements of the 11th Panzer Division in the Bourg area and on the previous day had destroyed 15 enemy tanks. In view of this situation, General Truscott requested permission to continue the "relentless pursuit" of the enemy on the axis Lons-Le Saunier-Besancon-Belfort with the object of preventing his escape into Germany.

After a staff conference VI Corps was directed to continue the "hot pursuit" of the enemy northeastward to the Belfort Gap via Lons-Le Saunier and Besancon. French Army B was to complete the occupation of Lyon and thereafter to push up the northwest bank of the Saone on the line Dijon-Epinal with sufficient forces detached to protect the right flank of the Seventh Army. Later, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson also concurred, in view of the fleeing nature of the opportunity, and agreed that a regrouping of the Seventh Army in accordance with SHAEF's plans could be temporarily delayed. General Truscott lost no time in putting this directive into execution.

By 3 September the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had reached Bourg-en-Bresse and Montrevel on Highway 75. During the night units of the 11th Panzer Division, withdrawing northward after the fight at Meximieux, entered Bourg-en-Bresse and a "free-for-all" followed. Almost all of the men of Troop B, 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, were killed or captured and their equipment lost, including 20 one-quarter ton trucks, 15 armored cars, and two light tanks. Although opposed by enemy armor and a number of heavy self-propelled

AND TROOP
"A"
AND ALL
TANKS OF
"K" TROOP
(XO)

guns, Troop B had fought gallantly and succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the Germans. The following day, the 45th Division, having destroyed enemy holding forces at Pont d'Ain, on Highway 75, and at other points southeast of the city, occupied Bourg-en-Bresse.

After the occupation of Bourg-en-Bresse, VI Corps troops temporarily lost contact with the enemy. The 45th Division spearheaded the advance through Lons-Le Saunier, Poligny, and Mouchard toward the Doubs. North of Lons-Le Saunier columns encountered numerous road obstacles. Blown bridges forced detours over muddy trails. Supply lines were extended, and transportation facilities were inadequate. Lyon was more than 70 miles to the rear; and supply depots were still on the beaches, over 250 miles away. The entire VI Corps was advancing along one main route, and traffic became so heavy that halts were necessary to gain sufficient clearance between march units.

As the Germans approached the Doubs in their retreat, they turned and made a determined effort to halt the advancing VI Corps. They apparently hoped to hold Besancon until 15 September, so that the remaining German troops in the Dijon area would be able to escape through the Belfort Gap.

Crossing the Doubs

Besancon is a fortress built by nature and improved by generations of military engineers. An industrial city of about 80,000 people, it is also a key communication and supply center. The Doubs River makes a loop around the city's industrial heart. The main approaches are solidly guarded by a huge Vauban-designed fort, La Citadelle, which in turn is supported by four minor forts: Fort Tousey on the southwest, Fort des Trois Chatels to the southeast, and on higher elevations across the river Forts Bregille and Chaudanne. These fortifications, built in the 17th century, are extremely thick-walled, surrounded by moats and utilize high ground to command all avenues of approach.

On the north bank of the river, west of the city, are Forts Rosemont and De Planoise; directly south on a steep hill stands Fort le

U.S. Dept. of the Army. Public Information Division.

THE MEDAL OF HONOR OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY



guns, Troop B had fought gallantly and succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the Germans. The following day, the 45th Division, having destroyed enemy holding forces at Pont d'Ain, on Highway 75, and at other points southeast of the city, occupied Bourg-en-Bresse.

After the occupation of Bourg-en-Bresse, VI Corps troops temporarily lost contact with the enemy. The 45th Division spearheaded the advance through Lons-Le Saunier, Poligny, and Mouchard toward the Doubs. North of Lons-Le Saunier columns encountered numerous road obstacles. Blown bridges forced detours over muddy trails. Supply lines were extended, and transportation facilities were inadequate. Lyon was more than 70 miles to the rear; and supply depots were still on the beaches, over 250 miles away. The entire VI Corps was advancing along one main route, and traffic became so heavy that halts were necessary to gain sufficient clearance between march units.

As the Germans approached the Doubs in their retreat, they turned and made a determined effort to halt the advancing VI Corps. They apparently hoped to hold Besancon until 15 September, so that the remaining German troops in the Dijon area would be able to escape through the Belfort Gap.

Crossing the Doubs

Besancon is a fortress built by nature and improved by generations of military engineers. An industrial city of about 80,000 people, it is also a key communication and supply center. The Doubs River makes a loop around the city's industrial heart. The main approaches are solidly guarded by a huge Vauban-designed fort, La Citadelle, which in turn is supported by four minor forts: Fort Tousey on the southwest, Fort des Trois Chatels to the southeast, and on higher elevations across the river Forts Bregille and Chaudanne. These fortifications, built in the 17th century, are extremely thick-walled, surrounded by moats and utilize high ground to command all avenues of approach.

On the north bank of the river, west of the city, are Forts Rosemont and De Planoise; directly south on a steep hill stands Fort le

THE MEDAL OF HONOR OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY



January 23, 1946

I M M E D I A T E

R E L E A S E

The President today awarded the Medal of Honor to First Lieutenant Daniel W. Lee, of Alma, Georgia, a platoon leader in an armored task force of the Seventh Army, who, although he was seriously injured in the leg, eliminated two German mortar emplacements and forced an armored car to withdraw in September, 1944, near Montrevel, France.

On September 2, 1944, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, spearheaded the drive of a small armored task force which had swept through southern France. Its mission was to take and hold the town of Montrevel, France, cutting off the main road to prevent the escape into Germany of enemy forces from the Rhone Valley. Early that morning troop "B" and the First and Headquarters Platoons of Troop "A" advanced on the town. After a brisk fire fight the enemy garrison, composed of several officers and 72 men, surrendered. Outposts were thrown around Montrevel, and road-blocks were set up on the main road.

Shortly thereafter strong armored elements of the German 11th Panzer Division counter-attacked in an attempt to retake the town and secure a safe route of withdrawal. This superior force cut the road behind Montrevel, trapping the American units by cutting off their supporting infantry and tank forces located to the rear. The attack continued throughout the morning and early afternoon. In the pitched battle, including bloody and furious hand-to-hand fighting, casualties were heavy on both sides.

Early in the afternoon with American ammunition running dangerously low, 81 millimeter mortar shells began falling into town. The heavy shells caused vehicle losses, and added seriously to the already heavy casualties suffered from the rifle, machine gun, bazooka, and anti-tank fire encountered since the attack began. These mortars appeared to be located just over a high ridge on the edge of town. Lieutenant Lee, leader of Headquarters Platoon, picked a seven-man crew and set out to eliminate them.

Two members of this crew, Corporal Charles H. Stewart, Box A, Beeson Avenue, Boothwyn, Pennsylvania, and Corporal Marvin A. Homrich, R.F.D. No. 1, Byron Center, Michigan, both since honorably discharged, told the story of Lieutenant Lee's actions.

"We started toward the enemy position when Lieutenant Lee suddenly spotted five German riflemen on top of a hill," reported Corporal Stewart. "After a short fight we drove them away and took the hill, from where we could see two mortars, manned by a crew of seven. An armored half-track was parked near them. Leaving the rest of us to cover his advance, Lieutenant Lee, armed with a rifle and hand grenades, crawled to within 30 yards of the vehicle, when suddenly the Germans saw him. Fire from a machine pistol shattered his right thigh."

"Although he couldn't use his leg at all, Lieutenant Lee continued on his mission by dragging himself along with his arms and hands," continued Corporal Homrich. "With accurate fire from his rifle, he killed five of the mortar crew. The other two Germans were so frightened they ran."

Corporals Stewart and Homrich reported that at this point Lieutenant Lee was in an armored car, an American vehicle captured earlier in the battle. In the enemy half-track, he found an abandoned German bazooka.

Lieutenant Lee fired a round at the armored car, forcing it to cease fire and take cover. Having cleared the slope of the mortar threat, he started crawling back again using his arms to propel him. On the way the intrepid platoon leader lost consciousness from extreme pain and loss of blood.

His men carried him to an aid station in a school house where first aid was rendered. When the Germans finally overran the town the next day, Lieutenant Lee was taken prisoner. Having secured their escape route through Montrevel, the enemy withdrew back into Germany the next day, taking all walking-wounded Americans with them, but leaving behind the more seriously wounded. Lieutenant Lee was found by his comrades where the enemy had left him two days after his heroic one-man assault.

Born June 23, 1919, at Alma, Lieutenant Lee was graduated from the University of Georgia with a B.S. degree in Agriculture in 1941, after which he was assistant supervisor of his father's farm at Alma. He was inducted into the Army March 18, 1942, and after basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas, won promotions to private first class on August 21, and to corporal on September 15, 1942.

Lieutenant Lee attended Officer Candidate School at The Cavalry School, Fort Riley, graduating with the rank of second lieutenant on December 19, 1942. For wounds received in action in France September 3, 1944, he was awarded the Purple Heart on September 15. Promotion to the rank of first lieutenant came on March 1, 1946.

Lieutenant Lee's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Marshall Lee, live at Route 1, Nicholas, Georgia. His wife, Mrs. Sallie E. Lee, makes her home at 424 Saluda Street, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

The official citation follows:

"First Lieutenant (then Second Lieutenant) Daniel W. Lee was leader of Headquarters Platoon, Troop 'A', 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, at Montrevel, France, on September 3, 1944, when the Germans mounted a strong counter-attack, isolating the town and engaging its outnumbered defenders in a pitched battle.

"After the fight had raged for hours and our forces had withstood heavy shelling and armor-supported infantry attacks, Lieutenant Lee organized a patrol to knock out mortars which were inflicting heavy casualties on the beleaguered reconnaissance troops. He led the small group to the edge of the town, sweeping enemy riflemen out of position on a ridge from which he observed seven Germans manning two large mortars near an armored half-track about 100 yards down the reverse slope.

"Armed with a rifle and grenades, he left his men on the high ground and crawled to within 30 yards of the mortars, where the enemy discovered him and unleashed machine pistol fire which shattered his right thigh. Scorning retreat, bleeding and suffering intense pain, he dragged himself relentlessly forward. He killed five of the enemy with rifle fire, and the others fled before he reached their position.

"Fired on by an armored car, he took cover behind the German half-track and there found a panzerfaust with which to neutralize this threat. Despite his wounds, he inched his way toward the car through withering machine gun fire, maneuvered into range and blasted the vehicle with a round from the rocket launcher, forcing it to withdraw. Having cleared the slope of hostile troops, he struggled back to



President Truman - 1st Lt. Daniel W. Lee Jan. 23, 1946

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in
awarding the MEDAL of HONOR to

FIRST LIEUTENANT DANIEL W. LEE,
(then Second Lieutenant), CAVALRY
UNITED STATES ARMY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"Lieutenant Lee was leader of Headquarters Platoon, Troop A, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, at Montrevel, France, on 2 September 1944, when the Germans mounted a strong counterattack, isolating the town and engaging its outnumbered defenders in a pitched battle. After the fight had raged for hours and our forces had withstood heavy shelling and armor-supported infantry attacks, Lieutenant Lee organized a patrol to knock out mortars which were inflicting heavy casualties on the beleaguered reconnaissance troops. He led the small group to the edge of the town, sweeping enemy riflemen out of positions on a ridge from which he observed seven Germans manning two large mortars near an armored half-track about one hundred yards down the reverse slope. Armed with a rifle and grenades, he left his men on the high ground and crawled to within thirty yards of the mortars, where the enemy discovered him and unleashed machine pistol fire which shattered his right thigh. Scorning retreat, bleeding and suffering intense pain, he dragged himself relentlessly forward. He killed five of the enemy with rifle fire, and the others fled before he reached their position. Fired on by an armored car, he took cover behind the German half-track and there found a panzerfaust with which to neutralize this threat. Despite his wounds, he inched his way toward the car through withering machine gun fire, maneuvered into range and blasted the vehicle with a round from the rocket launcher, forcing it to withdraw. Having cleared the slope of hostile troops, he struggled back to his men, where he collapsed from pain and loss of blood. Lieutenant Lee's outstanding gallantry, willing risk of life and extreme tenacity of purpose in coming to grips with the enemy although suffering from grievous wounds set an example of bravery and devotion to duty in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service."

Harry Truman

ROLL OF
HONOR

Crouching in his observation post in a shell-pocked building, Lt. Padraig M. O'Dea looked out over Montrevel and shook his head dubiously. Things were not going so well. Americans held the little French town, but in the distance he could glimpse a big force of German armor and infantry closing in. He relayed his information, and the Americans started to withdraw, rapidly but orderly.

Suddenly, the escape road exploded in a blaze of enemy fire. O'Dea sighted quickly on the German batteries and ripped out their location points in a crisp, efficient voice. American machine guns chattered fiercely and the shelling stopped abruptly. The lieutenant took a deep breath. "Score one," he thought.

Again the shelling started, this time on the town. In the face of intense fire, O'Dea ran from his building, summoned a mortar crew and rushed back to his upper floor observation post. The enemy was much closer, trying to infiltrate tanks and infantry. O'Dea's mortar crew opened up and the enemy withdrew, but now his position was spotted.

Enemy tanks and artillery zeroed in and systematically started to destroy his building. He held fast, skillfully returning the fire with his mortar, delaying the attackers until the American troops could withdraw. He ignored his own chance to withdraw safely. The building was rocking and shaking around him. The shells were coming nearer. One made a direct hit.

For his heroic actions and complete disregard for personal safety on Sept. 3, 1944, Padraig M. O'Dea, 01030181, 1st Lt., Troop B, Cav. Recon. Sqd. (Mech.), of Garwood, N. J., has been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Lt. O'Dea is missing in action.

ROLL OF
HONOR

A DSC was awarded posthumously to S-Sgt. Bennet N. Lawson, of Newark, N. J., of a cavalry recon squadron, for extraordinary heroism on Sept. 3 in Montrevel, France. Halting his tank column and climbing on top of a turret, Sgt. Lawson neutralized enemy infantrymen in a side street. Disregarding a wound, he continued to direct his platoon until he was forced to withdraw his tanks against intense enemy tank, machine gun and rifle fire.

His own tank stalled in front of an enemy force of four Mark V tanks and numerous machine guns. Ordering his crew to abandon the tank, Sgt. Lawson held his post in the face of certain death to cover their withdrawal and divert the enemy's fire. He was fatally wounded by an enemy shell.

FRONT and CENTER

With the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, Sept. 27, 1944

Memo to M. Lafayette, Paris.

The hell-for-leather Jersey farmers you char. 3d reside in the Revolutionary War are back again, fighting a new battle for French liberation.

You might not recognize them now. The name is new and very military. Not the Essex Troop or the 1st New Jersey Cavalry but the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The fine, free-galloping horses are gone, too. Bantams and armored cars replaced them. But in a machine war, where the precise manipulation of a lever brings explosive death 15 miles away, the Essex is still fighting man-to-man.

Like the old Essex, it has heroes too. There is T-5 George D. Scruggs, Spartanburg, S. C., who drove his armored car to a road block position at 6 AM, Sept. 13. At 11 AM, a Panther tank lumbered into range. Fighting a Panther with a 37 mm. gun seems as hopeless as that last charge up Bunker Hill, but Scruggs did it—and knocked the Panther out with a direct hit on its track.

NOTHING TO IT

Three hours later the Germans sent up a SP-88 mm. forward to the use of the annoying American. It was just 150 feet away when T-5 Scruggs let go. The third shell jammed the SP's driving mechanism, the ninth set it ablaze. Jerry took no more chances. He ordered up infantry and armor at 5 PM and Scruggs was captured.

That was the end of the story—until 8 AM four days later. Then Scruggs drove blithely up to the CP with a German sergeant beside him. Nothing to it. He just convinced the English speaking guard the war was lost. The guard knew where there was a captured American peep.

Or take S-Sgt. Stephen A. Middlebrook, Summit, N. J., of Troop C. The liberation of Montreval had come high. Two rec troops captured it only to be forced out when an armored column overran their positions. It was Sgt. Middlebrook who offered to lead a patrol of volunteers back into town. He left the CP at 11:30 on the black, starry night of Sept. 1. By 2 AM his patrol was outside Montreval, a blasted bridge blocking its way. The patrol plunged into the icy waters. On the far side it halted to massage life back into numbed limbs. Then it slipped into town. Once an enemy sentry blocked the way. Sgt. Middlebrook ended the threat with a silent knife thrust. The patrol scouted enemy positions, paved the way for a counterattack and withdrew. By 5 AM it was back at the CP. Montreval was retaken that day.

Then there are S-Sgt. Michael A. Aun, Patterson, N. J., and T-5 Roy Albright, Shoals, Ind. They were in a scout car when a German armored column struck. Sgt. Aun, manning the 30 caliber MG, sprayed a hail of lead at the enemy. Seven infantrymen were killed. Trails of blood told a silent story of additional losses.

UNUSUAL BUNCH

T-5 Albright handled the 37 mm. He battered the first of four IVs with six direct hits. Then rifle and machine gun slugs went past, he destroyed three weapon carriers, four personnel carriers, one Kraut-jammed civilian vehicle and three motorcycles.

It's an unusual military organization, this 117th Cavalry. Lt. Col. Charles J. Hodge, Short Hills, N. J., a Wall Street investment banker, looks at S-Sgt. Paul Kenworthy, Kearney, N. J., and says: "I've known him for 15 years. I was a sergeant when he was a corporal. That's the way it is throughout the unit—the CO has worn the squadron colors for 18 years; the exec. has been in 17 years; the S-3 joined 12 years ago. The S-2 is the Johnny Come Lately. He's only been around ten years."

In the line troops the situation is different. Danger is the reconnaissance man's business and replacements are unavoidable, especially if you've been overseas since September, 1942, and through the North African and Italian campaigns with some elements in Sicily, too. And then there's another factor. Six hundred and fifty of the men called up to active duty from the National Guard June 6, 1941, have been commended.

But newcomers have become a solid part of the 117th. During the race from the Riviera, in which the burden of battle fell so largely on rec units, they fought with the skill and reckless courage of veterans.

Their faces have changed and 37 mms. replace the sabers but Essex Troop is still around. They were good in '76? They're still good. M. Lafayette, they're still good.

—Sgt. STAN SWINTON



Montreval, France - Sept. 1951

Troop's Secret Unit

Essex Squadron Captured Seven Times Own Strength in Nazis in Southern France

News has come through at last of Essex Troop's "other" unit. And it is one of the war's most thrilling stories.

The unit, a reconnaissance squadron commanded by Lt. Col. Charles J. Hodge of Maplewood, has

Tells War Epic



Lt. Col. Charles J. Hodge

added Southern France to its distinguished record of service in North Africa and Italy. Among its feats, it is now revealed, were the capture of three German generals and about seven times its own strength in other prisoners.

About six months after Essex Troop went to England the squadron was detached and sent to North Africa. The 102d Reconnaissance Squadron, which remained in England, went into Normandy D-Day. Warren H. Kennet, Newark News correspondent, was with that squadron and has since told of its activities in Northern France, Belgium and Germany. But military restrictions had clamped down on news of Col. Hodge's unit until now.

1,160-Mile Forced March

Word of the unit's feats comes from Col. Hodge to friends in New Jersey. In North Africa the squadron was credited with one of the longest forced marches in history, from Algiers to Marikesh, a distance of 1,160 miles in 51 hours, to furnish security for Prime Minister Churchill and Generals Eisenhower and DeGaulle. The squadron has been cited several times and its officers and men have won many decorations.

After the North African campaign, Col. Hodge's squadron was sent to Italy, serving in advance of the Fifth Army. It was returned to Naples last June to prepare for the invasion of Southern France and landed there D-Day, August 15.

Prisoners Shocked

Under date of September 28, second anniversary of the troop's landing overseas, Col. Hodge wrote that his squadron had been a long while in actual combat in Southern France without rest or without stop. His letter said:

"We landed on D-Day and have never stopped. The pace has been terrific and the results speak for themselves. I guess we have made history in the amount of ground covered in the time spent. While the newspapers seem to think it was easy, I can tell you it was not. It was and is gruelling and without quarter, albeit the Boche has taken a terrible beating, even worse than Tunisia. Some of the prisoners coming in are really in a state of shock and invariably they now admit the jig is up.

"At one supposed strong point, on a nice Sunday afternoon, we, or should say, one troop overran the outpost and caught the whole garrison flat-footed. The officers

(Continued Page 2, Column 4)

erals. One guy was really stocked for the duration with the best French brandy. That has been consumed. Casualties were very light as the Boche had no idea where we were. What was most important, they had no idea where we would hit next, and that was all right with us. We took quite a few nurses prisoner, which was something we had not banked on."

Destroy 900 Vehicles

After describing a battle with a retreating German column, in which a whole Panzer division later joined, Col. Hodge wrote that his unit had captured about seven times its strength in prisoners and destroyed an estimated 900 to 1,000 enemy vehicles. He said he was decorating many of his men "as they have been wonderful and have written a chapter for posterity that will defy competition from any source whatsoever. Unfortunately some of the awards will be posthumous." He said they were all praying for a quick victory and home.

In an earlier letter from Italy, Col. Hodge wrote:

"We have been at this Italian drive some time now and we have been in front all of the way. Sometimes we moved so fast it was extremely difficult to keep us supplied with gas and ammo (ammunition). The advance has had many interesting moments and, although the papers all say the German is disorganized, which he was, he could still throw plenty of stuff at us guys who were right on his heels. Many towns we entered after the enemy had cleared it by five minutes. Also, many times we caught some absolutely cold and I mean we really shot them up."

The Essex Troop became mechanized cavalry soon after it was federalized, but Col. Hodge still has a soft spot in his heart for the horses. Describing a fight, he wrote:

"What has broken our heart is that we encountered a horse cavalry regiment of the enemy attempting to delay. It was miserable but it had to be done and we practically wiped them out. It's not all outgoing mail, however, as we are off the receiving side plenty of times."

In March, 1943, Col. Hodge, Maj. Robert F. J. McGarry of Newark, executive officer of the squadron, and Capt. Omer Brown of Dunellen were made honorary members of a famous French cavalry regiment and were decorated with the regimental insignia in appreciation for conducting schools for the regiment. Maj. McGarry was wounded May 25 in Italy and Capt. Brown, who was credited with capturing 150 Nazis in France, was killed in action there August 25.

DUSK IN THE RHONE VALLEY

Well up the Rhone valley toward Lyons, a U.S. motorized cavalry reconnaissance troop, feeling the way for the main body, was stopped before a German resistance pocket. After sundown, Time Correspondent John Osborne dropped in at the troop's farmhouse command post, saw the following little scene in the great drama of war.

The lieutenant, his sergeant and I sit down together. They both drop into silence. Soon I realize that they are half asleep, hunched on the boxes that serve for chairs. A German shell bursts in the air just over the house and they tiredly dive for the floor. The lieutenant smiles but does not speak when he resumes his seat before a wall map.

Over his shoulder, I can see on the map that we have very little between ourselves and the Germans. But that is not the thing which fills this room with a kind of spiritual blackness. What I sense in this room is weariness—the final weariness which men can endure while they still move, talk when they have to, or even fight again if they must. That weariness is in their faces, their bodies, their khaki clothes clotted with dust and dried sweat. This troop has been constantly rolling and fighting for eight days and nights.

A tall officer—another lieutenant—walks into the C.P. He limps. He stares at me in the half light—it is now dusk—and seems to expect me to say something. So I ask him how he's doing. "Not so good," he says. He sits, and holds his head in his hands a while. Another shell bursts overhead; he falls rather than dives to the floor. Still lying beside him, the other lieutenant asks how things have been going. The lieutenant with the limp says that he has lost two of his three armored cars. He says his men have had enough of this mucking stuff and have got to rest.

A pfc., a messenger, has come in. He takes one look at the tall lieutenant and suddenly he is holding a bottle of cognac toward the officer. The officer carefully pours a tiny glassful,

drinks, and hands the glass and bottle first to the pfc., then to me. As I drink, I hear the first version of a question which I am to hear many times in the next few days: "What in god-damned hell are you doing here?" I say I have come up for dinner and he says: "Dinner!" Another shellburst leaves nothing to be added to this remark.

"The Overall Situation." We learn more about what soldiers laughingly call "the overall situation," which is strictly bad. German "S.P.s" (self-propelled artillery) are in the town and on the hills on two sides of us. They have accurately "zeroed" the only road which the troop can take, and which it is now holding. That is, the sergeant morosely explains, the Huns' artillery can fan a fly's tail in mid-flight if it is so foolish as to venture up the road. Now and then a burst of gunfire, flatter and nearer than the noise of the S.P.s signals a sally of German heavy tanks from Sauzette. They sneak out, fire a few rounds at our lighter armored cavalry cars and tanks, then rush back to cover under bursts of our noisy but ineffective reply. Somewhere along that road, between us and the town, is a small unit of infantry, prudently silent in the gathering darkness.

Another lieutenant appears. Now only flashlights light our blacked-in room, and in their dimness the new arrival looks completely grey. He is all dust, from helmet to boots. He commands the troop's light tanks, which have been up against the Germans' heavier Mark IVs and VIs since the column left the beach. The only break in the tank commander's greyness is a red gash in his right index finger. He inspects the gash and says he got it buttoning up his tank. He tells his story briefly, tiredly, carefully.

"They Just Bounced Off." His column had run into some German heavies. Before the tank commanders could get under cover, the captain of the unit had the top of his head taken off, at turret line. At that point the lieutenant had taken over. He had fired four rounds from his 37-mm. gun against a German heavy's hide. "They bounced off just like tennis balls," he said,

"and we got to hell out of there." He gazed at his hand some more, and said again: "They bounced off, sons of bitches, just bounced off."

We felt, rather than saw, another man enter the room. For a moment, he did not sit. He stood, swaying and staring about the room. The pfc., the sergeant, the three lieutenants and I stared back at him. The lieutenant who had lost the armored cars was pouring another drink of cognac. The captain saw him. He said: "Well, I see you're all right. Lose any men?"

The lieutenant said that he'd got all of his men back, and the captain nodded. My presence was explained. The captain just looked at me, and went over to the map.

He explained to his officers that the Germans were pushing out of the town in more and more strength, and that if they chose to attack we'd be in trouble. Some medium tanks, attached to his unit but not in his command, were, in his perhaps biased opinion, being hesitant about coming on up the road and engaging heavier German tanks. Furthermore, said the captain, the little infantry he had attached to the troop, and the little more in position just outside the town, were not enough to keep the Germans back.

Guests and Hosts. The sergeant, a squat Pennsylvanian with a blackly bearded chin and soft black eyes, said that if I'd come out to his jeep I could have some fried potatoes and coffee. As I walked out, I became aware that we were guests. The family whose house the troop had taken was seated in a thickly walled and ceilinged room on the ground level. A young girl, perhaps 15, sat perfectly still and rigid, stretched out in an armchair. As I stepped across her legs, she did not move or speak. All her words were in her shocked eyes. The rest of the family—Papa, who had put his savings into this farm, Mama, a scraggly woman who was calmly assembling the *déjeuner*, a leggy boy of 16 or so and a baby girl—chattered in the passageway, and fell silent only when a soldier passed or a shell burst.

As I gobbled potatoes by the sergeant's jeep, complete dark-

ness and the last shell came together. After that, the only thing bothering the troop commander and his officers was the news from the road. The mediums went up, met the enemy's heavies, had to fall back.

The troop commander told the sergeant, the troop recorder, to be ready to burn his papers. One of the lieutenants looked over at the sergeant, quietly sorting documents into two piles on a table, and said: "It will be the first time this C.P. ever pulled out of any place."

Decision: Retreat. The troop commander put off the first retirement for two more hours. His tired old-young face, lean as a shell splinter, mirrored his doubt, his brief hope that he could hold, and finally his resolve to save what he had left for another day. He made that decision only after an infantryman from the fragile line near the town burst into the C.P. His face was bleeding slightly, his eyes were glazed. He could hardly talk until the troop medico had patched and soothed him. Then he said, still stammering, that German tanks had broken into the infantry line.

"Point-blank!" he said, "point-blank, sir. We had to get out the best way we could."

Our troop commander told his officers to pass the word to assemble the troop. The limping lieutenant, the tank commander, and the second in command followed him into the darkness. Only the sergeant was left in the room. "It's tough on them," he said. Soon the troop's armored cars, tanks and bantams (cavalry slang for jeeps), were rolling up the dark road, toward the rear. As we turned into the field where we would bivouac, the bearded sergeant said: "Well, it usually ends like this." He meant, not that it usually ended in retirement, but that any ending is an anticlimax for men who have survived the near brush of death.

That was all, except that the troop, promised a rest, got exactly half an hour of "rest," after they went into a rear area the next morning. When I last saw them, the column was on the road again, forming up for a counterattack in our valley.

Interrogation Report

6 September 1944

Sgt Harry Staab, 2d Co, AT Bn 61, 11 Pz Div.

Preamble: The PW left his unit in the vicinity of Baums les Dames and brought back four men of the 117th Rcn Sq, who had been captured by the enemy in the town of Montrevel.

The PW's unit and attached tanks of 15 Pz Regt had been ordered to secure the withdrawal of other enemy elements through the Bourg-Montrevel-Dole axis. On the night of 2 Sept., the column withdrew toward Montrevel and arrived there on the morning of 3 Sept. They were taken under fire upon approaching the town, dispersed their vehicles and dismounted to take up the fire fight with Inf. weapons. Resistance being more severe than anticipated, it was at first believed the town had been occupied by Maquis--4 Panther tanks and a number of Hvy mortars were ordered up. One Mk IV tank also moved into lead the heavier tanks in the attack. This Mk IV, as well as 2 Rcn cars were knocked out almost immediately by our 37mm guns. As resistance increased, the enemy deployed tanks and infantry to take up the fire fight. The battle lasted approximately eight hours, at which time our troops were forced to surrender, due to superiority in heavy weapons and armor. PW states that German officers and men were surprised when they learned that only two Rcn troops had held the town. Special orders were issued to treat our men well out of respect for "their heroic and well conducted battle."

Misc: PW saw 60 Panther tanks of the 15th Pz Regt in Lyon on 1 Sept. He described the breakthrough and withdrawal from Montelimar as "orderly." The 11th PD is now heading for Mulhausen.

J. F. Rieger
Captain, Cavalry

A copy of the above Interrogation Report was given to me for my file. This is a copy of it.

12 September 1959

John L. Wood
Lt. -Col. Armor
U. S. A.R.

Part 4 - The Drive To The Vosges Mountains

As a result of the Montrevel Action, the Squadron had lost the entire Troop "B" and most of Troop "A". The Tank Troop had every tank destroyed or badly damaged. It was necessary to organize the Squadron into six combat sections, each section consisted of two armored cars, three Jeeps and a Platoon of Infantry, who were on temporary assignment from the 45th Inf. Div.

In this manner, the Squadron continued their combat operations, assigned the mission of screening the 3rd Inf. Division as VI Corp., continued their aggressive attack against the German 19th Army.

Our pursuit of the enemy was on the axis Besancon, Arbois and North to the River Saone and closely operating with the 1st French Army. Along the way, many Allied Air Force Pilots were liberated, after parachuting from their damaged bombers and fighter planes.

On September 12, 1944, now assigned to the 36th Inf. Div., we attacked toward the large town of Vesoul. Enemy resistance had stiffened, and our casualties increased as our advance was pressed with strong determination.

In the meantime, replacements arrived and reorganization of Troops "A" and "B" proceeded. Complete organization of the Squadron was accomplished by early October with all armor cars and tanks replaced and ready for combat.

The Squadron advanced north toward the City of Epinal as the American Third Army under General Patton, advanced East in an attempt to trap the German 19th Army.

On September 18, 1944, a group of British Red Devils who had parachuted three months before with several Jeeps, were contacted and they joined up with the Squadron Forces. They were remarkable fighting soldiers and their stories of their exploits against the enemy, mainly the killing of high ranking German Officers were an outstanding episode in the liberation of France. The British Captain Commanding the Red Devils was killed a few weeks later leading his men in a skirmish with the Germans. A truly brave and utterly courageous officer.

General Patch, Commander of the American Seventh Army was a frequent visitor to Squadron Headquarters for a briefing on the up-to-date combat situation. He indicated that our battle information and enemy intelligence was the most up-to-date tactical information within the entire Seventh Army. In fact, General Patch stated that this vital information normally took three days to reach his Headquarters. As a result, he assigned a staff Colonel to report each morning to our Headquarters and return to Army with all up-to-date tactical information, reporting directly to the General.

Finally the gap between the Normandy forces was closed when patrols of Troop "B" contacted advanced elements of the 1st Spahis Regiment of the 2nd French Armor Division of the 3rd American Army. Thus on September 18, 1944 the Allied Forces who landed on the Beaches at Normandy and those from Southern France joined forces and the Allies had an unbroken line from Holland to the Swiss border.

The Squadron continued its determined advances, help capture Epinal and crossed the Moselle River and reached the foothills of the Vosges Mountains.

By the close of September, the Squadron held the line from Secofur to Rambervilliers. We were to maintain these positions for several weeks as the Germans had developed strong defensive positions in the mountains and it was extremely difficult to dislodge them.

Our advance against the German Forces from the Riviera Beaches in Southern France was swift and triumphant. Due to great boldness and driving initiative, we made many great and sweeping gains and had fought almost four hundred miles to reach the Vosges Mountains.

Unfortunately, the cost was high in loss of Officers and enlisted men. Also, much equipment was destroyed by enemy action, but despite every type of obstacle, the men of the 117th Mecz. Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron responded magnificently.

At this point in time, due to our stationary position at Secoeur, I was able to write about the heroic exploits of the gallant men of the Squadron and the leading part that they played in helping to liberate a large area of Southern France and which earned the Squadron the Award of the French Croix Du Guerre with Palm, from a grateful French Government.

The enclosed article, "The Knights of the Yellow Cord (Cavalry)" was written for and dedicated to the Officers and men of the Squadron who, by their valor and devotion to duty, made the supreme sacrifice for their Country.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE YELLOW CORD

HAROLD J. SAMSEL

Major, Cavalry

Dedicated to the Officers and Men of the
Mechanized Cavalry who, by their valor
and devotion to duty, made the supreme
sacrifice for their country.

Somewhere in France

October 1944

THE KNIGHTS OF THE YELLOW CORD

In the cold light which will follow the dawn of peace, upon the cessation of hostilities of the great conflict of World War II, a close study and thorough analysis of the part each respective branch of service of the American army played in bringing to a successful conclusion the war against Germany, will reveal the important role that mechanized cavalry contributed toward final victory.

Rarely, indeed, does one read in the daily communiques or press dispatches, the accomplishments and fighting qualities of the intrepid men of the mechanized cavalry in their daily performance of reconnoitering well ahead of the front lines, probing the enemy's strength. In modern warfare, the fast moving, hard hitting armored cars and tanks are the elements which first contact the enemy. It can truly be said that the wearers of the yellow cord of the mechanized cavalry, lead the Queens into battle.

Relatively speaking, the mechanized cavalry of the American Army is one of the newest branches of service and received its first baptism of fire in the Tunisian campaign. In the early days of building the American army, shortly after the fall of France in June, 1940, from a small standing army, mechanized cavalry was still in its infancy. However, the High Command at that time wisely decided that in a modern war of machines, there would be little use for horse cavalry. The basic tactics of cavalry remained fundamentally sound in principle and needed only to substitute modern mechanized vehicles capable of rapid cross-country maneuverability and speed, possessed with strong fire power and equipped with long range high power radio communications, in place of the gallant steeds of a bygone

era.

In 1941 several horse cavalry regiments were converted into mechanized units, trained and participated in many large scale maneuvers, developing a high standard of proficiency. During this early stage, there was moulded a limited number of hard hitting mechanized cavalry squadrons, equipped with fast armored cars, hard hitting speedy light tanks and heavy caliber assault guns, highly mechanized and capable of operating deep within enemy lines or on their flanks, probing out the enemy's defenses.

By necessity, therefore, mechanized cavalry became one of the newest branches of the service, and as a result little is known by the American public of the exploits of the mechanized cavalry squadrons and their contributions in the campaigns of Tunisia, Sicily, Italy and now France. Being few in number and small in size, they appear lost in the background of the accomplishments of infantry and armored divisions, the artillery, engineers and air corps. But yet it is the mechanized cavalry which furnishes the highly valuable information of the enemy's strength and dispositions, permitting the employment of all these elements in a sound plan of attack. They are more often referred to as reconnaissance elements. In France there has been one unit which has distinguished itself in true cavalry tradition, contributing greatly to the rapid advance made by the American 7th Army in their push northward from the beaches of southern France.

This unit, its background dating back to the Revolutionary War days and steeped deep with cavalry tradition, was one of the first mechanized cavalry reconnaissance squadrons to sail overseas. Already it has traveled in seven foreign countries over a period of more than two years. Its members wear the battle stars for participation in the campaigns of Tunisia, Sicily, Italy and southern France.

It is believed that this squadron was the first one of its kind to land

intact on "D" Day of a large scale invasion. The entire unit was landed on the beaches with elements of the assault waves when the 7th Army invaded the southern coast of France.

Taking advantage of its rapid mobility and self-sustaining long range operation, it soon had penetrated deep into southern France and more than 150 miles behind the German lines. This rapid advance placed it well forward of its supporting infantry and artillery.

The operations of this unit in their thrust north through the Rhone Valley will prove to be one of the sagas in the annals of modern military history, when the final story can be fully revealed.

At this time, however, it can be revealed that the caliber of men, their esprit de corps and their traditions have moulded this unit into one of the outstanding fighting outfits of the 7th Army. Their splendid accomplishments and deeds of valor on the battlefield are bywords among fighting men in France.

The "Queens of Battle," the fighting doughfeet of some of the most seasoned and battle tested American divisions now operating in France, look with respect upon the fighting "Recons" who lead them into battle. There is no more encouraging sight to the doughboys than to see the mechanized cavalymen out in front of them, probing the enemy's defenses and testing his strength. They fight side by side, the "Recons" ready to exploit the breakthrough, supported by their tanks, armored cars and assault guns.

These are no ordinary fighting soldiers, but the most highly trained specialists and versatile fighting men of the ground forces today. They are proficient tank and armored car drivers, expert gunners, skilled radio operators, artillerymen with heavy caliber assault weapons, highly trained as engineers in removing enemy mine fields and booby traps, preparing demolitions and building improvised bridges. Their auxiliary weapons include

mortars, light and heavy, anti-tank guns, bazookas, anti-aircraft guns and all types of automatic machine guns. Every type of personal arms, from pistols, TSMGs, rifles, carbines, rifle and carbine grenades and intrenching knives are carried by the individuals.

One must wonder why such a display of fire power and skilled specialists is concentrated within so small a unit. When properly employed in exploiting a tactical situation, the mechanized cavalry will often operate deep behind the enemy's lines and must be self sustaining in all supporting weapons, to insure a degree of success against a bewildered enemy. This has occurred many times in France and the all around teamwork and versatility developed to a new high standard, only attained by the American soldier, struck staggering harassing blows against the 19th German Army in their tragic retreat into Germany from the southern coast of France.

The Squadron, fresh from its battle-scarred campaign in Italy, where it made the remarkable advance of over 250 miles in less than forty days, north from Cassino, prepared itself for the invasion of southern France.

Elaborate and painstaking plans were prepared for the employment of the troops, including the innovation of landing mechanized vehicles with the second assault waves. Battle tested, with supreme confidence in their ability, complete faith in their equipment and vehicles, the Squadron sailed with a great armada to attempt to gain another foothold on the so-called impregnable "Fortress of Europe."

The ships in convoy formation, under the watchful eye of the Navy's sea dogs of many Allied Nations and an air cover of fighters scanning the skies ahead to prevent the enemy from discovering the approach of this great invasion army, sailed majestically toward its goal.

The scene enacted aboard the invasion fleet consisting of every type of landing craft, was one of complete confidence, notwithstanding the dangerous

mission ahead.

The majority of the officers and men were seasoned veterans of Tunisia, Sicily and Italy and had also participated in several invasions on hostile shores. To those who search into the men's souls in an attempt to discover what reactions Zero hour meant to them, there appeared an indifference to the dangers ahead. They appeared to possess an attitude of faith in their proven ability as the finest fighting men in the world. Their job was to crack another opening in the so-called impregnable wall and join forces with the gallant men of the Allied armies who landed on the Normandy beaches. Together, side by side, they would continue their advance toward Berlin and destroy the last vestige of Nazism and let the world once again enjoy a new light of freedom from oppression.

In the early mists of "D" Day, there appeared in the distance the hostile shores of Southern France. Already the naval guns had begun to spend their destructive fury upon the enemy's fortifications and installations. Amidst the crescendo of hundreds of naval guns was added the full weight of our bombers who dropped their lethal loads with unerring aim. The skies were darkened by the might of our air force.

This awe-inspiring scene of gun flashes from sea and the leaping flames on shore attested to the strength of our forces. Already, too, thousands of daring paratroopers and glider-borne troops had landed behind the enemy's lines.

Zero hour approached; men made last minute preparations. An early breakfast had been served and now the men gripped their rifles a little tighter. Complete confidence permeated the atmosphere. Had we not tested the best the enemy had to offer on other battlefields and found that he was not the superman he would have us believe? With confidence and faith born of bitter battle experience, the men of this gallant 7th Army climbed aboard

their assault boats and sailed for the beaches of southern France.

The full weight of the terrible fire power from the hundreds of naval ships laid their final caress upon the assault beaches and before the smoke had cleared, American boys had a toehold on the beach. The most difficult part of the job had been accomplished; it was only necessary now to meet the enemy on equal terms. With determination and a will to engage the enemy, the assault waves drove relentlessly forward. Behind followed wave after wave and among these were the fighting mechanized cavalry, their vehicles poised and ready to locate the main strength of the enemy and contact the paratroopers inland.

The enemy dazed by the weight of shells and bombs, and caught by surprise, soon gave away to our determined efforts.

Contact was established with the airborne troops and with capable assistance from the valiant patriots of Fighting France, a firm beachhead was established. Without waiting for a breathing spell, the "Recons" pushed on, their advance so rapid that by "D" plus 3, a patrol captured the German Corps Commander, a Lieutenant General, with his entire staff. He was dazed by our speed and bold fighting qualities and meekly surrendered. A situation had developed that was every true cavalryman's dream, an exploitation deep into the enemy's line to harass his communications, take advantage of his disorganized forces as they beat a hasty retreat toward Germany. A golden opportunity that had few parallels in this war, was in the offing.

Thus, on "D" plus 3, this highly mobile mechanized cavalry squadron had penetrated the outer defenses of the enemy and was free to roam within the enemy lines at will. By the close of the first day more than fifty miles were gained and many towns and villages liberated from the yoke of the oppressor.

The scenes enacted by these liberated French peoples, who welcomed us with uncontrolled emotion will forever remain vivid among the memories of the men of the Squadron. Their genuine greetings of welcome, some with tears in their eyes from sheer joy, others extending their typical French greeting of kissing both cheeks, a novelty to the American boys, were scenes to be enacted hundreds of times in the advance toward the German border.

The enemy lost one of his greatest weapons in being prevented from destroying key bridges and vital communication centers. The advance moved with such momentum that the best the Germans hoped for was to escape with their lives. The knowledge that we had penetrated so deeply, already a hundred miles by "D" plus 5, left him in a bewildered state. His lack of knowledge of our whereabouts had him confused; it was not certain what routes of escape remained open or when his supply lines would be cut or harassed. Never before in modern warfare had a hard hitting fast moving mobile force possessed with the finest long range radio communication been permitted to roam at will against a disorganized army bent on retreat through a hostile country.

The patriots, or Maquis as they are referred to, encouraged by the presence of American forces, became bolder in their destruction and retaliation against isolated German garrisons. Their cause was justified by the exploitation of their land by the occupying German forces. The enemy's ruthless manner of retaliation on hostages, the willful destruction of French homes, their livestock, and finally the shipping to Germany of the bulk of the agricultural products of an already famished land, added to the hate and wrath stored up within their souls.

With the coming of the invading American forces, it was the signal for these fighting patriots who had lived in the hills many long months, to come out in the open. Already they were organized into compact groups by districts,

ably led by former French army officers who had escaped in the fall of France. They were fairly well armed with weapons supplied by the Allies from the air, and supplemented by captured German equipment.

It was through the able assistance of these patriots that the Squadron was furnished with the most up-to-date intelligence of the dispositions of the German forces. Guides were furnished who knew every hidden trail and by-pass which led around destroyed bridges and enemy strong points.

On one occasion when a bridge was destroyed a few hours before our arrival, the local Maquis chief had assembled sufficient men to construct a ford, permitting the Squadron to continue an uninterrupted advance.

There were many instances when groups of Germans would offer to surrender to the Americans, if they could be guaranteed they would not be turned over to the local patriots. Often the enemy, when encountered by the Squadron, believed they were being attacked by patriots, deeming it impossible that American troops had penetrated so deeply in so short a time.

The penetration had reached a distance of 185 miles from the original landing on the beachhead only a short time before. The rate of advance surpassed all expectations and hundreds of towns had been liberated.

It was now a question of maintaining supply lines through hostile territory. Many enemy strong points were by-passed, from which our supply vehicles could easily be attacked. Again the patriots proved their valuable assistance by guarding and securing bridges and protecting our slim line of communication for our column. The men of the Squadron realized by now this history-making exploit and were keenly alert to the dangers.

This sudden thrust had carried the Squadron deep into hostile territory and it became apparent that in the very near future the bulk of the enemy's retreating force would be encountered.

As yet, the majority of our enemy contacts consisted of engaging German

garrisons which were defending the larger villages and towns. In every instance the enemy was caught by surprise in these towns, bewildered by our sudden advance and audacity of attack. Their communications had been so disrupted that our whereabouts were never known until the leading vehicles of the Squadron contacted the outer defenses of the enemy's garrisons. These defenses in the majority of cases were only partly manned.

An outstanding example of the element of surprise was when our forward forces advanced on the largest town yet encountered. One leading patrol observed a small group of enemy organized in position. The patrol leader called for artillery fire and before forty rounds had been fired, observed a white flag of surrender. Knowing the tactics of the Germans when offering to surrender, he sent forward five light tanks to approach this group. To the amazement of the tank leader, the German officer in charge stated that his commanding officer was willing to surrender the entire garrison. The offer was accepted and to the astonishment of everyone, the garrison totalled 1500 Germans.

Thus this larger sized force of enemy surrendered to an American force of less than 100 troops. It was ascertained that our patrols had overrun the outer defenses; it was Sunday afternoon and the majority of the German troops were relaxing. The German commander to the best of his knowledge believed that the Americans were not within a hundred miles of this sector. Finally, when our artillery fire landed, he believed that the town was being attacked by a superior force and decided to surrender.

Fresh from this latest success, we turned west toward the Rhone River, where it was believed that the retreating forces of the shattered 19th German Army was retreating north through the Rhone Valley.

This was soon ascertained and our assumption was correct, for our column ran head-on against the retreating enemy column. The valley road on the east

bank of the Rhone River was the last escape route remaining open to the Germans, all bridges across the Rhone River having previously been destroyed by our Air Force.

The German high command was determined to escape with the bulk of his forces and attacked with elements of the 11th Panzer Division to hold off our harassing blows against his flanks. Our forces were greatly inferior to this German armor, but his lack of knowledge of our strength and the element of surprise in our favor, delayed the advance of the leading elements of the German Army for several days. The enemy probed his right flank to ascertain our dispositions and strength and finally determined how small a force was blocking and harassing the retreat of an entire army.

However, his delay was fatal, for by this time the leading elements of the 7th Army had rushed north, its route paved by this gallant mechanized cavalry squadron of only several hundred men. By the lightning thrust of this daring and remarkable exploit, brilliantly executed, into the heart of France, it made possible the fastest advance made by a modern army in World War II.

The Squadron was soon supported by the bulk of the American forces who originally landed on the beaches of southern France and the 19th German Army suffered a most humiliating defeat. For five days his column was attacked at close range by every type of weapon in the American army. At night the enemy's columns would travel three abreast, going in the same direction on the main road north. Not daring to move during daylight hours, his concentrations in bivouac were subject to devastating fire by our artillery and air force, who enjoyed a field day.

The sight of this retreating German army, heading pell-mell toward Germany in disastrous route was no doubt a shattering blow to the enemy's morale, causing thousands of the enemy to surrender. The majority of their

transport had been destroyed, civilian cars and trucks were requisitioned from the French. They lacked gasoline, which resulted in horses pulling every type of vehicle, and the majority of the soldiers were walking or riding pilfered bicycles.

It was necessary for this column to ford the Drome River at three places and our artillery was registered on those points. At night when the enemy attempted these crossings, our batteries fired their lethal loads upon the hapless column.

Finally, the last escape route was cut and thousands of prisoners were captured, along with columns of enemy materiel of every description. Shocked from the murderous fire of our guns and the weight of our Air Force, practically starved, it was indeed a sad commentary for the "Master Race." The carnage that remained blocked the roads for miles. Every type of German combat vehicle was represented, hundreds of dead horses with horse-drawn artillery pieces destroyed, many French civilian cars were abandoned for lack of fuel. The battle area was literally strewn with the bulk of the vehicles of the escaping German forces, a complete mass of wreckage, attesting to the destructive power of American equipment.

Resuming its rapid advance, the Squadron in a 150 mile right end sweep, outstripping its supporting infantry and artillery, again contacted the leading elements of the retreating 19th German Army as they were nearing the German border, harassing his flanks with lightning stabs, forcing the enemy column time and again to divert from his planned axis of escape. The remaining escape routes toward Germany were fast dwindling, and it became apparent that it would soon be necessary to defend in strength the narrowing avenues remaining open, if the Germans expected to reach the border.

Already the threat of the American 3rd Army, racing from the Normandy beachhead toward the left flank of this enemy column, threatened to cut this

column off. His last routes of escape into Germany were now extremely limited. Harassed by the fighting French patriots from every point of advantage and struck savage blows by our Air Force, his losses increased considerably. Abandoned materiel and wreckage were strewn along the roads from the southern coast of France, attesting the severe losses of a mighty Wehrmacht army.

Successes are usually determined at great cost in hardships and sacrifices. In warfare the price sometimes appears high, but the net result in the over-all effect of final victory surpasses the individual sacrifice. No victory is ever achieved without its price in sweat and blood.

Penetrating deep behind enemy lines, beyond safe limits of supply and communications in daring attacks upon a superior force entails the greatest personal dangers. Exploits of this character require the highest qualities of leadership, physical stamina, astute resourcefulness, skillfully trained personnel and above all, the will and determination to engage the enemy. It is axiomatic in military tactics when exploiting against a disorganized enemy to strike with daring speed and retain the element of surprise.

The achievements and success of this brilliant military operation would never have been possible had the above qualities been lacking. Had less than the highest qualities existed, had they been only mediocre on the occasion when the Squadron was to face its greatest test against the foe, the final result would have been disastrous.

On this occasion, the situation was rapidly approaching where a desperate enemy was confronted with the prospect of having his last route of escape completely cut and his force annihilated. A large detachment of the Squadron was assigned the mission of seizing and holding an important town and crossroad on the main avenue of escape. Approaching during the early light of dawn after an approach march of more than thirty miles through

mountainous terrain and pitch darkness, the initial attack was launched. The element of surprise was in our favor and within an hour, all resistance had been overcome and the entire garrison were taken prisoner.

Immediate steps were taken to consolidate defenses and cover the avenues of approach leading toward the town, in expectation of the enemy's reaction to the loss of this vital point. Hardly had the initial preparations been completed when the town was in turn attacked by the enemy, in force. The Germans appeared determined to retake the town and launched a tank attack, supported by infantry of the Panzer Grenadiers. Our forces met the initial enemy assault with every weapon available and when the smoke had cleared, the cavalrymen still held tenaciously to their positions. It was apparent that elements of a Panzer Division were attacking, and they soon launched a second assault. Our light armored cars and tanks were no match against the enemy's Mark V tanks, but by superior marksmanship, determination and sheer guts, the enemy attack was again repulsed. For several hours the battle continued; the enemy was building up superior strength while our own reinforcements were rushing up. However, as in the past, we were operating fifty miles beyond our nearest infantry support and it became a race against time to reach this fearless force of Americans who were holding off a superior force of armor and infantry.

The enemy's determination became increasingly stronger with the intensity of his attacks, while our own force suffered severe losses in materiel and personnel. Nevertheless the town was held eight hours after the Germans initially attacked in force. By skillful leadership, employment of the combined weapons, utilizing the maximum fire power, superb fighting qualities of the individual soldiers and a resolute determination of purpose in keeping with the highest traditions of the service, these men of the mechanized cavalry withstood the ferocious attacks of a large force

of a German Panzer Division.

Individual heroism became commonplace. Light armored cars slugged it out with enemy Mark V tanks at point-blank range, fighting with determined skill and superb marksmanship. These gallant American soldiers exacted a terrific toll. Soon ammunition became exhausted, but fortunately a loaded German ammunition truck had been captured earlier. Making full use of the enemy's hand grenades and explosives, they continued the battle.

It became apparent that our infantry reinforcements would not arrive in time. To alleviate the pressure on the heroic defenders of the town, a tank attack was launched. Striking from two directions, the fast driving light tanks drove toward town and engaged the enemy. Firing their guns with rapid speed against the enemy's superior heavier tanks, they temporarily diverted the pressure against their comrades. However, the superiority of the enemy's armor was in their favor and our forces retired with their remaining tanks.

With ammunition exhausted, no food or water available and many wounded in need of medical aid, completely surrounded by an overwhelming force of the enemy, the American commander maintained he could hold out if reinforcements would arrive.

On the outside every effort was made to reach the besieged town with reinforcements. Once too often these gallant mechanized cavalrymen were to make a daring attack against unsurmountable odds and pay a high price for the attempt.

Before reinforcements arrived, the enemy closed in and after the most furious battle of the campaign, the conflict ended. Having fought valiantly against a foe possessing seven times the strength, supported by heavy tanks of a Panzer Division, the enemy acknowledged the courage and superior

fighting qualities of these Americans by issuing special orders that they be treated with special privilege. The enemy shared his rations and cigarettes as a token of his respect for these fighting men, who fought to the end against such numerical strength.

What has been described in this narrative only lightly tells of the deeds and accomplishments of a few intrepid American fighting men of the mechanized cavalry. On other battlefields, their deeds and acts of valor continue with the same spirit and with the highest traditions of the Cavalry. These men a few years ago gave up their horses reluctantly to ride the iron steeds of a modern mechanized war. The spirit that has prevailed through the glorious traditions of the past, still lives as "The Knights of the Yellow Cord" seek out the foe and lead our armies into battle.

- - - - -

flank of the French rear near Chagny. The attack was unsuccessful and cost the Germans 400 killed and 30 prisoners. Fanning out, the 1st French Infantry Division outflanked Autun, some 20 miles west of Chagny, from the north and had cleared the town by the end of the day.

Troops of the French II Corps raced to meet the American XV Corps of the Third Army. Only 25 miles separated the French from Dijon, and the fall of this important city would not only cut the chief enemy escape route but also outflank the Doubs line. On 9 September French armored elements reached a point on Highway 74 almost midway between Beaune and Dijon. Here the Germans attempted to hold firm and halt the advance. Another counterattack was launched into the flank of II Corps. However, this attempt failed and cost the Germans over 300 killed and many captured. An estimated 300 vehicles and 12 guns of different calibers were destroyed.

Seventh and Third Armies Join Forces

Dijon was invested and liberated by the 1st French Armored Division on 10 September. The Germans did not attempt to defend the city, and the capital of Burgundy fell into Allied hands undamaged. On their right flank the French contacted the 117th Cavalry of VI Corps at Auxonne, north of Dole, thereby establishing a continuous army front. During the night of 10-11 September an armored reconnaissance group operating west of Dijon met a patrol from the 2nd French Armored Division of the American Third Army. The meeting at Sombernon linked the Normandy front with that of southern France. Whether the trap was now closed, however, it was difficult to say. Large enemy forces were reported to be still west of Dijon.

The following day, 11 September, French II Corps armor continued to push northeast toward Langres. The infantry established a static defense line west of Dijon and prepared for any future enemy attempt to break out of the closing trap. Reconnaissance elements pushed out to the northwest of the Dijon-Langres highway.

At 0700 hours on 12 September, reconnaissance troops of the 1st French Infantry Division linked in force with an armored regiment

HEADQUARTERS
SIXTH ARMY GROUP
Office of the Commanding General

APO 23, U.S. Army

7 October 1944

Lt. Col Charles J. Hodge,
Commanding Officer,
Troop F, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance
Squadron, Mechanized.

Dear Colonel Hodge:

Today your great leader, Lieutenant General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., sent me a Luger as coming from the members of Troop F of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized. I greatly appreciate this trophy and hope that I may be able to employ it usefully in the continuation of this war.

The work of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, will be one of the outstanding accomplishments of the activities of the VI Corps, which it has so ably assisted and supported throughout its many campaigns.

Sincerely,

/S/ Jacob L. Devers,
/T/ JACOB L. DEVERS,
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army,
Commanding.

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

Raymond J. Glass
RAYMOND J. GLASS
1st Lt., Cavalry
Adjutant

Reckless Recs First Men Of 7th To Reach Moselle

By Sgt. STAN SWINTON
Staff Writer

WITH THE 7TH ARMY ON THE MOSELLE Sept. 20—(Delayed)—The reckless recs penetrated within 55 miles of the German border at 3 PM yesterday when Lt. Omar Myers, 25-year-old peacetime agriculture inspector, led two battalions within 300 yards of the wooded Moselle River banks in the Epinal sector. Scouts from the same famous reconnaissance later slipped into Epinal itself and withdrew. Epinal, little more than 60 miles west of the Rhine, is believed by the Moselle. It had been reported a strongpoint in the hastily conceived line the Wehrmacht created behind the natural barrier of the Moselle and manned with provisional battle groups, baited with stragglers from France and bulwarked by

Reckless Recs

(Continued from page 1)

stream and fell into the arms of the reconnaissance group. Quick to take advantage of enemy surprise, other reconnaissance elements bulwarked the Moselle probe and kept the Germans busy until the infantry consolidated the advance today. But to Lt. Myers, Sgt. Tucker Grimm, Upper Black, Eddy Bucks County, Pa., T-5 Bob Eargood, a regular army man from Evansville, Ind., with seven years service, Pvt. Mike Meijas, New York City, and Pvt. Harold Reynolds, Lakewood, N. J., went the honor of being the first 7th Army group to reach the Moselle.

THE STARS AND STRIPES

Sept. 30, 1944

FRONT X and X CENTER

With the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, Sept. 27

Memo to M. Lafayette, Paris.

The hell-for-leather Jersey farmers you charged beside in the Revolutionary War are back again, fighting a new battle for French liberation.

You might not recognize them now. The name is new and very military. Not the Essex Troop or the 1st New Jersey Cavalry but the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The line, free-galloping horses are gone, too. Bandages and armored cars replaced them. But in a machine war, where the precise manipulation of a lever brings explosive death to miles away, the Essex is still fighting man to man.

Like the old Essex, it has heroes too. There's T-5 George D. Scruggs, Spartanburg, S. C., who drove his armored car to a road block position at 6 AM, Sept. 3. At 11 AM, a Panther tank lumbered into range. Fighting a Panther with a 37 mm. gun seems as hopeless as that last charge up Bunker Hill, but Scruggs did it—and knocked the Panther out with a direct hit on its track.

NOTHING TO IT

Three hours later the Germans sent up a SP 88 mm. forward to dispose of the annoying American. It was just 150 feet away when T-5 Scruggs let go. The third shell jammed the SP's driving mechanism, the fifth set it ablaze. Jerry took no more chances. He ordered up infantry and armor at 5 PM and Scruggs was captured.

That was the end of the story—until 8 AM, four days later. Then Scruggs drove blithely up to the CP with a German sergeant beside him. Nothing to it. He just convinced the English speaking guard the war was lost. The guard knew where there was a captured American jeep.

Or take S-Sgt. Stephen A. Middlebrook, Summit, N. J., of Troop C. The liberation of Montreuil had come high. Two rec troops captured it only to be forced out when an armored column overran their positions. It was Sgt. Middlebrook who offered to lead a patrol of volunteers back into town. He left the CP at 11:30 on the black, starry night of Sept. 1. By 2 AM his patrol was outside Montreuil, a blasted bridge blocking its way. The patrol plunged into the icy waters. On the far side it halted to massage life back into numbed limbs. Then it slipped into town. Once an enemy sentry blocked the way, Sgt. Middlebrook ended the threat with a silent knife thrust. The patrol scouted enemy positions, paved the way for a counterattack and withdrew. By 5 AM it was back at the CP. Montreuil was retaken that day.

Then there are S-Sgt. Michael A. Ann, Patterson, N. J., and T-5 Roy Albright, Shoals, Ind. They were in a scout car when a German armored column struck. Sgt. Ann, manning the 30 caliber MG, sprayed a hail of lead at the enemy. Seven infantrymen were killed. Trails of blood told

UNUSUAL BUNCH

T-5 Albright handled the first of the IVs with six direct hits. The rifle and machine gun slung past, he destroyed three carriers, four personnel cars, Kraut-jammed civilian vehicles and three motorcycles.

It's an unusual military lion, this 117th Cavalry. Charles J. Hodges, Short Hills, N. J., Wall Street investment broker, at S-Sgt. Paul Kearney, N. J., and known him for 15 years, sergeant when he was a That's the way it is through unit—the CO has worn the colors for 18 years; the been in 17 years, the S-2 years ago. The S-2 is the Come Lately. He's only been ten years.

In the line troops the different. Danger is the of study of maps and photos, numerous landings shores by secret agents—the final plans; weeks African and Italian campaigns by the infantry and some elements in Sicily, then there's another factor: dred and fifty of the men to active duty from the Guard on June 6, 1944, commissioned.

But the newcomers have solid part of the 117th. The race from the Riviera, the border of battle fell on rec units, they fought skill and reckless courage.

Their faces have changed, mms. replace the sergeants. A Troop is still around. The good in '67. They're still Lafayette—they're still

—Sgt. STAN SWINTON

BEACHHEAD SOUVENIR

NEWS EDITION

No. 100

Founded on the Anzio Beachhead

Sunday, October 15, 1944

6th Corps Drives Through France Veterans Hit Riviera Beaches

Mediterranean Vets Hit Ashore D-Day

15 was a tense day on the shores of Southern France. D-Day. The veterans of the 6th Corps—Oran, Licata and Gela, Sicily and Anzio—were on the beach.

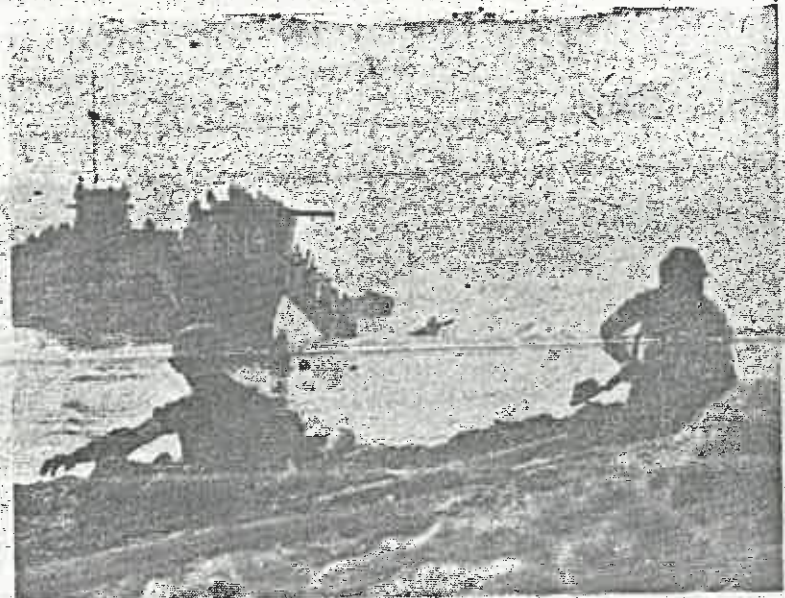
In the line troops the different. Danger is the of study of maps and photos, numerous landings shores by secret agents—the final plans; weeks African and Italian campaigns by the infantry and some elements in Sicily, then there's another factor: dred and fifty of the men to active duty from the Guard on June 6, 1944, commissioned.

But the newcomers have solid part of the 117th. The race from the Riviera, the border of battle fell on rec units, they fought skill and reckless courage.

Their faces have changed, mms. replace the sergeants. A Troop is still around. The good in '67. They're still Lafayette—they're still

—Sgt. STAN SWINTON

"The Yanks Are Coming"



The morning of August 15, 1944. Yanks leave an LCI, plunge into the water and wade to shore. Here a medic prepares to treat a wounded. The MP is moving on to his post. (APS)

'You Did It', General Truscott Says in Tribute to Troops

TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE VI CORPS:

In the bright, prophetic sunlight of the early morning of the 15th of August, you men of the VI Corps—men of the 3d Division, the 36th Division, the 45th Division and of every reinforcing unit—veterans, all of other amphibious operations—launched your memorable assault against the shores of Southern France. Supported by powerful air, airborne, and naval forces and assisted by long-oppressed and waiting French Allies, you destroyed the beach defenses of the 19th German Army and advanced inland to initial objectives with almost unprecedented speed.

facilitating their subsequent capture by our Allies. By your drive up the Durance River Valley, you trapped and annihilated a great portion of the fleeing 19th Army at the site of the now historic town of Montelimar. Without pause, you then turned to the northeast in a relentless pursuit of remnants, which you have continued almost eight days, you have traversed five hundred miles and have defeated a desperate enemy at every stand. You have forced a crossing of two major rivers. You have overcome every obstacle that a resourceful enemy could devise. You have, with even less than organic transport, must be as you were to

Up From the Sea To Threaten Reich

Story of Sixth Corps' Sweep Toward Germany

Following abruptly upon the fall of Rome in the Italian campaign, the VI Corps was withdrawn from the lines and sent to the rear to prepare for the invasion of Southern France. For this new assault, to be made upon the German continental bastion, the most veteran divisions in the Mediterranean campaign—the 3rd, the 36th and the 45th Divisions, with the attendant number and variety of seasoned supporting units—were designated not to comprise the VI Corps. The experience of North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Normandy were to be called upon in this great new operation in the western theatre.

Our Mission

Simultaneously with the fall of the City of Rome, the first Axis capital to be liberated, the landings in northern France had been launched. Operations were progressing satisfactorily but slowly. A strong threat from the south, one that would contain and divert much of the enemy strength in France, offered the best possibility of assisting the northern effort, and of accelerating the progress of the forces engaged there. The attack by the Seventh Army with the Provisional Airborne Division dropping just before H-hour and the VI Corps assault ever the beach at H-hour, followed by the French Army was to constitute this threat.

Preparations

Personnel and equipment were gathered together, plans were formulated, intensive special training was engaged in by all units of the Corps, and everything was made ready. All of the multitude of meticulous details that characterize preparations for a distant large scale amphibious undertaking was perfected. All of the information which had been in progress of collection over a long period of time, regarding the strength and disposition of hostile forces, and of the conditions which might

BEACHHEAD NEWS

VI CORPS

Founded on the Anzio Beachhead

pt. J. C. GRIMES
1ST LIEUT. ALAN E. GOULD

Officer in Charge
Executive Officer

STAFF
T. WM. H. QUINN, JR.
T. TY CROSS
L. R. P. FLAHERTY

Editor
News Editor
Feature Editor

Correspondents: Bill Harr, James E. Claunch, Mark Porter, Joseph Palmer, Roy I. Broide, Jack Savacool and Dwight P. Shear

Published daily for troops of the VI Corps. Acknowledgment is made to the Press Service of the Corps Signal Battalion and the G-2 Staff of the VI Corps for the daily Corps news summary. The Beachhead News receives CNS material. Publication of credited matter prohibited without permission of CNS. War Department, New York, N. Y.

OL I, No. 100

Sunday, October 15, 1944

Looking Back Over Our Shoulder

Picked at random from the files of the Beachhead News, looking back over the road since invasion.

Somehow, we failed to immortalize a GI as the first ashore.

Pvt. Arthur Winter goose-stepped a column of prisoners rough town as liberated civilians cheered.

A captured bakery was quickly put to use by the front line infantry unit and white bread was served in southern France, D-day.

Pfc. Rudolph Cebula, from Weirton, West Virginia, who was supposed to have fired the first shot at Salerno, fired the first round of artillery on the Riviera.

Six hours after the beach was stormed, six GIs were found in a private home jitterbugging with local girls.

Pennies from the people of Draguignan purchased the land for our first American cemetery, their gift to the United States.

The 45th Division infantrymen marched honor-guard for a fallen member of the Maquis.

130 Germans resting in a rest camp woke one morning to find that they were surrounded by American troops.

A Frenchman, guiding Yanks, had passed his own home but wouldn't top to visit his wife until the objective had been reached.

He hadn't seen her in two years.

8th Division troops, once under the mercy of German Anzio guns on the heights, turned the tables when they climbed a hill here and found a column of German vehicles passing by below them.

Somebody yelled, "Remember Anzio!" and they opened fire.

Pfc. Harvey Conditt, jeep driver, found a bomb straddling a bridge, looped a rope around it and dragged it off with his jeep.

A 36th Division task force, led by Second Lieutenant James Hollo-way, slipped past a barracks-full of sleeping Germans one night when a column of Yanks and a column of Germans met head-on in the main street of a village.

fore he found out that the village was still in German hands. He left town.

Another soldier, Pfc. Wallace Whitner, escaped death when a bullet fired from the turret of what he thought was a Yank tank, hit his chest.

notebook in his breast pocket. Third Division artillery in a three-

The Liberator



Souvenir

This second Souvenir Edition of the Beachhead News, commemorating the 100th Edition of our publication of news for front line troops and containing a resumé of the Southern French campaign, has been published in 80,000 copies and has been carefully censored so that subscribers may send their copy home.

We are proud of the unique position we have as a mobile front-line newspaper. Trucks on which we printed our original issues at Anzio are with us no longer but we have our trucks and equipment and intend to continue to publish the daily news for all VI Corps troops. This is a typical copy of the Beachhead News. All up-to-the-minute news has been cut out and condensed summaries of our operation have been published instead. We have also tried to select our best features and art of the rapid drive.

Another soldier, Pfc. Wallace Whitner, escaped death when a bullet fired from the turret of what he thought was a Yank tank, hit his chest.

notebook in his breast pocket. Third Division artillery in a three-

CP and 24 cases of scotch.

The 36th Division Recon hit-jacked it. A French girl walking along before an American patrol waved to hidden German

LIAISON

A little French girl presents an American soldier with a gift as the infantry comes into a newly-liberated town. (APS)

machine gunners, and when they waved back the Yanks got them.

When five Nazi soldiers used a girl for a shield, Pfc. Alfred LeMay fanned their hair with a bullet and

A village liberated but not visited joyously welcomed

jeep driver Cpl. Robert A. Young when he drove in looking for some

A Berlin-born Yank es-

German General And the Private

Yank Infantryman Private

thur C. Gilderman was returning after a trip to the prisoner's camp when he noticed a heavily-brained German sitting among the bushes just off the trail.

The soldier fired a shot over the German officer's head. Convinced, the officer put his pistol away and surrendered.

"I asked him for his pistol," the doughboy reported, "so I made him flat on his back while I searched him and took the gun."

He marched him back with his hands over his head. He didn't like the idea of being ordered around by a private, so I had to help him start.

It sort of upset him, but he came along okay.

The much-braided German objected to capture at the hands of a private was Major General Otto Richter.

Lieutenant Swims River To Get Boat for Patrol

The mission assigned Lieutenant Gordon Klapper was to take an infantry patrol across a large river and reconnoiter the terrain on the other side.

One of his men spotted a boat on the opposite bank and pointed it out to the officer.

Lieutenant stripped, swam across and returned with the boat. His patrol crossed without getting hit against the hostile shores below.

NIGHT PATROL

When a patrol leaves on a mission, it might turn up anything behind the German lines.

The recent patrols ended up in a German motor pool.

The park was jammed with recon cars, trucks, a heavily armed car and a tank as well as sleeping Germans.

The patrol maneuvered around for a position to get at the tank, put a rifle-grenade through it and took off.

Believe It or Not

A First Sergeant, a Sergeant and a Corporal were enjoying a few hours of leisure at a sidewalk cafe in a newly-liberated town.

In the smiles and handshakes the citizens. A chicken, belonging to the owner of the cafe, before startled eyes of the three coms, deposited an egg on the

They fried it.

FRIENDLY TIP

"Halt," yelled his prisoner. "Cut it," ordered Pvt. V. Smyth.

Escape up Rhone Valley Smashed at Montelimar

Task Force Butler Hits Northward to Gap

(Continued from Page One)

force was made available VI Corps. This was then mounted and brought up to through intensified recon-

by every available land and air agency. Reports of the operations were studied.

and operations quickly shape and before long no delay had been overlooked.

The Attack

came the order—to move the enemy.

A huge force was assembled and, under smoothly coordinated arrangements, each element without hitch, assumed its place in the overall scheme.

operation was under way—before arrival at the target every individual participant had been briefed thoroughly the plans, the expectations, and the vital enterprise.

the morning of the 15th of the great armada, support the all out efforts of the air-

over-head, stood off the forces of Southern France then added by the 19th German.

Precisely at H hour the attack against the hostile shores below.

Moving In

the results of the critical first operations are described properly in an official report as follows: "Assault of all units of VI Corps in the San Tropez-Frejus

made according to plan and distance inland toward beachhead initiated. All initial objectives successfully occupied."

The carefully laid plans and guarded preparations had borne fruit; the enemy had been taken by surprise.

Quickly taking advantage of this, veteran divisions of North Africa and Italy broke through the prepared enemy defensive positions and crushed the forces mar-

against them. The First Airborne Task Force landed successfully in the Le Muy area, disrupted enemy communications and blocked the movement of his reinforcements.

The attack of the First Special Service Force on Port Cros and the Ile du Levant proceeded satisfactorily. Contact had been made with the small group of French commandos operating on the left flank.

At the day's end the corps was consolidated and established firmly ashore. The campaign in Southern France had begun auspiciously.

Pursuit

The impetus of the initial assault was sustained and progress continued to be rapid in all division sectors.

ports of Toulon and Marseilles and were being passed through by elements of the French units which were to complete their reduction.

The 45th Division was nearing Grenoble. The 36th Division had reached the Livron area in the Rhone River Valley and was making dispositions for the great battle of Montelimar which, in fact, had already begun.

Task Force Butler

The Task Force Butler, a fast-moving hard-hitting composite force conceived during the planning period with the 36th Division. This force which had been assembled on the 18th of August had streaked to the North as far

VI Corps had driven its advance

On the Road to Berlin



The road to Berlin is littered with the wreckage of Germany's once great mechanical Army. Rusted junk lines the roads long after the dead have been buried.

Here bulldozers cleared the road after a huge enemy convoy was trapped and annihilated while attempting escape through the American pincers at Montelimar.

as far north as the Lure-Luxeuil-Darney Line. Forty days after the landings, the advance had progressed more than 400 miles and against resistance which has increased day by day.

Every conceivable obstacle of terrain and enemy action have been encountered and overcome enroute.

Two major barriers, the Doubs and Moselle Rivers, both with practically every usable bridge blown, were crossed almost without hesitation.

Approximately 40,000 prisoners of war have been taken. Vast quantities of irreplaceable equipment have been lost to the enemy and at this moment the VI Corps, side by side with other Allied units in this theatre in one unbroken line, stands on the threshold of Germany.

of the retreating army was forced on the south a great portion

Credit must be given here to the

occupied by the 36th Division which dominated it.

Fierce fighting followed as the trapped Germans fought for their very existence. In the bloody battle that ensued great numbers of the enemy were annihilated, enormous quantities of supplies and equipment were captured or destroyed and thousands of prisoners of war were taken.

Those elements of the great German 19th Army that succeeded in making their escape continued frantic efforts to extricate themselves through flight to the North but the valley of the Rhone was opened to the allies.

Sensing quickly the changing situation and seizing the opportunity offered, the VI Corps regrouped, re-oriented-itself towards the Northeast, entered a new phase and took up the pursuit of the fleeing Germans.

By the 15th of September, after just one month of operations, the VI Corps had driven its advance

the Northeast, entered a new phase and took up the pursuit of the fleeing Germans.

By the 15th of September, after just one month of operations, the VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

VI Corps had driven its advance

French Cheer While Yanks Fight in Street

It started when a column marching Americans turned a corner into the main street of one of the hundreds of now forgotten villages. Up the street, some 500 yards away, a column of German troops appeared.

Until the Germans opened fire, the Americans believed them to be prisoners because they marched in a column of two. When the shooting started the Yanks dispersed to ditches and behind buildings.

The sound of heavy machine guns could be heard above the rattle of small arms. Yanks rushed to set up two anti-tank guns and blasted 15 rounds down the main street.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

The battle lasted for about fifteen minutes before the Germans fell back. Through it all, civilians kept sticking their heads in and out of upper story windows to give out with lusty cheers.

ARD FIGHTING LIES AHEAD, GEN TRUSCOTT

(Continued from Page One)
r weapons and your supplies
r distances almost logically
believable. You have, by your
cesses, not only contributed im-
measurably to the advance of the
thern Allied Forces by prevent-
ing the movement of reserves against
m but have eliminated the Ger-
n 19th Army as an effective
ating force. Your operations have
en a most vital factor in clear-
ing the enemy from almost all of
ence.

Our conduct here and your re-
lationships with the people of
ance in the areas that you have
erated has been in accord with
highest standards of American
itary tradition. The fervent and
olehearted welcome which they
ve extended to you is testimo-
n of their gratitude and will re-
in, I am sure, a treasured mem-
in the minds of every member
this command. Your country has
son to be proud of your accom-
ishments and grateful for the
vices that you have rendered.

This campaign will stand as a
nument to you Americans of the
Corps—a tribute to your train-
initiative, ingenuity, aggres-
eness, boldness, determination,
fighting spirit and to the lead-
ship of the officers and non-com-
missioned officers of all ranks. To
ry officer and to every man, I
der my sincere appreciation for
r untiring efforts and my deep
niration for your accomplish-
nts.

Our task is not yet done. Hard
ting lies ahead. A fanatical en-
v, reorganized and reinforced,
at bay on his own doorstep.
ged terrain confronts us. Rain,
l, and snow will soon increase
difficulties of operations and
to the hardships that you must
ain. But—surmounting every
ective as you press on—you will
troy the enemy before you and,
ether with all the other forces
the command of the Allied Na-
s, will bring about his final de-
and unconditional surrender.
eterans—men of the VI Corps
with respect and pride, your
nmander salutes you.

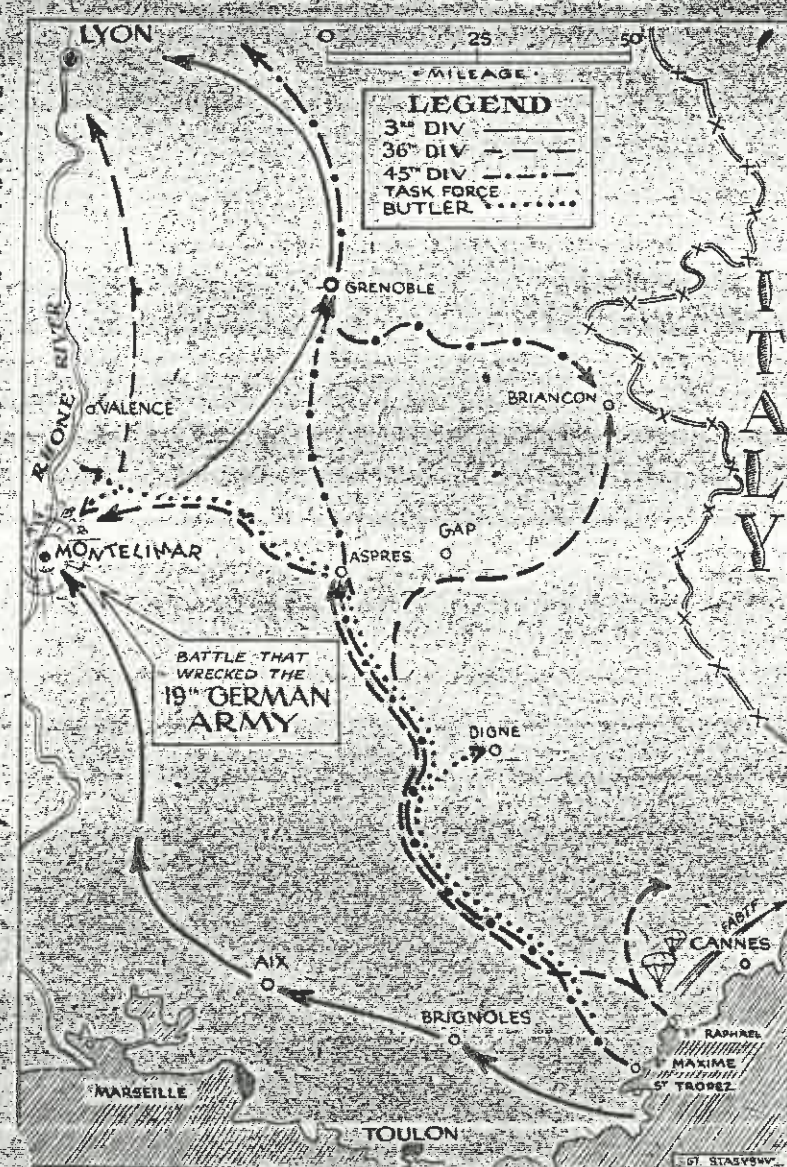
L. K. TRUSCOTT, JR.
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

ANNED DOUBS RIVER IN TWENTY-TWO HOURS

Engineers of the 36th Division,
in the Allied march reached the
Doubs river, worked through
rain and dark night, to throw
ridge, 20 feet high, across the
feet of water. The job was
e in 22 hours and the Ameri-
armor moved on across the

confronted by a demolished
ge and lack of materials, the
ineers scoured the area and
t the bridge out of hand-sawn
and planks, and whatever
eral they could find to sub-
te for the GI.

Here Is How It Was Done



Forces that landed on the beaches August 15 streaked north-
ward and in two weeks had defeated a great part of the oppo-
sing army and were knocking at the gates of Lyon, about 200
miles from their beachheads. The German attempt to escape was
smashed at Montellimar. (APS)

FAMED CITADEL FELL TO THIRD DIVISION

High above the city of Besancon,
in the path of the American ad-
vance, was an ancient fort. From
its heights the entrenched Germans
could fire down on the American
troops approaching the city. All
bridges but one approaching were
blown. Hitler had ordered this city
to be held until September 15 and
the Germans rushed an entire new
Division into that sector.

One battalion of Third Division
troops crossed the one bridge
over the Doubs, while two others
were sent after the towering citadel
guarding Besancon.

The old fort has never intended
to withstand the shock of modern
age and lack of materials, the
ineers scoured the area and
slopes got a 155 howitzer into po-
sition and pounded at the walls
and planks, and whatever
German troops within couldn't
fled out under a white flag.

Seven Men of Forty-Fifth Baptised in Southern France

Seven men in the 45th Division
were the first men to be Bap-
tized on the south-French beach-
head when Captain Harvey F.
Bett, Macon, Georgia, battalion
chaplain immersed them in a small
stream, at nine in the morning of
the fourth day.

The men Baptized were William
R. Tackaberry, Pfc. Robert J.
Mole, Pvt. Delma Combs, Pvt.
Harvey K. King, Pfc. Vernie B.
Miller, Pfc. Troy F. Mandrell and
Pfc. Robert I. Weyant.

NAZI COMMANDER FOUND SUICIDE AFTER BATTLE

One Nazi beat the rap on this
front, according to a note found
near the body. He was a colonel,
a commander, and he wrote, "There
is no chance. I can't hold out."

UP AND OVER BEACH FOR ANZIO VETERANS

(Continued from Page One)
The 45th Division, 157th
180th Infantry are in and in
fact with enemy opposition, the
radio cracked with static but
it the 36th Division reported
the 141st was in and advancing
up the slopes and the 143rd was
landing.

But later came the report from
the 36th Division's 142nd In-
fantry, "Landing was held up
heavy artillery from hostile shore
batteries." However, so complete
was their plan that the comman-
der immediately shifted from Red
Beach to Yellow Beach, and the
operation went forward without a
pause.

These battle hardened veterans
operating behind the experienced,
forceful, powerful and accurate
navy and air corps knew how to
dig krauts out of their pill-boxes
and concrete fortifications. Every-
one had his job to do, everyone
did it.

All Ashore
Infantry had landed on the
beaches, running and were still
running. Assault and maneuver
overran the enemy and the army
moved in as fast as the feet of
the infantry could take them, at
last as the engineers could break
the blocks for the tanks and other
vehicles.

Engineers were clearing mine-
fields, building roads, breaking
road blocks. Signalmen were lay-
ing wire, constructing poles for
larger wire. Medics were evacu-
ating the few wounded and estab-
lishing hospital units—all on D
Day.

French partisans appeared from
everywhere with scores of Ger-
man prisoners and evidence of
scores of others already taken
care of. Our forces accounted
for many more prisoners and Ger-
man dead and wounded in the
day's action.

French people, originally shocked
by the impact of the mighty
blow and not accustomed to free-
dom after their four years of op-
pression, became jubilant, throw-
ing flowers, forcing kisses on sol-
diers, giving freely their precious
wine. Their day of jubilation was
at hand.

As D Day came to a close,
the tenseness of the occasion gave
way to a feeling of relief. They
were ashore, and everyone real-
ized that it was no longer D
Day and that the battle—just be-
gun—was well on the way to an
other Allied victory.

GERMAN GENERAL SCHMIDT KILLED AT ROAD BLOCK

Major General Schmidt, much
decorated German officer, was a
different from legends of
Germans—he fell before the
let of some Third Division soldiers.
Riding in a sedan in convo-
y, the parade encountered a
of Third Divisioners preparing
road block. The Yanks opened
fire and the record.

BEACHHEAD NEWS

Sunday Supplement

This Newspaper Must Not Fall Into Enemy Hands

Founded on the Anzio Beachhead

Sunday, October 29, 1944

Recon--Eyes of the Army

Armored Cars Replaced the Horse, but It's the Same Old Cavalry Spirit

Rough Riding 117th Has Ridden Far

By JOSEPH E. PALMER
Staff Writer

You stick your neck out maybe
20, 30 miles—you take a quick
look around and lash out with
rapid, short jabs where they hurt.
Then you move somewhere else
and do it all over again.

And if the story of the 117th Re-
connaissance squadron can be told
in one paragraph that's it but the
truth is that if deeds were words
the 117th could easily fill a Web-
ster's unabridged.

The boys don't ride horses any-
more—although they handle horse-
power aplenty—and the polished
boots and shiny spurs are up in the
cave until Hitler, Hirohito, et al
call "Uncle!"

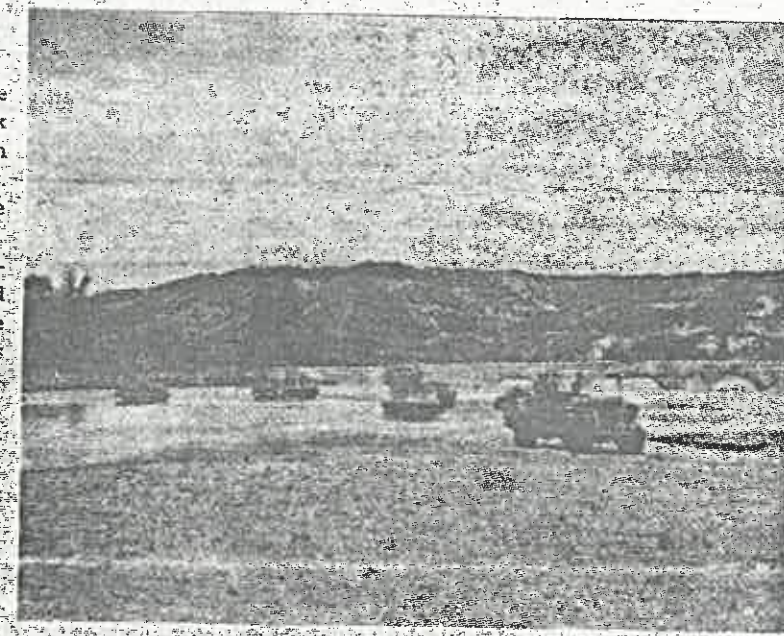
Privates who capture German
generals at their baths and cap-
tains who have the guts to demand
surrender of more than 1,000
krauts at one clip—they all fit
into the combat pattern of the
117th recon squadron which has been
in seven foreign countries during
more than two years of overseas
service.

Chronologically it's difficult to
pin down achievements of the
squadron since it hit with the VI
Corps in southern France on that
memorable August 15 but you
know that quite a bit has hap-
pened from the way Lt Col Charles
Hedge, the CO, says that. "We've
been hard and often."

There is anything wrong with
statement—begging the colo-
nel's pardon—it lies in its under-
standing as GIs everywhere in the
area will agree after they
read the record.

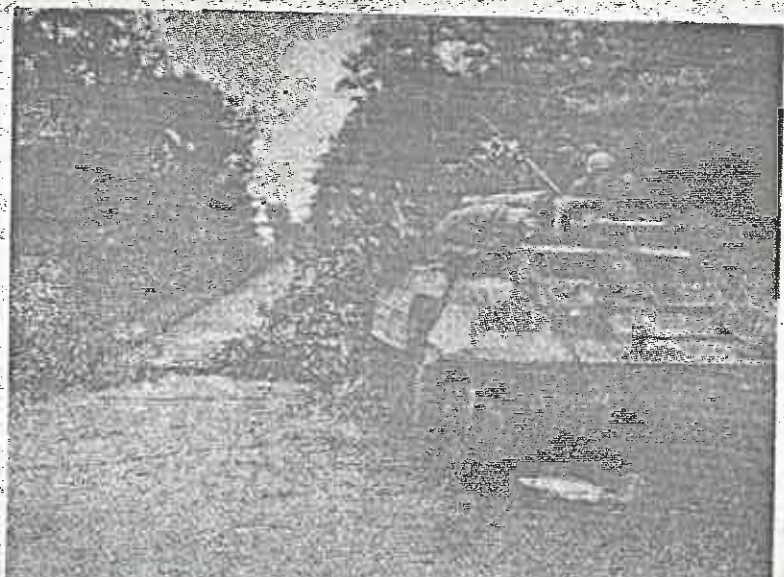
Recon's Duty
SOP that an armored cavalry
squadron's mission in life is to hit the
enemy where he isn't looking—in
front, the flanks and the back.
It's so simple, so militarily
sound and addle-headed that he
has only one thing to get the
mission done until he finds out

Looking for Trouble



You take a quick look around and lash out at the enemy with short, rapid jabs where it hurts most. Then you move somewhere else and do it again. (Army Sig. Photo by Newell)

and Ready for it



With its armored cars, banta
half-tracks, assault guns and sm
arms the 117th has the nasty—
the Nazi—habit of generally snai
ing the best laid plans of t
"Vons."

The 117th started its French ra-
page against the krauts 120 minu-
after H hour that August 15 and
still going strong. The first two
three days were, as the record pi-
it, spent in "overcoming enemy r-
sistance" and pushing ever furth-
inland.

But the squadron drew its t-
assignment when some of its el-
ments moved out August 18 as t-
spearhead or the eyes for the f-
mous Butler task force whose re-
ord alone will have a separate pic-
in the history of the French ear-
paign.

One of the early highlights in t-
phase of action came when Lt J-
seph Syms captured one of the fi-
Nazi army big-wigs taken in t-
drive.

Tired General

The recon officer and his m-
had slugged it out with the Ge-
mans for a little more than tv
hours when an aide of Lt Gen V-
Neuling, commanding officer of t-
62nd German corps, came out u-
der a flag of truce and said t-
big boss had had enough—in fa-
he had too much.

The American lieutenant we-
with the aide, walked before t-
general who saluted stiffly a-
calmly handed over his pistol. T-
surrender, which took place in
cave, embraced the whole 62-
corps headquarters—colonels, m-
jors, captains and under office
galore.

Lt Syms was impressed by t-
fact that when the Nazi gener-
surrendered he made his salute
the regular military fashion—sk-
ping the "Heil" variety.

More prisoners entered into t-
bag only a short time later wh-
another troop—"company" to y-
infantrymen—moved against t-
Germans and swelled the PW cag-
by that number.

But that was only an anti-clim-
for the big show which was a f-
for the 117th but a miserable f-
night flop for the Germans set
like Stork club debutantes at t-
one-time popular resort town
Gap.

Two troops moved on the big r-
sort center, one of them overru-
ning the city's outposts before t-
Germans knew that America

Against Superior Forces You Have to Think Fast

Part 5. Through the Vosges Mountains



Privates Eddie Skymanski and Johnnie Gonzalez man a twin machine-gun nest able to sweep an open field. (Army Sig Photo)

ities of the squadron the German Driscoll closed in on the German commander, whose overwhelming vehicle although he had no fire- forces finally fought their way into the town, ordered that American prisoners taken there be treated with the highest degree of military respect.

Several Americans who escaped from the village said the kraut soldiers took the order literally—even

"We Like to Dash Here And There"

brush with the enemy but continued to pump lead from his tank even after it had crashed into a building.

He had to fire, you see, so that the enemy would turn their power on him instead of shooting down the men from the sergeant's tank who had dismounted to run for cover at the non-com's orders.

The sergeant died over his gun but his men lived to fight another day.

In another incident, bluff, brains and bravery paid off for Captain Ray Brauchli who, for a brief moment, captured a French town and the German garrison of 500 men until an English-speaking kraut spoiled the show.

The captain admitted later that he felt almost militarily naked when he rolled into the village in his bantam followed only by the armor and men of a half track.

He hadn't expected that many Germans but he told them to surrender, that he was only the advance man for the main body of troops following along behind.

And the Germans were about to do it until their English-speaking

a suicide action if he could escape.

Narrow Escape

But by the time the additional krauts had gotten the captain and his men had to turn the bantam and half track around and beat it without the aid of a man.

Ability to think quickly in emergencies is another characteristic of the 117th men, like the one who took full advantage of a miscalculation on the part of the Germans.

The recon was moving a convoy when a lost kraut driver fell in at the rear believing the American vehicle to be his own in the darkness.

The private saw the error and his immediate action was to turn the machine gun bantam on the kraut bus and it with hot lead. The bus was completely and 28 Germans were destroyed.

What officers and men of the 117th like best to get across their outfit is the eyes, the for advancing ground troops.

"We're out in front always," see what lies there or to and feint for bigger moves the way one officer explained.

In October 1944 the Squadron was stationed in a quaint French Village of Secdeur, France as we began the third year overseas. Our journey has brought us to many Countries, England, Scotland, Gibraltar, Algiers, Tunisia, French Morocco, Sicily, Italy, Southern France and now approaching the plains before Strasbourg and Alsace-Lorraine.

Mail was catching up after our fast dash from the south where we rarely stayed in the same place more than twenty four hours. Captain Kennedy, the Skipper of the "S.S. Grenville M. Dodge" was a faithful correspondent with a vivid style of writing. Attached is a typical letter received in October, 1944 after several delays through the Rhone Valley.

The first edition of "Beachhead News" published in France by VI Corp., was issued on October 15, 1944, and this issue describes the Squadron's operations from the Beachheads of Southern France to the foothills of the Vosges Mountains.

As the "Recon-eyes of VI Corp", the Squadron preceded every advance of the Corp from the Beaches to the Vosges Mountains. The edition "Beachhead News" attached, vividly describes our combat operations as armored reconnaissance troops.

On October 10, 1944, Major McGarry departed from the Squadron to be hospitalized in Southern France and was not to return to duty. As a result, I was promoted to Executive Officer and second in Command. After twenty-three months as the operations officer (S-3) I was now to assume greater responsibilities and prepare myself for possibly future command of the Squadron in the event anything happened to Col. Hodge. See copy of S.O. #107 dated 10th of October 1944, attached.

The Rev. Thomas Theodore Butler was another faithful correspondent who wrote truly beautiful letters with an added dimension of much news about Lucille. His letters had great meaning and I looked forward with keen anticipation in reading these most interesting letters. As one moves closer to the top of Command, the lonelier the position becomes and such letters somehow contribute immeasurably in helping to bridge this gap. Attached is another example of Rev. Butler's letters, dated October 25, 1944 with a description of a poem entitled "A Mother's Prayer".

During the defensive lull before the Vosges Mountains, there was a great occasion when fourteen N.C.O.'s of the Squadron were given on the spot Battlefield Commission in the Infantry and assigned to various Divisions as Platoon Leaders.

Light patrols continued to probe each evening to maintain a degree of pressure on the defensive positions of the Germans. We still suffered casualties, and on one occasion a mortar barrage caught a mess line of "C" Troops and there were twenty-eight casualties, some serious.

Finally on November 1, 1944 we once again moved to the attack and in coordination with French Forces successfully liberated the Town of Baccarat. Our Headquarters was set up in the famous Chrystal Factory of Baccarat. The owner was so grateful that his buildings had been spared from damage, that he presented Col. Hodge and myself with a beautiful collection of over eighty Chrystal Glasses of five sizes and two types of wine decanters. We were both fortunate to be able to ship this valuable chrystal home intact, where it is still in use today.

Hard fighting again became the order of the day, as Seventh Army Units attempted to dislodge the Germans from the Vosges Mountains. Our advances through heavy dense woods and muddy roads was delayed many times, but not withstanding the hardships of cold weather, snow and rain the attack was aggressively pressed forward.

The Towns of Vacqueville and Merviller was soon liberated. The 100th Inf. Div. engaged in combat for the first time and the Squadron was attached to the Division. Fighting continued on a hard scale but soon Pexonne fell and we advanced toward Neuf-maissons which was strongly defended. With support of medium tanks from the 753rd Tank Bn., Troop "B" entered the Town on November 18, 1944.

The Squadron was now fighting harder than at any time since engaged in combat. The Germans were surprisingly strong and stubborn and gave very little ground. They finally retreated only against Superior Fire Power and Great American Fighting Soldiers. Every mile was desperately fought for and a high price was paid for each advance.

An interesting note at this point of time is a copy of an Intelligence Report from the Germans 19th Army Newspaper "Die Wacht" which gives an account of their retreat up the Rhone Valley. It provides a real insight as to the Germans Tactics and a style of their propaganda efforts.

Our third "Thanksgiving Day" overseas was observed with some notice, although everyone was too occupied staying alive and warm. On this day, a half track returning with men from the Squadron's Rest Center, hit a land mine near our Headquarters, killing two and seriously injuring two others. A sad day to remember.

Lately, it appears that we have been taking a large number of prisoners, many simply giving up with safe conduct passes. The Town of Mulbach was soon occupied and the Squadron was now attached to the Third Infantry Division. It was now planned to attack the City of Strasbourg, the Capital City of Alsace and a German stronghold on the Rhine River. The attack was launched on November 27, 1944 along with the 2nd French Armor Division, who recklessly advanced at great speed and quickly overran the German outposts.

Part 6. The Battle For Alsace-Lorraine

The German defenders of Strasbourg were completely surprised by the audacity of our aggressive attack and fell back across the Rhine River completely disorganized. The City was completely in Allied hands by nightfall of November 27, 1944 and Germans were surrendering in small groups, in a bewildered state.

On several occasions, I led small combat groups to homes where the owners indicated Nazis were hiding out. In one home, to our total amazement, twenty seven German Officers came out of a cellar when I threatened to toss a hand grenade, in the belief there were only two or three stragglers. Somehow I was at my best in this type of envirement, leading soldiers, in cleaning out the last remnants of the German defenders of Strasbourg.

The Cross of Lorraine always had a deep and abiding meaning to me. The liberation of Strasbourg, the heart of Lorraine, had special significance and it was sheer delight rounding up the hundreds of Germans holed up throughout the City. By daylight the Squadron alone had over 1,500 prisoners.

After three days of organizing our defenses in the City, the Squadron attacked north along the Western side of the Rhine. Strong patrols were maintained at night, particularly near the many tributaries, to prevent German Patrols from crossing from their East Banks.

Enemy resistance north of Strasbourg stiffened and the Squadron was engaged in the heaviest fighting to date. Fifteen miles north of the City are two important crossing towns, Kilstett and Gamsheim.

Many times we fired across the Rhine River against German soil, protecting our flank along the Rhine. Finally on December 8, 1944 Gamsheim was occupied with assistance of a Battalion of Infantry from the Third Division.

Patrolling the Rhine became difficult due to high rising waters. At night we used Dukw's, which are large floating trucks, as outposts along the river and smashed several German Patrols trying to make a foothold.

Two incidents occurred shortly after advancing North from Strasbourg. While fighting our way into the City, suddenly found ourselves mixed in with a French Unit. The commanding Officer, a French Lt. Col., was highly pleased to meet up with an American Cavalry Officer and was totally surprise of my Cavalry background. He asked for the Cavalry insignia of Cross Sabers, which I was wearing which was gladly presented to him.

Five days later, he marched his Battalion of Infantry, fifteen miles to my Headquarters, where in full Ceremonial Formation, he presented to me a beautiful framed etching of the Strasbourg Cathedral with the following inscription in French.

To Major Samsel

In Fond Remembrance From An Officer Of

The French Cavalry

Strasbourg 10 December - 1944

"Cavalry Forever"

This etching hangs in our Recreation Room as a warm reminder of a more pleasant interlude of the War.

This incident occurred in the Town of Souffle Weirsheim, Alsace where I was also given a six weeks old Male German Police Dog puppy as was Col. Hodge. I named my puppy "Spur" which was the code name of our Squadron. Col. Hodge named his dog "Sambo" which I always suspected was named after me, as he fondly called me "Sammy" and continues to do so to this day.

"Spur" was to remain my constant companion throughout the War and subsequently returned home with me. He lived until 1956, long enough for both my children to have fond memories of the most wonderful dog a man could cherish.

The Squadron was assigned to the 79th Division on December 10, 1944, and I reported to the C.Q. for instructions, as Col. Hodge had taken a ten day leave for Paris and I was acting Squadron Commander. This Division's insignia Co. incidentally was the Cross of Lorraine.

The weather in December 1944 was cold, rainy and quite uncomfortable. Notwithstanding the 79th Division, made a strong attack north along the western side of the Rhine with the Squadron attacking to the right of the Division.

After hard fighting we occupied Bischwiller and Seltz. Soon we were receiving enemy artillery fire from guns supporting the famous Siegfried line. These guns ranged up to 210mm, or eight inch shells.

At this point in Germany, the Squadron was now operating further East than any other Allied Troops of the entire Western front. The only barrier between our men and Germany was the Rhine. How we all wished it was possible to ford this mighty river and engage the Germans on their own soil.

Our objective on December 15, 1944 was the Town of Lauterbourg, on German soil. On December 16, 1944 Lt. Bertoldi of Troop "C" and his Platoon engaged the first Germans on the "Fatherland's" soil. Soon elements of the 79th Division, took over our positions and retained control of Lauterbourg. The Squadron was relieved and reverted to Corp Control for a short needed rest.

In the meantime, the Germans were building up their forces on the East Bank and strong enemy patrols constantly probed our positions. A jeep load of Officers and men hit several Teller Mines one evening and two Officers and four Senior Sgts., were killed. All were outstanding Soldiers and this one single incident had the greatest impact on hardened men who felt this loss throughout the remainder of the War and years later.

As Executive Officer it was my duty to write to the families of these men and express our deepest sympathy at the loss of their loved ones. Words were never adequate to truly express our deep sorrow and grief over their loss.

Corp. announced on December 21, 1944, the Squadron was assigned to the 14th Armored Division to form Task Force Hudelson. This news was greeted with less than enthusiasm by members of the Squadron who had liberated a large area of Alsace - Lorraine in the fiercest fighting of the War, many times against strong enemy counter-attacks.

The Squadron had attacked north from Strasbourg to Lauterbourg, inside the German border. Our spirits were of the highest state, having performed at our best level of combat proficiency against a strong determined enemy.



Unit - Troop "C" - Wrecked Church of St. Remy
Baccarat, France Nov. 3, 1944

7. Defensive Position Vosges Mountains

On December 22, 1944, now assigned to Task Force Hudelson, who was the Ass't. Division Commander of the 14th Armor Division, the Squadron took up defensive positions in deep woods of the Upper Vosges Mountains. We thought the last of the Mountains were behind us, but in snow covered ground the men once again dug in positions just south of the fortified Town of Bitché, France.

The 94th Cavalry Recon. Squadron of the 14th Armored Division was attached to our Squadron and took up defensive positions to our right.

We set about on defensive installations consisting of mines, booby traps, trip-wired flares and grenades, concertina and apron-style barb wire. The armor cars and tanks were dug into hull defilade, to allow for full turret turning firing.

The weather turned extremely cold and snow fell almost every evening. I had a strong premonition that many hard and difficult times lay ahead. The Germans had successfully attacked the First American Army in the Ardennes with massive forces and the Allied Armies had taken a bad beating and were falling back.

Our third Christmas Day overseas was spent digging in, preparing dugouts and generally improving positions. Notwithstanding an excellent turkey dinner was enjoyed by all and judging from the lack of activity in our sector, the Germans took time off to celebrate also.

Squadron Headquarters was in a large Farmhouse on the outskirts of a small village named Mouterhouse. Fighting from defensive positions is most demoralizing for American Troops. By nature, they are aggressive and become restless when stationary for too long a period.

It was necessary to daily inspect all defensive positions to insure alertness of the younger officers and N.C.O's contact was maintained with elements of the 100th Inf. Div. who were also dug in on our left.

The Germans sent out strong probing patrols every evening which kept our troops on a double alert. There were many small skirmishes and casualties were suffered on both sides.

Col. Hodge was informed on December 29, 1944 by Corp Hd., that a thirty day furlough back to the States had been approved.

Secondary defensive positions were also being prepared under direction of Capt. Zecca, the Asst S.3. My time was chiefly spent visiting our field of fire were completely interlocking, supplies and ammunition were adequate and high state of alertness was maintained.

As the New Year approached, the enemy activity in the front lines increased. Enemy wheeled and tracked vehicles could be heard throughout the night and everyone sensed that something was soon to happen.

The weather remained bitter cold and the ground was completely covered with snow. Enemy artillery fire increased and there was German Air Activity for the first time.

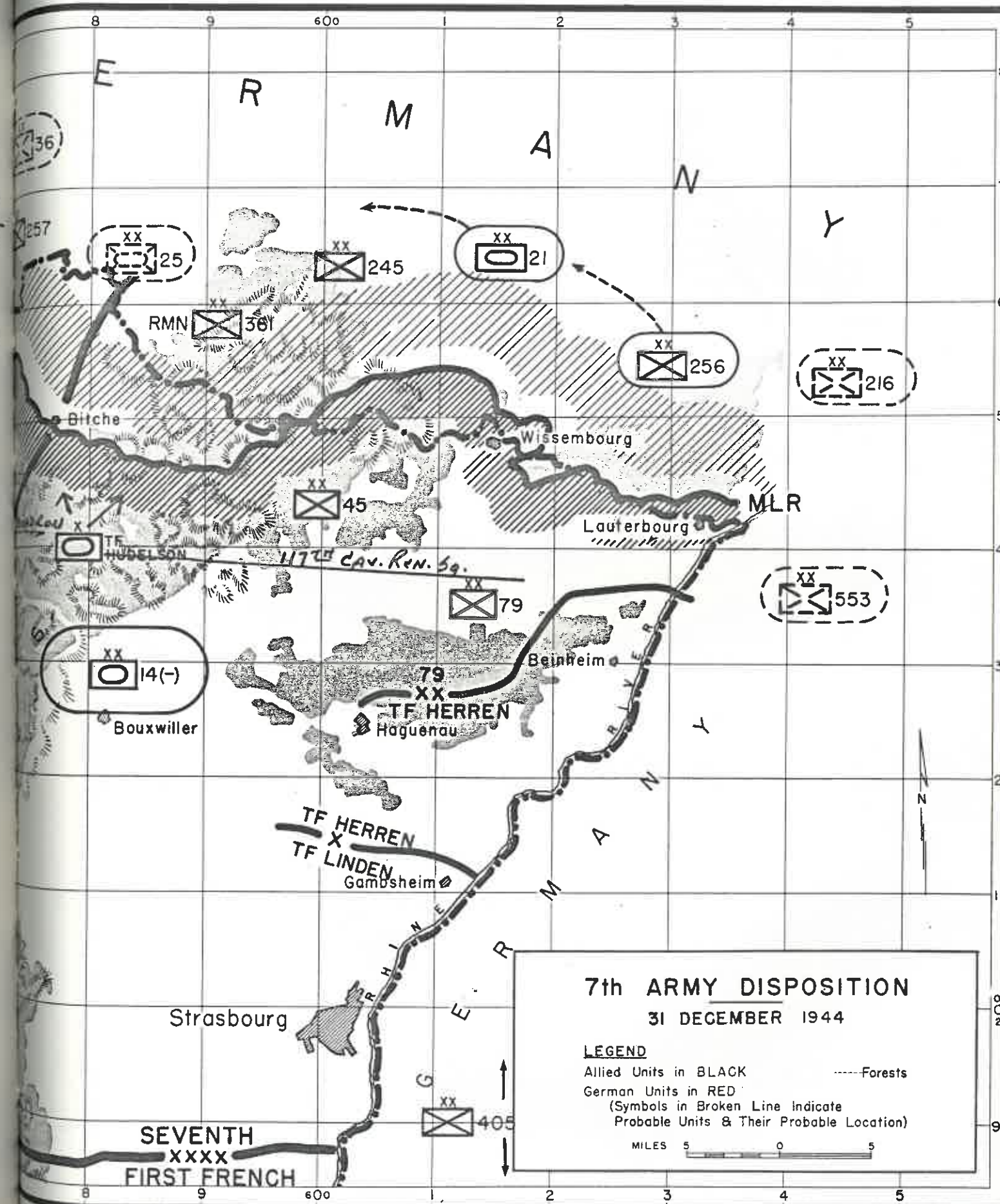
Just prior to New Years Eve, VI Corp. advised all Troops to remain on sharp alert with no celebrations. Intelligence indicated a possible enemy attack, in early morning.

At midnight, in order to give the enemy an American version of a New Year's party, all assault guns and supporting artillery opened up with a terrific barrage. Little did we know at that moment the Germans were launching a massive attack against the American Seventh Army. The point of their drive was directed against our Squadron positions. Their attack was launched from the Bitch Fortress and New Year's Eve, January 1, 1945, and became one Bitch of an evening, one that will be long remembered by every member of the Squadron, at least those who survived this devastating enemy attack.

The attached lists indicate the casualties the Squadron suffered since landing in Southern France on August 15, 1944. Four Officers and thirty-two enlisted men were killed and more than three hundred and fifty officers and enlisted men were wounded. Many returned back to the Squadron after their wounds had healed. Many suffered wounds on three and more occasions.

The strength of the Squadron on January 1, 1945 was forty officers and 730 enlisted men.

Also listed are the vehicles destroyed or captured due to enemy action.



CASUALTIES FRANCE

1944

Date	Killed		Wounded		Troop	Remarks
	OF.	EM	OF.	EM.		
Aug. 15		1			C	Hobby, James L. Cpl.
17		1			C	Carroll, William A. T/5
17		1			A	Merritt, Charles A. Pvt.
20		1			C	Velinsky, Bernard Sgt.
25	1				E	Brown, Omer F. Capt.
28		1			B	Flournoy, Howard S. Pvt.
Sept 2		1			C	Michel, Robert F. Pfc.
3		1			B	Renzi, Lepold J. T/5
3		1			B	Barsby, Lawrence W. Sgt.
3		1			B	Stewart, Louis W. Cpl.
3		1			F	Lawson, Bennet N. S/Sgt.
5		1			B	Decoteau, Minel A. T-5
10		1			A	Waddington, William G. S/Sgt.
10		1			A	Pyle, Benjamin F. Pfc.
12		1			B	Fisher, Lawrence M. T-5
5		1			C	Moreno, Joe F. Pfc.
12		1			E	Herbert Alfred A. Pvt.
12		1			E	Williams, Robert T. Pvt.
13		1			C	Mixon, Elverd M. T/5
Oct 30		1			F	Mitteldorf, George E. T/4
Nov 2		1			F	Pelser, Ernest E. T/4
7		1			B	Anderson, William H. Pfc.
20	1				F	Beck, William A. 2nd Lt.
22		1			A	Curry, Edward L. T/5
22		1			A	Jacono, Matteo T/5
Dec 4		1			B	Robertson, James H. T/5
8		1			B	Workman, Jack Pvt.
18	1				A	Roedler, Harry G. 1st Lt.
18		1			A	Panzino, Vincent C. S/Sgt.
18		1			A	Torbich, Edward S/Sgt.
18		1			A	Haley, Ernest L. Sgt.
18		1			A	Deaton, Henry E. Sgt.
20	1				A	Ellison, Carl G. 2nd Lt.
21		1				Price, Clay C. Pvt.
29		1			B	Robertson, John F. Tec/5
31		1			C	Bowers, Edgar L. Pfc.
TOTAL	4	32				

1944

VEHICLES DESTROYED OR CAPTURED IN ACTION

FRANCE

DATE	TYPE	TROOP	TYPE OF ACTION	PLACE
Aug 15	Jeep	C	Destroyed by 20mm AT fire	St. Maxine
16	A/C	C	Hit by 76mm AT burned	4 Mi E Pierre P
18	Tank	F	Caught afire vic Le Muy	Le Muy
22	2 A/C	A	Knocked out by AT fire	Cleon D'Andron
	3 Jeeps	A	Destroyed and abandoned to prevent capture	" "
	1 Mc	A	" " "	" "
24	A/C	C	Hit & burned by 76 mm AT	Grane
	2 Jeeps	B	Destroyed to avoid capture	Montelimar
	A/C	B	Engaged by Mk V Tk	Savasse
28	A/C	Hq	Destroyed by AT Gun	Loriol
30	Tank	F	Overturned and badly damaged	"
	A/C	B	Forced off road into gully	"
31	Jeep	C	Captured in fire fight	Chalamont
Sept 1	Jeep	C	Captured by Ey patrol	Meximeux
3	2 Tanks	F	Des or Cap by fir or AT fire	Montrevel
	4 H/T	B	" " " "	Montrevel
	4 1 T Tr	B	" " " "	"
	9 A/C	B	" " " "	"
	18 Jeeps	B	" " " "	"
	1 Mc	B	" " " "	"
	1 1/4 Tr	B	" " " "	"
	2 A/C	A	" " " "	"
	5 Jeeps	A	" " " "	"
	H/T	A	" " " "	"
	1 T Tr	A	" " " "	"
	Jeep	Ms C	" " " "	"
8	Jeep	A	Destroyed by Ey MG Fire	Briancon
9	Jeep	A	Stolen outside 46th Ord.	
10	Jeep	A	Hit mine - destroyed	Marney
28	Jeep	Hq	" " "	Rupt Sur Moselle
Nov 2	A/C	A	Destroyed by Mk IV Tk&20MM AT	Bertrichamps
2	Jeep	A	" " " "	"
22	H/T	A	Destroyed by mine	Vacqueville
30	A/C	B	Destroyed by est 75 mm	Gamsheim
Dec 18	Jeep	A	Destroyed by rd mine	
31				