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U.S. Army. 2nd Infantry Div.
Story of the 2nd Infantry Division

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UNCLASSIFIED
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The
STORY
OF THE

2ND

INFANTRY
DIVISION



This is one of a series of G.I. Stories of the Ground, Air and Service Forces in the European Theater of Operations, to be issued by the Stars and Stripes, a publication of the Information and Education Division, Special and Information Services, ETOUSA... Major General Walter M. Robertson, commanding the 2nd Infantry Division, lent his cooperation to the preparation of the pamphlet, and basic material was supplied to the editors by his staff.

Name WILLIAM F. KERNAN

Date Enlisted

Assigned to 2nd

Training

Battle Actions

Citations

PASSED BY CENSOR FOR MAILING HOME



Normandy



THIS booklet contains a sketch of our 2nd Infantry Division during its first five months of active operation in World War II.

Your division entered upon these operations backed by traditions and military achievements "Second to None" in our Army. Your division has fully lived up to these traditions and has added new victories and valorous acts as standards for the future. You have maintained unblemished your record of never having failed to take and hold your objective. Your outstanding loyalty and devotion to duty is attested by innumerable acts of gallantry and sacrifice throughout our entire campaign. Your esprit and morale under adverse conditions have been an unflinching inspiration to me. I deem it a high privilege to have served as your commander.

With deep humility I dedicate this brief story as a tribute to our brave comrades who have fallen in action in its making. We must justify their sacrifice by our unswerving determination to carry through to new victories, to new traditions, to complete victory.


W. M. Robertson

Major General, Commanding

The 2nd Infantry Division's Story

"SECOND TO NONE"

MAY, 1918: the 2nd Div. fought at Chateau Thierry.
May, 1944: the 2nd Div. fretted for action at a marshalling area in southern England. July, 1918—Soissons, July, 1944—St. Jean des Baisants. September, 1918—St. Mihiel, September, 1944—Brest.



Dates, soldiers and places change, but the fighting tradition that won the fourragere of the Croix de Guerre at Blanc Mont in 1918 remains the same.

Fighting in France is not new to the 2nd Div. It fought in every major engagement of the first World War where American troops participated. It left its mark at Belleau Wood. It left its dead, too. The 2nd Div. captured one-fourth of the entire number of prisoners taken by American Expeditionary Forces, one-fourth of the total guns. It suffered one-tenth of all casualties in American armies. It won more decorations than any other American division. It fought 56 consecutive days without rest—the longest period for any American unit.

For 23 years between the two wars, the 2nd Div. was garrisoned at Ft. Sam Houston, Tex. Many of its officers and men are Texans. During the years of peace, it was transformed into the first "streamlined" division. Gone now are the 5th and 6th Marines, the victors of Belleau Wood. In their place is the 38th Inf. Regt., the "Rock of the Marne." The 9th and 23rd Inf. Regts.

remain, as do the 12th and 13th F.A., now reconstituted as the 12th, 13th, 27th and 38th F.A. Bns.

For the invasion of France, the 2nd Div. brought with it a great tradition. Later, the record was to speak for itself that such heritage was upheld.

Fanning Inland from the Beach

TREVIERES LIBERATED

D plus 1, June 7, 1944: in the teeth of vicious, accurate enemy shellfire which blanketed the shoreline, the Indian Head boys hit the beach at St. Laurent-sur-Mer. Preassigned assembly areas, when eventually located in the confusion of battle, were packed with snipers. Before moving in, one regiment was forced to blast out a company of Germans.

Vehicles, infantry supporting weapons and communications equipment remained aboard craft off the beach. Three days were to pass before these vital supplies began rolling inland. Communications were established with salvaged wire found on the beach and abandoned enemy equipment. The only vehicle in the division was a jeep

loaned by another unit to Division Commander Maj. Gen. Walter M. Robertson.

By midnight, the CP had been established and assembly areas largely cleared of enemy. The silence of darkness was shattered by heavy anti-aircraft fire when German planes zoomed overhead. The division staff already had planned the attack on the first objective, Trevieres, a communications center 16 kilometers inland. Field orders were scrawled in longhand on German stationery.

Snipers remaining in the area were killed the next day and, at one time, a fusillade of sniper bullets spattered into the division CP. One sniper was shot down from a tree some 50 yards away from division headquarters.

Near midnight, June 8, the last infantry regiment began to unload and a staff officer reported to headquarters that the unit was ready to move to an area previously selected. He was told that the area, far in advance, had not been cleared according to plan—that it now was occupied.

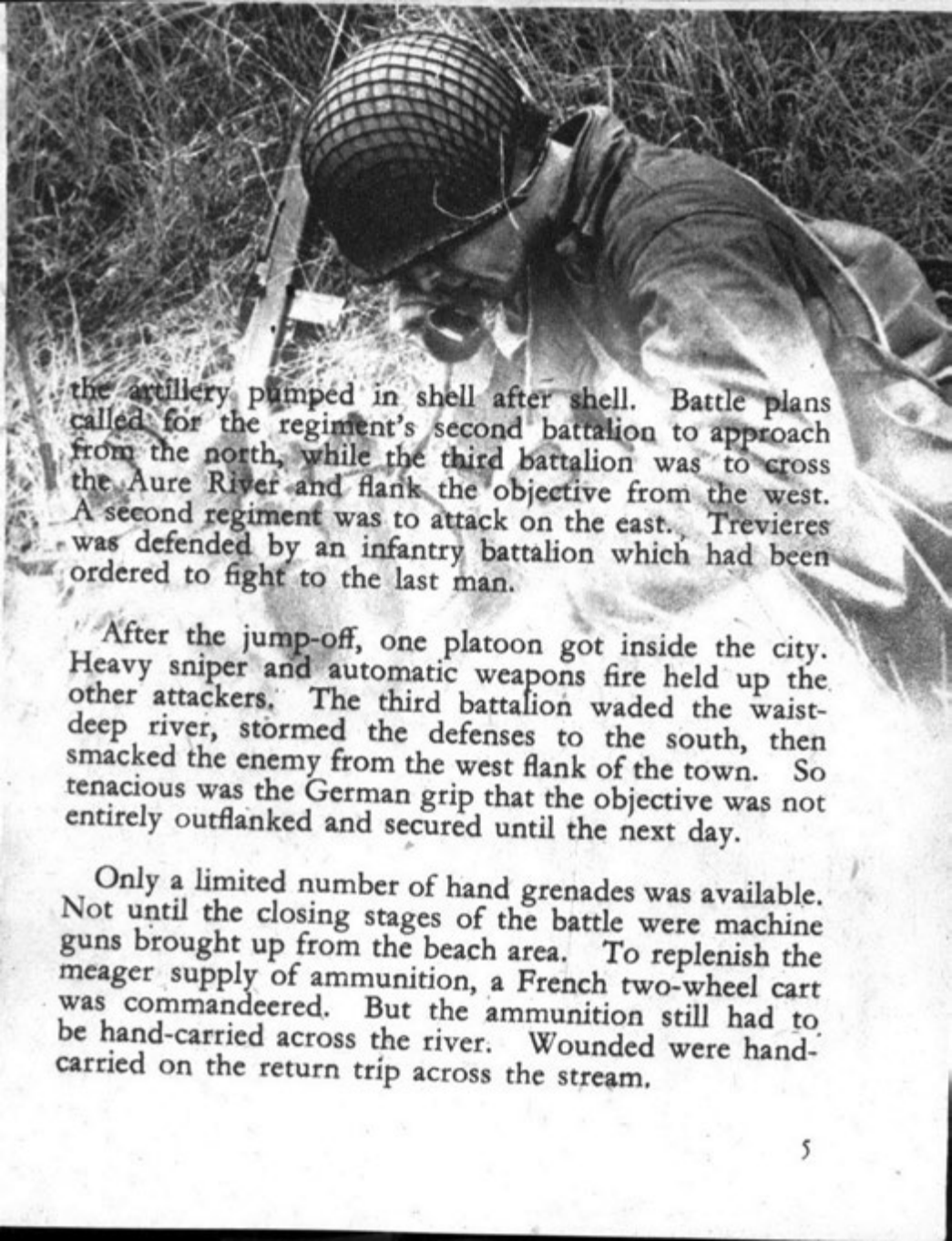
“By whom?” he asked.

“By the 353rd Inf. Div.,” was the reply.

“Never heard of them, sir. Who are they?”

“Germans.”

Although lacking supporting weapons and communications, one regiment attacked the strongly defended town of Trevieres June 9. Knowing that the infantry possessed only the minimum of necessary transportation,



the artillery pumped in shell after shell. Battle plans called for the regiment's second battalion to approach from the north, while the third battalion was to cross the Aure River and flank the objective from the west. A second regiment was to attack on the east. Trevieres was defended by an infantry battalion which had been ordered to fight to the last man.

After the jump-off, one platoon got inside the city. Heavy sniper and automatic weapons fire held up the other attackers. The third battalion waded the waist-deep river, stormed the defenses to the south, then smacked the enemy from the west flank of the town. So tenacious was the German grip that the objective was not entirely outflanked and secured until the next day.

Only a limited number of hand grenades was available. Not until the closing stages of the battle were machine guns brought up from the beach area. To replenish the meager supply of ammunition, a French two-wheel cart was commandeered. But the ammunition still had to be hand-carried across the river. Wounded were hand-carried on the return trip across the stream.

One officer and six men were pinned inside a house four hours during the first day of the fierce assault. They were armed only with pistols and carbines while Germans were within grenade-throwing range on three sides.

Liberation of Trevieres marked the fall of the first major obstacle as the expansion of the V Corps bridgehead struggled forward.

The Battle of the Hedgerows

HEROES STEP FORWARD

THE push neither stopped nor hesitated at Trevieres. Spearheaded by the 9th and 38th Inf. Regts., the division ploughed through Le Molay and the Foret de Cerisy until it struck the first definite enemy defense line running west from Brigny through St. Georges d'Elle. In two days, the division ripped overland 16 miles but had advanced 10 miles as the crow flies.

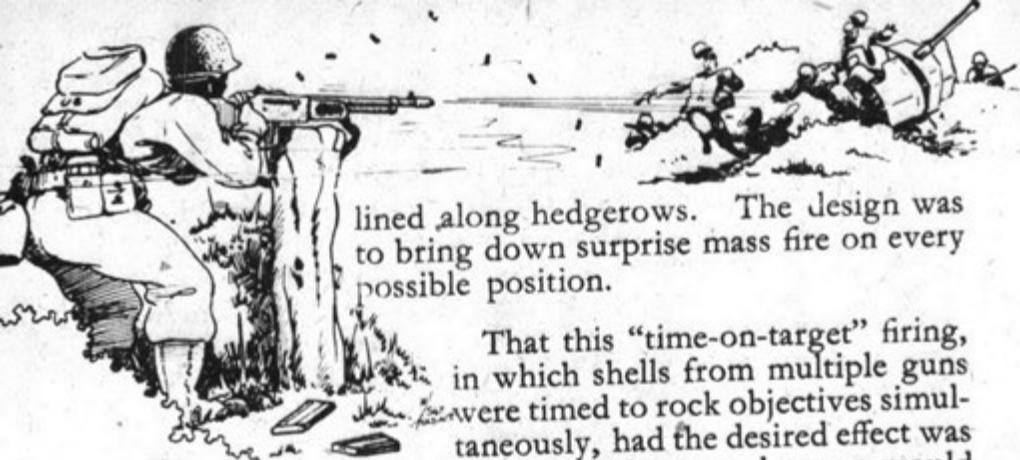
A well-defined German defense line was struck June 11 in the Berigny-St. Georges d'Elle-Ivon sector. Here, the "Second to None" had its first encounter with the 3rd Parachute Div. of the Wehrmacht, took its first

prisoners. It was the beginning of a grudge-fight which was to be renewed many times—much to the sorrow of the paratroopers. Between then and June 16 when a halt was ordered to prepare for the attack on Hill 192, the division's tentacles wound around nearby villages and consolidated gains. St. Georges d'Elle, the town that was to change hands several times, was entered by battalions of the 23rd and 38th Regts. The 23rd also captured Berigny, while St. Germain d'Elle fell to the 9th.

Fighting throughout this sector was fierce. The battle of the hedgerows was on—and with all stops out. Mounds of earth, sometimes as wide as three feet and almost as high as a man's head, divided the fields. Behind and between these the Germans dug in and waited to spray machine gun and automatic weapon fire on the first American to step into the field. Most fields were no larger than a house lot back home. Sunken roads wove in and out of the fields, providing excellent enemy cover.

In the battle for St. Germain d'Elle, fighting grew extremely severe. Casualty lists mounted steadily. One company lost 17 men one day, 15 the next. A company commander told of knocking out seven machine guns in one field and five in another only to have them replaced from a seemingly endless chain.

During the entire struggle which preceded the smashing of the forces defending Hill 192, artillery played an important role in holding the Nazis inside holes they had



lined along hedgerows. The design was to bring down surprise mass fire on every possible position.

That this "time-on-target" firing, in which shells from multiple guns were timed to rock objectives simultaneously, had the desired effect was attested to by patrols. At any minute, a barrage would batter a position. The Germans quickly learned to crouch in their holes.

Once, when an infantry regiment was staving off a counter-attack, an artillery liaison officer hurriedly called back for fire. Asked the nature of the target, he replied: "Call it machine guns, call it tanks, call it anything. Just give me fire." He got it—from four battalions—and in time.

In the fight for St. Georges d'Elle, Pfc Ralston A. Shepherd, 23rd Inf., saved three companies from mass slaughter. Cornered in an area 30 by 100 yards, with hedgerows skirting both sides, the companies lay in direct line of fire from a flak gun. Shepherd placed his BAR over a gate post and fired more than 1000 rounds, dispersing the Nazis gun crew before it had the opportunity to go into action. The companies took advantage of the precious time, reorganized and fought their way out of the trap. For his action, Shepherd was awarded the Silver Star.

There were many such heroes. Pvt. Joe Marez, an aid man with the 9th Regt., disregarded a hail of machine gun and rifle fire during an attack when he ran forward to attend two wounded riflemen. As he applied a tourniquet to the first man's leg, a bullet struck his head. But Marez didn't quit. He started for the second man, then suddenly collapsed. He was evacuated just in time to save his life. For his heroism, Marez got the division's first Distinguished Service Cross.

There was one corporal of the 38th Inf. Regt. who was wounded and couldn't be evacuated. When German forces advanced near his position, the corporal, unable to stand, pulled a gas protective covering over his body for camouflage and began sniping at them. Although without food, he kept this up for two and a half days until relief finally came. The bodies of two Germans he had killed and the bloodstains of one he had wounded during this time were found.

It was during this fighting, in which green troops came to grips with seasoned German soldiers for the first time, that "88 Corner" became the best-known crossroad in the area. German artillery had zeroed in on the much-used intersection of the St. Lo-Cerisy La Foret roads. A day never passed without shells landing nearby. Division MPs constantly braved the fire to direct traffic.



The Bloody Hill before St. Lo

TEAMWORK PERFECTED

THE battle for Hill 192, vital strongpoint on the way to St. Lo, was next. One rifle company succeeded in reaching the crest June 16 only to be driven back in the face of a withering counter-attack. The division's 2nd Engr. Combat Bn. hurriedly was rushed up to fight as infantrymen.

From then until July 11, when the Indian Head boys roared to success on the heels of a tremendous artillery and aerial bombardment, the division got ready for more of the same.

Thickly covered with heavy foliage, the hill commanded a six-mile area. When "Second to None" wrested the precious territory from the Nazis, the breakthrough at St. Lo, vital communications center just six miles away, was set to follow two weeks later.

The enemy had been fortifying Hill 192 for months. It was studded with foxholes, machine gun nests and expertly camouflaged observation points. Hedgerows sprouted along its gradual slope. Behind these, Germans huddled in dugouts.

Every crossing and road in the vicinity had been zeroed in by enemy artillery emplaced on the rear slope. German camouflage suits blended softly with the foliage so well that one Nazi sniper remained in a tree only 150 yards from American lines an entire day before he was located and killed.

Here, T/Sgt. Frank Kviatek gained fame for his skill at picking off snipers. A veteran of 27 years in the army, Kviatek used a bolt action Springfield with telescopic sight to account for 21 Germans, mostly snipers. His goal was 25 for each of two brothers killed in Italy. Later wounded, he returned to combat to boost his total to 36.

Opposing forces were so close together at this stage of the struggle that infantrymen propelled hand grenades with slingshots made from abandoned intertubes.

In one raid preparatory to the drive over the hill, 1st Lt. Ralph Winstead, 38th Inf., led a combat patrol that blasted its way through enemy hedgerow positions and killed or seriously wounded at least 11 Nazis. With clock-like precision, the patrol poured through three holes cut out of the hedgerow by engineers before returning to their



lines. Every member of the 16-man raiding party received either the Silver or Bronze Star. Only one man was seriously wounded.

The taking of Hill 192 finally was achieved through coordinated efforts of infantry, artillery, tanks and engineers. The Air Force also helped by softening up the heights with dive-bombings. Simultaneously with the main assault, the regiment on the left flank executed a diversionary attack to mask the action that was to take place on a division front.



Shortly before daybreak, July 11, eight battalions of division and corps artillery laid down a heavy concentration which shifted to a rolling barrage as the attack knifed forward. Artillery shells screamed and shook the earth until the objective was secured that afternoon. Many Germans who surrendered had been dazed by the intensity of the shell fire. They admitted it was worse than fighting on the Russian front.

Meanwhile, engineers blasted holes in the hedgerows through which tanks rumbled to spray the next hedgerow with cannon and machine gun fire. This kept the Nazis down until infantry, following behind the tanks, could pick off or capture them. Tank dozers, their mammoth scoops poised in front, filled in sunken roads or ploughed over machine gun nests.

One dozer operator, Pvt. John R. Brewer, 741st Tank Bn., saw three Germans behind a hedgerow blazing away at the advancing troops with their burp guns. He smashed the hedge over the trio, burying them alive.

It was the engineers' job, once they had blown openings in the hedgerows, to guide the tanks to good firing positions. Telephones were attached to the rear of each tank but they often failed to operate. Pvt. Alton N. Jones, 2nd Engr. Bn., was one of many engineers who sought to remedy the situation. Exposing himself to enemy fire, Jones crawled atop one tank and gave directions by tapping on the hull.

Although tanks and artillery were of inestimable value, it was the doughboys who captured Hill 192—advancing yard by yard up the slopes, digging the Germans out of the shelters as they came to them.

Second Lt. Mac L. Basham, 38th Inf., reported he routed one Nazi from his hole and then made the Kraut accompany him to other shelters to order out his comrades. After taking seven prisoners this way, the Lieutenant turned them in, secured the aid of two enlisted



men and together they drove five more from dugouts.

By late afternoon, "The Hill" belonged to the men of the 2nd. The division, its immediate mission accomplished, faced south to await the great breakthrough.

Breakthrough: A Bubble Bursts

REST AFTER 70 DAYS

HILL 192, then St. Lo were the first symptoms. Like a volcano, the entire Normandy front had come alive—from Caen to Granville, from one coast of the Cherbourg peninsula to the other. The feverish flow of artillery, tanks and supply trucks, rumbling from the beach and from Cherbourg, had filled to bursting the tiny space occupied by men and materiel. Soon it erupted.

The 2nd now stood astride the St. Lo-Berigny highway, and, with the key city of St. Lo in American hands a few days later, the division attacked again on July 26 with regiments abreast. The objective was St. Jean des Baisants. In the lull since Hill 192, the Germans frantically had dug defenses three hedgerows deep.

Tank-infantry teams had evolved new methods of attacking the miniature fortresses. No longer did tanks carry dangerous satchel charges on their backs. New devices, invented by ingenious GIs overnight, ripped open the thick earth walls of the hedgerows while infantry-tank-artillery coordination stunned the enemy to make easier the task of the doughfoot.

Buttoned-up medium tanks charged into the attack under time-fire of artillery to search out openings and routes of approach. Their guns spat steel into enemy machine gun nests. When the time-fire lifted, tanks whirled around to their own lines behind a smokescreen to be joined by infantry, which came up with close support from the artillery—this time firing ground impact-bursts.

The Germans were making a last desperate stand and every hedgerow was bloodily defended between the St. Lo-Berigny road and St. Jean des Baisants.

Capt. George R. Michell, commanding Co. K, 23rd, went ahead of his two assault platoons, fired five shots into one machine gun nest to kill the crew, and then charged another emplacement under withering fire, emptying a clipful of Garand ammunition to silence it.



The 60 men left in his company after coming through the barrage, stormed fortifications manned by 300 Germans. They took 40 prisoners, killing or routing the remainder. Capt. Michell was awarded the DSC for his action.

THE rout was on. Doughfeet battered stubbornly through German rearguard actions—so relentlessly that at times they fell exhausted against hedgerows, only to rise and slog wearily forward again. But what they paid in sweat, they saved in blood. The enemy had no time in which to dig in deeply and catch his breath for another stand.

The Germans were tricky. Once 50 of them advanced, hands held high in surrender. Suddenly they dropped flat to the ground, while their machine guns opened up on unwary GIs taken in by this treachery. Minefields always were to be reckoned with. Heavy artillery occasionally lobbed in death and destruction.

But the disintegration of the enemy, became more apparent. By Aug. 2, the division had crossed the Vire River—still spearheading the attack of V Corps south to the ruins of Vire and on to Tinchebray.

Aug. 15 saw the infantry slam into Tinchebray and advance to the outskirts of the far side to guard against possible counter-attack. Next day, the division drew out of action and for the first time in the battle of the hedgerows, the 2nd no longer had the enemy to its front.



Vanquished and Victor



Street Fighting: Brest





TRÉVIÈRES
CERISY-LA FORÊT
HILL 104
ST-GEORGES D'ELLE
ST-JEAN DES BAISANTS
TORIGNY
VIRE
TINCHEBRAY
DAULAS PENINSULA
HILL 154 FOURNEL
BOURG-NEUF
HILLS 105-90 HILL 100
ST-MARC
BREST
NORMANDY
BRITTANY
GERMANY

THE FRANKS WITH THE





No Atheists in the 2nd



Outskirts of Brest



It had come 40 kilometers in 20 days. The breathing spell came none too soon.

IN World War I, the division had set a record of 56 consecutive days of fighting. That mark was now eclipsed. World War II saw the Indian Head combat soldiers in the front lines 70 straight days—from D plus 1 to D plus 71!

Contributing valuable support to the division in crushing the Wehrmacht during the Normandy campaign were the 462nd AAA (AW) Bn., 612th and 893rd TD Bns., 741st Tank Bn., 192nd Cavalry Recon. Sqdn. and 81st Chemical Bn.

Of the part the division played in the Battle of Normandy, Maj. Gen. L. T. Gerow, Commanding General, V Corps, said :

"The record of the 2nd Inf. Div. from its arrival on the beaches of Normandy until the capture of Tinchebray has been one of hard, relentless fighting against a stubborn enemy. It was largely through the persistent determination and unfailing courage of the officers and men of the 2nd Inf. Div. that the battle of the hedgerows was won.

"For more than two months of continuous fighting, they were to a great measure responsible for the success of V Corps."

Almost immediately after the fall of Tinchebray, the 2nd embarked on a 300-mile journey and the Battle of Brest.

Mighty Struggle for Seaport

STAGE SET FOR FINAL BLOW

ONE writer has likened the Battle of Brest to the Siege of Sevastopol. Both once were prosperous commercial ports, later converted by the Nazis into key naval stations. Both were left as piles of rubble, torn walls and twisted steel when war's fury ceased.

Brest housed the submarine pens from which U-boats threaded their way into the Atlantic to attack Allied shipping. As a port it was needed by the Allies, who were hard-pressed for harbors through which to feed the growing armies in France.

Knowing this, the German High Command had ordered the Brest garrison to hold out for at least 90 days. Pillboxes and emplacements of steel reinforced concrete, plus the bitter defense of the paratroop garrison, testified that the Germans had determined to make the port another Stalingrad.

Hitler demanded three months. Brest fell in 39 days.

For generals and commanders, Brest was notable because it involved street fighting technique. The GI

remembers it best because, while it was a deadly, bloody business, he could at least sleep in a bed for the first time since D plus 1, enjoy fine wines and liquors and investigate German billets, storehouses and canteens filled with Nazi loot.

But he had to come a long, hard way before enjoying these luxuries—through hedgerows as thick and roads sunk as deep as those in Normandy, past heavily defended concrete emplacements, and against a vicious weapon, the flak gun fired at point blank range.

Brest proper lies on the northern side of the harbor, cut in half by the Penfield River, flowing south into the harbor. Across the harbor to the southeast of the port the Daoulas Peninsula juts out and to the southwest,

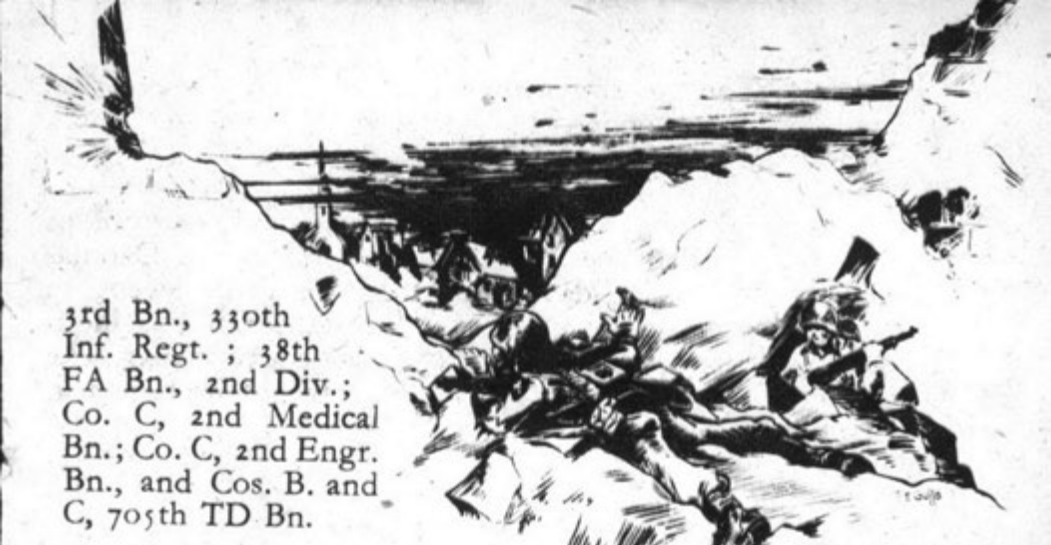


the Crozon Peninsula. Both the city proper and the two peninsulas were heavily defended.

Three divisions, with a large amount of supporting corps artillery, were assigned to reduce the garrison. The plan for the 2nd Div. was to drive south through the easternmost part of the city to the harbor. On the right (western flank), the 8th Inf. Div. was poised to whip south through the center of Brest. Farther to the west moved the 29th Inf. Div., heading south to clean out the western tip of the Brittany Peninsula. A task force, composed of the 38th Regimental Combat Team and other units, was scheduled to reduce the Daoulas Peninsula.

Commanding Task Force B was Maj. Gen. (then Brig. Gen.) James A. Van Fleet, Ass't CG of the 2nd, now commanding the 90th Inf. Div. This task force consisted of the 38th Inf. Combat Team; Bty. C, 323rd FA Bn. ;





3rd Bn., 330th
Inf. Regt. ; 38th
FA Bn., 2nd Div.;
Co. C, 2nd Medical
Bn.; Co. C, 2nd Engr.
Bn., and Cos. B. and
C, 705th TD Bn.

It moved against Daoulas on Aug 22 and soon overran the first major objective, Hill 154, highest point on the peninsula. The tactic was to creep Indian-fashion through low-lying bushes which the enemy had failed to cut down around the hill, to encircle and surprise.

One PW taken from a concrete emplacement said: "I knew you were coming but I couldn't do anything. I could see no one to shoot. The first American soldier I saw was the one who captured me."

Too late the Germans attempted to reinforce the concrete pillboxes, barbed wire entanglements and trenches encircling the hill's peak. One infantry company held off reinforcements while another bagged the position. Entirely the doughboys' show without benefit of artillery

or air support, the maneuver was highly successful. Hill 154 commanded the entire harbor area and was a valuable observation post.

Although much hard fighting lay ahead, capture of Hill 154 was the beginning of the end for the Daoulas Peninsula. Seven days later the task force swept to the tip to clean out pockets of resistance around Plougastel, and reap a harvest of over 3000 prisoners. The 38th Inf. returned to the division, which now closed in on the main defenses of Brest.



FALL of the Daoulas Peninsula produced an immediate advantage. TD artillery and heavy machine guns now could be set up along the shore, pouring direct, harassing fire across the harbor into the city. Observers on Hill 154 and liaison planes made it increasingly difficult for the enemy to use artillery without revealing his position. While the battle for Daoulas raged, the division crashed Brest's outer defenses. A key objective was Hill 105, which was to the outer defenses what Hill 154 was to Daoulas. There the similarity ended, for 105 was taken only after slow, painful fighting. Hill 105 was larger, more heavily manned, more bitterly defended both in the approaches and on the slopes. Buttressed by concrete dugouts and positions, the Krauts defended it foot by foot.

Attacking the hill's approaches, one company inched its way toward a group of six bunkers. A platoon crossed the Guipavas-Brest road, and one squad reached the first bunker when a loud explosion, followed by three successive blasts, rocked the terrain. Huge boulders, sharp chunks of concrete and debris burst in all directions. One man said later he "just kept climbing" even though he was buried to the waist. Others were not so lucky.

Force of the explosion left craters 100 feet wide and 50 feet deep. One man-sized piece of concrete smashed a trucksize hole in a thick hedgerow 100 yards away.

The squad which reached the first bunker was completely wiped out. Only two members of the platoon's

remaining squads were battle fit. Although few were killed, many were stunned and hurt. The company commander gathered 22 men together and pressed on for 400 yards more before being stopped.

Two days later another company met its day of trial with sacrifice and courage. Enemy paratroopers at Fourneuf held a ridge threaded with tunnels, pillboxes, foxholes and camouflaged gun emplacements. Because little protection was offered by this terrain, a smoke screen was thrown up to cover the advancing infantry. One platoon struck out blindly through the smoke, each man aware of the danger of the mission. They were found later, lying in a field along a sunken road, still in perfect platoon formation. All but three were dead, but bloodied bayonets, and 28 German bodies in one field grimly told the full story of the battle.

That night the enemy withdrew 500 yards.

The fortunes of war were kinder to Co. E, 23rd Inf., as it attacked a similar stronghold on Hill 105. Boldness, luck and surprise were accompanying features. GIs blasted a flak gun with mortar fire and charged into a pitted road with fixed bayonets, kayoing machine guns on both flanks, and forcing the Nazis to surrender.

Artillery and air bombardment softened up Hill 195, but it was the hard-hacking hedge-to-hedge infantry slugging which finally took it. Hill 105 commanded the outer defenses of Brest and the city itself. Hills 90 and 100 still had to be taken, but after the highest—105—had fallen, the others were doomed.



WHEN he first came to Brest, Gen. Robertson was told that the German paratroopers the division had fought from the beachhead, through Trevieres, to the breakthrough at St. Lo and Vire, were again on his front. As each battle for the fortress city developed—Hill 154, Forneuf, Hills 105, 100 and 90—the truth of his oft-repeated statement became more apparent:

“We’ve fought them again and again and beat them. We’ll do it again.”



As soon as riflemen had secured both slopes of the hill, tank destroyers again went into action, stabbing into the hills on the same ridge and into the city's outlying suburbs. Division and corps artillery also wheeled into position, constantly lobbing accurate high explosives, interspersed with smoke shells, to mark targets for sweeping fighter bombers.

Brest Airfield was the scene of another bitter struggle. South of the field the infantry was pinned down by concrete emplacements which had resisted three days of heavy shelling. To start the attack rolling on one company sector, flame-throwers were brought up to fire into embrasures of an enemy machine gun emplacement. Heavy losses in the company demonstrated that no man experienced in using the weapon was available. Company commander Capt. Cameron A. Clough strapped the equipment to his back, crossed the open field under heavy fire and destroyed the emplacement. His action enabled the company to breach the main line of resistance and outflank positions menacing companies on either side. Capt. Clough was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

In Brest itself, pillars of smoke billowed constantly from fires set by artillery and aerial bombardment. Traces of gunpowder and burnt wood lingered in the air. Only skeletons of buildings remained—some blackened by fire, others hollowed by concussion blasts. Here and there blocks of apartments or stores stood untouched. Piles of debris spilled, slopped into deserted streets.

The silence was oddly accentuated by the random chatter of machine guns and the sharp crack of rifles. Shells whispering overhead to crash in the distance added to the ghostliness. When a French civilian ventured among the wreckage, his footsteps echoed blocks away. At night the silence mounted until an occasional shell descended and burst. Pale lights from flares quickly disappeared in the surrounding darkness.



This was the scene as the 2nd Div. entered Brest for the final battle. The original tactical plan had been altered so that the division sector now included all of the city east of the Penfeld, while the 29th Div. advanced to capture the area west of the river. The 8th Div. had moved around to the south to assault the Crozon Peninsula. The stage was set for the final blow.

Over, Under, Through the Walls

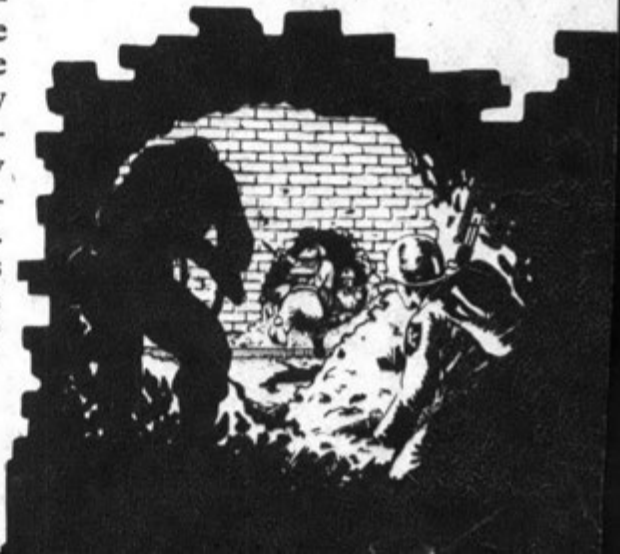
THEN ON TO GERMANY

THE swath cut by the GIs veered north into St. Marc, moving so swiftly that lighted cigars and hot dinners left by the Krauts were found in hastily abandoned German CPs. Final victory, however, lay beyond a maze of streets and buildings—fighting far removed from hedgerow warfare. Traditional methods of street fighting were useless. These streets were death traps swept by machine and flak guns set up at intersections. Positions were gained by the “ladder route,” through back doors, gardens, up and down ladders, and over walls and hastily improvised catwalks. Another expedient was to chop a path through the middle of the block by blasting interior walls.

First Lt. Pichegru Woolfolk, 23rd Inf., told how a squad in his platoon had to bore through seven buildings before reaching an enemy stronghold. But the trick saved lives. Favorite approach to a building was from above, because lower floor entrances invited showers of hand grenades and rifle fire from the upper floors.

Direct fire from the 705th TDs, emplaced on the front lines knocked out many strong points. Men of the 2nd Engrs. punched holes through walls or pushed paths through rubble as much as 15 feet deep in some places.

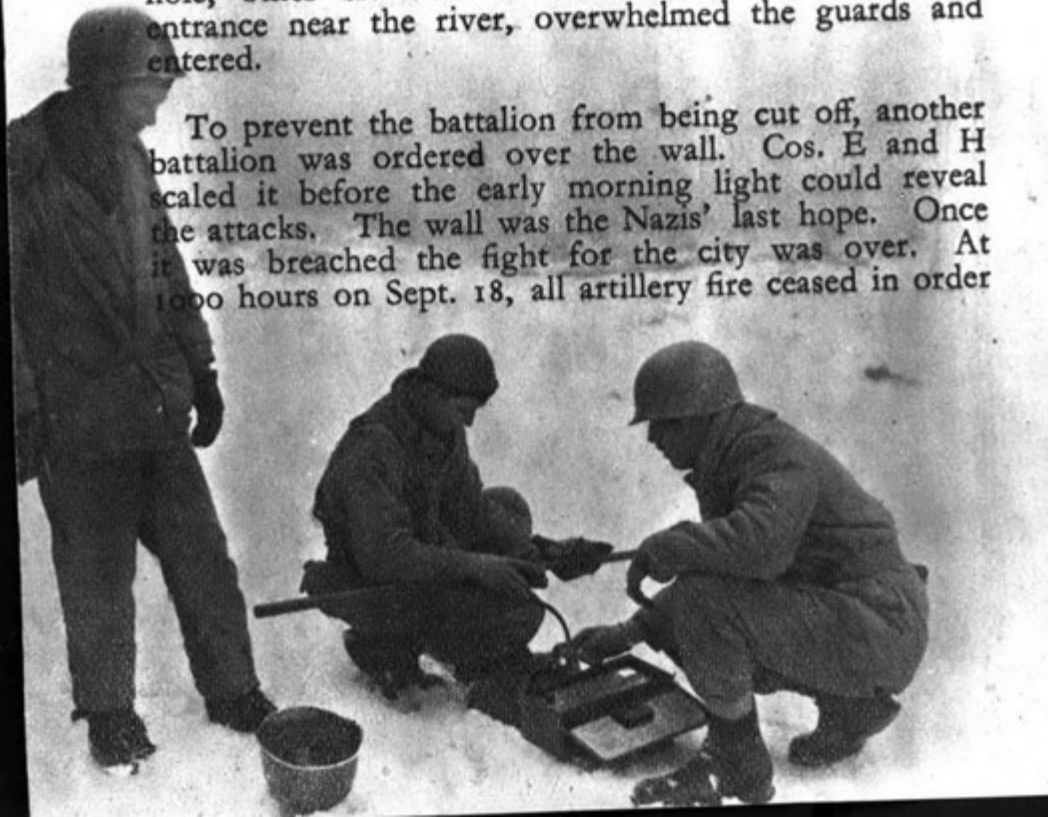
Surrounding, flanking, working their way from block to block, sometimes knocking out a machine gun from an upper story window, or engaging in grenade and fire fights within buildings, the infantry inched forward. One of the sharpest fights occurred in the cemetery on the southern edge of town, where the Germans had set up machine guns for cross-fire, protected by ornate French tombstones. One platoon wormed its way into this macabre battlefield, but had to withdraw until holes could be blasted in the cemetery walls. Buildings on both sides were in American hands before the cemetery finally could be taken.



The division eventually reached the old wall of the inner city. Patrols probed the ancient moat, searching for an opening. The wall measured 60 feet across in some places—too wide for demolitions. Two plans were considered—a crossing of the Penfield west of the wall through the 29th Div. sector, or a penetration of the wall itself.

To Lt. Col. William F. Kernan's ^{3RD} 2nd Bn. went the credit for finding a way through. Co. I, which had distinguished itself at Forneuf, discovered the unguarded weak spot. While the company trickled through this hole, other elements of the battalion found another entrance near the river, overwhelmed the guards and entered.

To prevent the battalion from being cut off, another battalion was ordered over the wall. Cos. E and H scaled it before the early morning light could reveal the attacks. The wall was the Nazis' last hope. Once it was breached the fight for the city was over. At 1000 hours on Sept. 18, all artillery fire ceased in order



to permit surrender of the garrison. By that time, the 29th Div. had swept past the submarine pens to the Penfield to end all resistance in the western sector.

Now it was nearly 1500. From holes, caves and underground dugouts Germans straggled into the Place du President Wilson. Some wore well-tailored, fancy uniforms, in sharp contrast to the more practical battle dress of the Americans. Dirty, ragged clothes hung on others. Collected in little groups in the enormous square were the grey-haired labor troops, the conglomeration of naval personnel who had been fighting as infantrymen, the scrawny youths and the stiff, well-dressed officers.

Groups were led off as new ones appeared. At one time nearly 1000 troops packed the square, over which an American flag danced lazily in the breeze.

At 1500 the German commander formally surrendered the garrison in the presence of Gen. Robertson. Fortress Brest had fallen.

IN six weeks of fighting, the 2nd Div. had captured 13,000 prisoners, including 3000 taken by Task Force B on the Daoulas Peninsula.

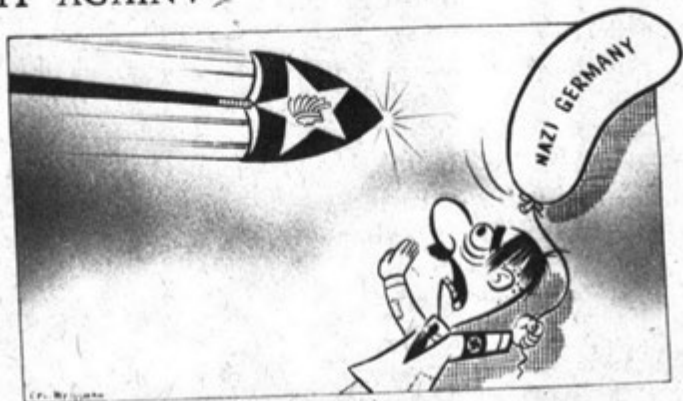
But all of this would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance rendered by units attached to the division during the Battle of Brest. Units which blended their efforts to make the 2nd Div. so effective

were the 612th TD Bn.; Co. B, 705th TD Bn.; Co. D, 709th Tank Bn.; Co. C, 86th Chemical Bn.; 687th FA Bn.; Cos. A, C, E, 5th Ranger Bn.

Now, the 2nd Div. is poised for the all-time showdown. Hundreds of miles to the east of Brest, where the thunder of war reverberates, men of the 2nd, inside the blood-stained, snow-swept Siegfried Line still slug their way forward.

When there is time to reflect, memories revert to the other weary hours of the past and especially to those men who helped put the 2nd in Germany—those who now remain behind in Normandy and Brittany. Recent deeds only have enriched the heritage created by the forefathers of the 2nd Div. who cut the pattern of courage in World War I.

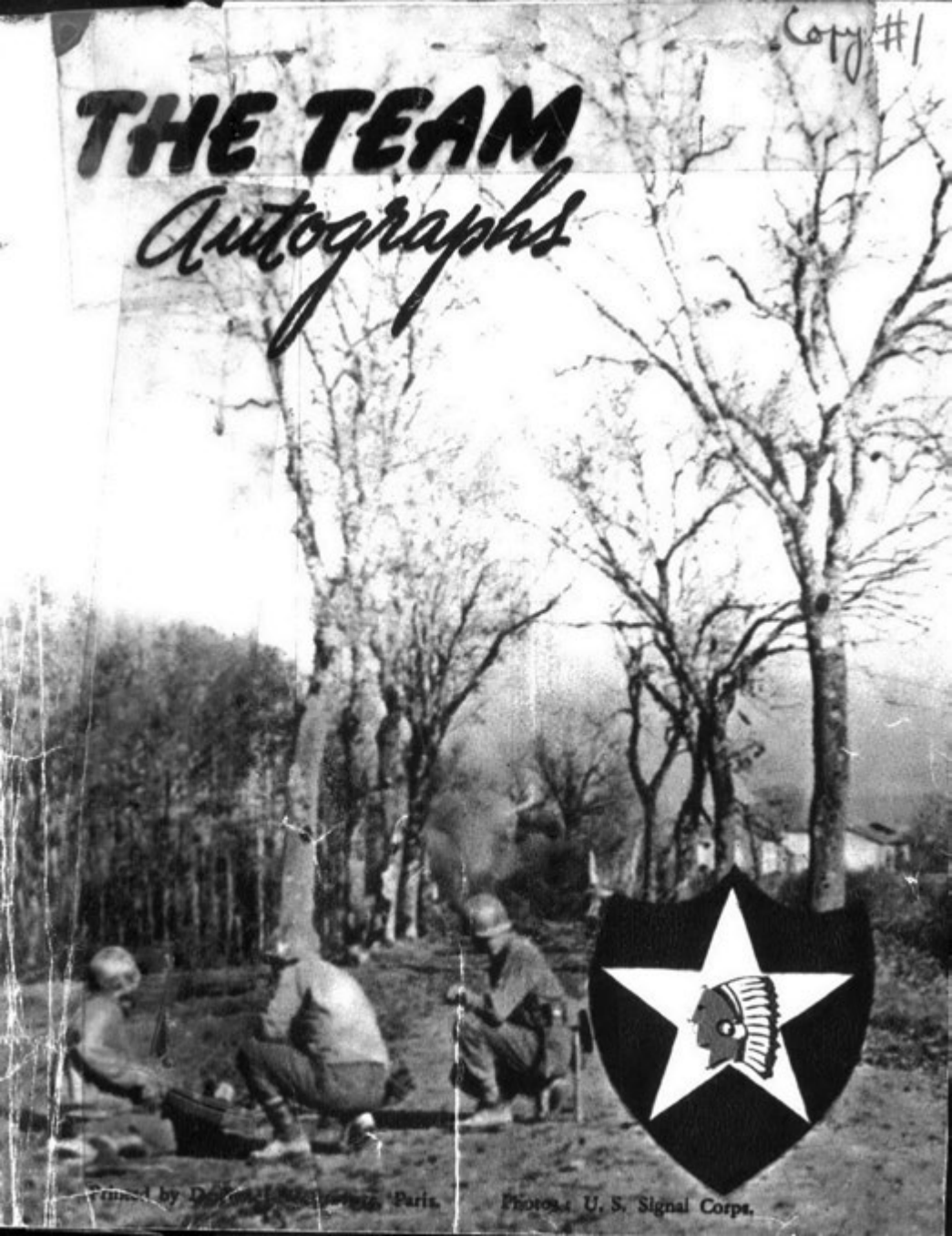
In achieving its successes during the current campaign, the going has been tortuous, back-breaking. But this story is only a larger replica of the saga of 25 years ago. Whenever obstacles loom on the road to ultimate victory, Gen. Robertson's reminder answers the challenge: "We've fought them again and again and beat them. WE'LL DO IT AGAIN!"



Copy #1

THE TEAM

Autographs



Painted by Donald S. [unclear], Paris.

Photos: U. S. Signal Corps.

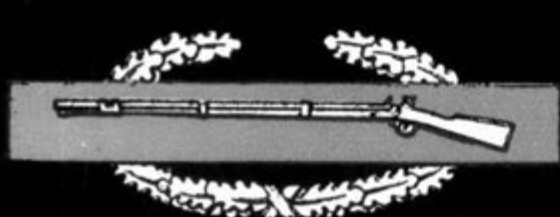


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THE STORY OF THE 2ND DIVISION

Name WILLIAM F. KERNAN

Date Enlisted.....

Assigned to 2nd.....

Battle Actions.....

Citations.....





This booklet covering the last six months of our participation in World War II, tho of necessity brief, should bring to each one of you an enduring glow of pride in your individual accomplishments and the magnificent combat record of our Division. Gathering confidence with experience, our Division wrote a brilliant chapter for itself and for our Army in the Ardennes counter-offensive of December 1944 when, in spite of many handicaps, it stopped the northern prong of Von Rundstedt's drive and held like a rock at the Elsenborn shoulder. Thereafter your battle-field technique, dash and gallantry made you unbeatable and you recorded an unending string of brilliant victories — on the Roer, the Rhine, the Weser, Leipzig and Pilzen. You have earned for your Division five battle streamers, the eternal gratitude of your country and a justifiable pride in our own "Second to None."

Along the way we have left many of our brave comrades. As we glory in our final victories let us pause and render full tribute to their sacrifices. In humility, let us together salute them and dedicate our record of victories as recorded here, to their undying honor.

W. M. Robertson

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Major General, Commanding

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed to give a general picture of the Second Infantry Division in its operations from the time it reached the Siegfried Line in Germany on October 4, 1944, until it arrived in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, its location on V-E Day, May 8, 1945.

A preceding booklet told how the Second, which was activated in France in 1917 and which probably gained more renown in World War I than any other division, opened its campaign in World War II when it came ashore on Omaha Beach in France, D plus 1, June 7. The story described the manner in which the wearers of the Indianhead patch fought their way through Treviers, Cerisy La Foret, and then, in one mighty effort, crushed the powerful Nazi defenses on Hill 192, grassy slope holding up the advance on St. Lo.

In the speedy breakthrough South that followed, the Second stepped out in front and pushed through St. Jean des Baisants, Vire, and Tinchebray in victorious but hard fighting. It was next ordered along with two other divisions to take Brest, heavily defended seaport which the Germans had used as a submarine base. After a bitter four-week struggle, in which the Nazis fought desperately to prevent the port from passing into U. S. hands, the garrison formally surrendered to Major General Walter M. Robertson, Division Commander, from Nelson County, Virginia, on September 18, 1944.

The division then moved by truck and train across France and Belgium to the Siegfried Line, where this story begins.

PRELUDE

"What the Second Infantry Division has done in the past four days will live forever in the history of the United States Army."

—LT. GEN. COURTNEY H. HODGES.

These were the words that the First Army's commander wired softspoken Maj. Gen. Walter M. Robertson, after Nazi Panzer Divisions tried unsuccessfully to crack the Second's line during the German winter breakthrough. And these were the words that perhaps better described the Second's part in repelling the attack than any written during the period.

It was the Second that held a shoulder of the bulge and for three days and nights beat back blow after blow by numerically superior forces seeking to cut through and seize the important road net extending to the North and Northeast. It was a stand made under conditions military textbooks would describe as impossible, but the Second met the onslaught head-on and smashed back with such fury that two enemy divisions were badly mauled and a third forced to take another route of advance.

Maj. Gen. C. R. Huebner, commander of the First Army's V Corps, said the part of the Second in protecting "the critical Eupen-Malmedy road cannot be praised too highly." Field Marshall Montgomery also singled out the Indianhead Division for praise.

More than 100 armored vehicles were knocked out by the division and two members of the Second were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery during this period.

CHAPTER I

Lull Before the Storm

The Second Division entered Germany on October 4. It crossed the border in the Schnee-Eifel, ten miles East of St. Vith, Belgium, and as its first mission on German soil, took over the defense of a 27-mile sector along the Siegfried Line. This was a sector, supposedly held by the enemy in light force, through which Von Rundstedt's armies were to strike in the great December counter-offensive, launched five days after the Second had moved to another sector on December 11.

In the 68 days between October 4 and December 11, the Second waged incessant patrol and artillery warfare with German troops in the deep pine forests and ridges of the Schnee-Eifel. By day and night reconnaissance patrols roamed the forests seeking out enemy positions. Ambush scouts pounced on unwary Germans. Combat groups jabbed enemy lines and battled enemy patrols in a mine-strewn no-man's-land. At night, German patrols made raids through gaps in the lines that existed in the wide sector. In Schlausenbach, where the 9th Infantry CP was situated, the bell in the steeple of a tiny 17th Century Church was used as an "invasion bell" to warn Headquarters personnel of the approach of infiltrating patrols. On at least one occasion its toll brought men rushing out into the flickering glare of flares to defend the CP.

Because of the lengthy front line, certain strong points were selected for defensive purposes. The Second Engineer Battalion quickly constructed Tobruk-type bunkers in these areas. Protected by wire and mines, they could hold a platoon and be defended against attacks from any direction. Weeks later, when the 106th Division occupied this area, Von Rundstedt's counter-offensive hit the thinly-held line with terrific force, but it was several days before he was able to break through the strong defenses that had been constructed.

For weeks buzz bombs roared over Second Division lines on rush-hour schedule, but damage and casualties were not high.

In November, snows came, and the scene along the front might have been borrowed from a painting of the winter at Valley Forge.





Small groups of soldiers huddled around fires that could be built by day, and guards stood their posts in snow several inches deep. The forests rang to the sound of axes, as the troops felled thousands of trees for shelters. The Division proved rich in log cabin architects.

Despite the weather, most of the men lived comfortably. One company built a day room and furnished it with decorations a patrol had seized in a German hunting lodge in front of our lines. A Ranger Platoon, between skirmishes with German patrols, lived in consummate comfort in a cabin fitted out with curtains, window panes, a hand-painted lamp, rug, tables, chairs, bunks, and even a doorbell — a bicycle bell affixed above the entrance. The 38th Infantry built a log chapel on the Siegfried Line. The big game hunters at the front shot deer in the forest and treated their platoons to venison steaks.

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower visited the Second Division on November 8, and presented Silver Star awards at a ceremony at the forward CP in St. Vith.

A few weeks later, on November 25, the 23rd Regiment held what was believed to be the first regimental parade on German soil in World War II. General Robertson decorated a number of men in the ceremony at Hemmers.

On November 11 the Division observed Armistice Day with a barrage of small arms, mortar, and artillery fire at 11:00 a.m. The



Digging in for the Winter.

Germans, after recovering from their surprise, made a feeble retaliation. Thanksgiving was observed with a barrage of turkey — which was not fired at the Germans. The men looked forward to spending Christmas amid their pine-log luxury, but this was not to be the case.

On December 10, in the midst of a driving snow storm, the Division started North for an attack on a Siegfried Line stronghold at Wehlerscheid in the Monschau Forest. The 106th Infantry Division assumed the defense of the Schnee-Eiffel, and, as the men of the Second pulled away, there were mutterings about the luck of the 106th Division inheriting such a quiet sector. But five days later, Von Runstedt's cyclone struck the 106th in full force, inflicting grievous casualties. The Second had missed Von Runstedt by five days in the Schnee-Eiffel, but it was to meet him head-on on the sixth.



CHAPTER II

Heartbreak Crossroad

To most men of the Second, the Wehlerscheid Offensive became known as the battle of Heartbreak Crossroad — and with good reason. It was a savage, costly four-day battle in freezing weather, which ended with the fruits of victory being snatched away under circumstances utterly beyond the control of the men who fought there.

The battle of Heartbreak Crossroad was a battle for the Roer River dams. The Second had the mission of capturing the dams if possible, or to force the enemy to blow the dams and eliminate the threat of the floodwaters wrecking the river crossings planned along the river. From Gemund, the river ran North several hundred miles and was a dangerous threat to the Allied advance as long as the enemy controlled the dams. The division's mission was an important one.

Roads into Germany had proved to be scarce and heavily defended. There was only one good one leading to the dams in the division's zone.



Heartbreak Crossroad.

This ran from Rocherath, Belgium, across the German border at Wehlerscheid — Heartbreak Crossroad — and thence beyond the Siegfried Line where it branched into an excellent road net. Along the German border the Rocherath road passed through the Monschau Forest, and at Wehlerscheid, in the heart of the forest, Siegfried Line fortifications were clamped across it like a giant vise. Barring the way into Germany were 25 concrete pillboxes squatting in the forest on both sides of the road. For 200 yards the approach to the pillboxes had been cleared of trees to give German gunners a field of fire, and across the clearing, with its profusion of mines, stretched masses of barbed wire.

A severe ordeal obviously awaited any troops attempting to force their way into Germany over this route. Yet as the war developed in early December, the road, as a means of approach toward the Roer River Dams, became more and more important in relation to the overall Allied strategy on the Western Front, and the Second Division was given the mission of smashing through the Wehlerscheid stronghold into the open country South of the dams.

Spearheaded by the 9th Infantry, the division launched its attack on December 13, driving into the Monschau Forest astride the Rocherath-Wehlerscheid road. Hardships beset the troops from the start. Snow, knee-deep in places, covered the ground and made the going laboriously hard for doughboys burdened with weapons, ammunition, and packs. The forest was so dense the branches were interlocked as stiffly as gates, and the men had literally to push their way forward. To make matters more miserable a thaw was sending the snow on the pines dripping down on the men, soaking them to the skin. That night the weather turned intensely cold. They had to sleep without blankets, and their wet clothing froze.

The attack was not preceded by an artillery preparation. It had been planned to surprise the enemy, and the regiment advanced several hundred yards to the vicinity of the clearing around the

pillboxes without opposition. As the assault companies neared the clearing, however, leading scouts reported smoke from enemy fires. Doughboys dropped their overcoats, gripped their weapons, and forged ahead across an anti-tank ditch to the edge of the clearing.



88's pay us a visit.

Two hundred yards away, beyond the rows of barbed wire, were the pillboxes, squat, ugly, half-concealed in scrub pine. As the troops closed up to the clearing, hundreds of German guns of many caliber split the silence of the forest. And they exhaled murderous fire. The attack had been detected when the men crossed the anti-tank ditch. Machine guns clipped the bushes, kicking up dirt around the embattled doughboys. Artillery and mortar shells, shearing off the tops of trees, sprayed shrapnel in all directions. Casualties were heavy, the toll early in the engagement including the Second Battalion Operations Officer, the Battalion Commander's radio operator, the Company Commander of Company G, and the Executive Officer of Company E.

Soon after the fire fight had begun a patrol from Company E wriggled out into the clearing for more than 80 yards to reach a slight elevation before the barbed wire barrier. There the men were stopped by heavy machine gun fire. It was quickly discovered, however, that from this rise in ground a much better view of the pillboxes could be obtained than from the edge of the clearing. Word was sent back to the lines. Artillery was notified. Accompanied by two radio operators, Capt. Homer G. Ross, of Elyria, Ohio, Company Commander of Company E, crawled out in the face of enemy guns to join the platoon. From the middle of the clearing, he directed artillery fire by radio and succeeded in calling down direct hits on pillboxes. The patrol, however, could not breach the barbed wire, and, after the artillery mission had been fired, withdrew.

Meanwhile to the South a remarkable piece of patrol work was being accomplished — one that was to prove again that the stoutest iron-and-steel defenses are vulnerable to the courage and tenacity of a few men. For in the midst of the raging battle 15 men under T/Sgt. Clyde A. Dugan, of Canton, Ohio, and S/Sgt. James R. Dunn, of Mosca, Colo., crawled through the crossfire of machine guns and the bursts of mortars, cutting the barbed wire and opening a path that was to lead the two battalions across the clearing and topple the entire German position.

Soon after the regiment had reached the clearing, Sgt. Dugan and nine of his men from the Third Platoon of Company G started out on their stomachs through the barbed wire. Machine gun bullets crackled overhead. One man was killed, but there was no turning back.



Through the Monschau Forest.

Yard by yard they toiled across the field through the snow until they reached the far end where they slid into a zigzag communicating trench linking two pillboxes. At about the same time that Sgt. Dugan's patrol reached the trench, five men of the First Platoon of Company G, under Sgt. Dunn, were sent out in support. Two of them were wounded at the outset and fell back. The others continued on, with Sgt. Dunn and S/Sgt. Adam C. Rivera, of Mesa, Arizona, cutting the barbed wire as they went. By the time they reached Sgt. Dugan, they had opened a four-foot gap in the wire across the field.

No sooner had the two groups joined forces in the trench, however, than the Germans began frenzied attempts to destroy them. First came a patrol from the pillbox on the right. Bullets whizzed through the trench. The Americans captured one of the Germans and drove the others back. The captured German insisted that if he were allowed to return, he could persuade the others to surrender. Sgt. Dugan gambled on it and let him go. A little while later there were sounds of movement, and it began to look as if the gamble had succeeded. Then a German machine gun muzzle poked slowly out from behind one of the turns in the trench. When a helmeted head followed it, no one was willing to gamble further. Sgt. Dugan shot the German gunner, then leaped out of the trench and fired into the rest of the Germans, killing another man. From the woods came another patrol, then another and another. For almost five hours Sgt. Dugan and his men stood off repeated attacks until they were able, under the cover of darkness, to slip back across the clearing to their lines.

For the next 48 hours Second Division Artillery pounded the pillboxes, and patrols from the three battalions of the Ninth fought bloody skirmishes to dislodge the Germans.

Then, after dark on December 15, Sgt. Dunn and an 11-man patrol from Company G crept out through the breach in the barbed wire and made their way toward the enemy lines with a sound-powered telephone. An hour passed, then two hours. At last, at 9:30 p.m. a call came. "The Germans don't seem to be alert," Sgt. Dunn said in a low voice. "We have surrounded one of the pillboxes. No opposition."

Lt. Col. Walter M. Higgins, Jr., of Chattanooga, Tenn., Second Battalion Commander, flashed the word back to the Regimental CP. A plan of attack was quickly formulated. Company F was sent through the gap in the barbed wire, making the path with white tape, and Company E followed. The two companies built up a bridgehead. The Third Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. William F. Kernan, San Antonio, Texas, was rushed through. The Germans woke up to what was happening, but too late. Their position was lost in a blazing attack.

Pillbox doors were blasted open with beehive charges and bazookas, but sufficient dynamite was not on hand to blow up the pillboxes themselves. A charge of 1,500 pounds would have been required for each, and engineers were so busy building and clearing roads that they were unable to bring up the amount needed to destroy

the 24 pillboxes in the area. This did not seem important at the time, but it was soon to be a cause of bitter disappointment. In the desperate struggle lying ahead, these pillboxes were to pass once again into German hands and have to be retaken.

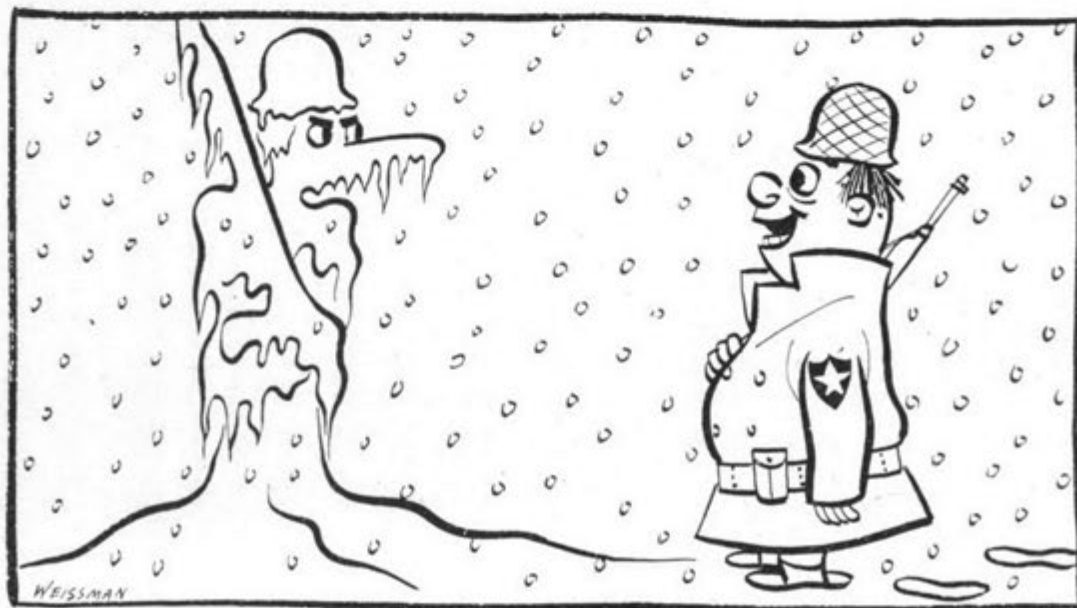
Some of the defenders tried to escape and were killed, many surrendered. Company L, commanded by First Lt. Melvin S. Goldstein, of Brooklyn, N. Y., seized a fortified customs house with 77 prisoners.

With the German lines breached, General Robertson acted swiftly to exploit the advantage. On the morning of December 16 the 38th Infantry passed through the 9th to attack towards its objective, Dreiborn, Germany. During the day the 38th pushed on 1,500 yards against resistance that was sometimes very stubborn.

Bright prospects were opening to the Second Division. The first belt of the Siegfried Line had been breached at Wehlerscheid. The road to Hofen and Monschau and the road to Dreiborn and Schleiden were ready to fall like ripe plums. It was a moment of well deserved triumph, but there were somber and ominous overtones, a feeling that all was not well. German artillery was growing in volume along the line.

At 10:00 p.m., the telephone rang in the CP of the First Battalion 9th Infantry. Major William F. Hancock, of Ruby, South Carolina, Battalion Executive Officer, answered it. Lt. Col. Ralph V. Steele, of Lake Norden, South Dakota, then Regimental Executive Officer, was calling. His message was not reassuring. There was trouble to the South; the battalion might have to withdraw in the morning. The news was scarcely credible. During the night the Germans threw in sharp counter-attacks around Wehlerscheid.

In the morning battalion commanders were hurriedly summoned to Regiment. There the full truth became known. A serious German counter-attack was developing around Rocherath. The 9th and 38th Regiments must pull back quickly to avoid encirclement and help stem the attack. The pillboxes so dearly won must be relinquished without a fight.



"HEY, SAM - YA WANNA HAVE A SNOWBALL FIGHT WHEN YA COME OFF GUARD ?"

The word spread among the troops: "We're pulling back." In the distance was a heavy rumble of artillery. Dog fights raged overhead, and the forest was filled with the din of anti-aircraft fire. In this tense atmosphere the 2nd Division broke contact with the enemy and gave up Heartbreak Crossroad. Many days were to pass before it returned.



CHAPTER III

No Breakthrough Here

Shadows of the threat from Rundstedt's armor and infantry had been first cast early on the morning of December 16th when, after an artillery free period, heavy concentrations of enemy shells rained on the divisional sector, continuing through the afternoon and night.

On the afternoon of December 16th threatening shadows assumed a darker and more menacing appearance when General Robertson received orders not to commit the 23rd Regiment, which at that time was preparing to move from Camp Elsenborn, site of the Division rear echelon, to aid in the exploitation of the Wehlerscheid breakthrough. Later in the afternoon one battalion of the 23rd was detached from Division control and attached to the 99th Division to plug gaps in the lines. Shortly afterwards another battalion was attached to the 99th, leaving only one battalion of the 23rd in Division reserve.

Later in the day Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Huebner, deputy commander of V Corps, and General Robertson held a discussion and proposed operations indicated a change in plans. The threat to the division now had become a definite conclusion.

It was hardly 7:30 a.m. on December 17th when General Robertson learned from the V Corps Commander that the enemy was attacking in force along the entire front of other divisions and had already broken through defenses of a neighboring division on the right and rear, thereby seriously threatening the 2nd Division flank and Command Post at Wirtzfeld.

The impending storm had struck in fury. The size and proportion of this gigantic enemy attack was the first indication that the German's winter offensive in the Ardennes had been launched. The 2nd Division, with two of its regiments miles ahead pressing an attack of their own, was in a precarious position. To prevent the two regiments from being completely cut off from the remainder of the Division, rear echelon and special units must assume the responsibility of holding the surging tide when it struck until the 9th and 38th could pull back and establish a defense in Rocherath and Krinkelt.

Almost immediately after word was received that the neighboring division had been overrun by superior forces of German tanks and foot troops, the 9th and 38th began disengaging from the enemy and started a daylight withdrawal from the Wehlerscheid area to defensive positions around Rocherath, Krinkelt, and Wirtzfeld, covering the

roads leading to Eupen and Verviers. The remaining battalion of the 23rd, plus a TD Company and a company of medium tanks, started South at once toward Rocherath, Krinkelt, and Wirtzfeld, the latter the site of the Division Command Post.

In the next 14 hours, the Indianhead Division, achieved what military books say is impossible. Against two powerful German divisions it did a complete turnabout from the offensive to a well organized daylight withdrawal and defense against a threat from the flank and rear, then slammed the door in Rundstedt's face.

Uncertainty of the situation on December 16th had resulted in General Robertson, who years before had become an expert on daylight withdrawals, mapping a plan for drawing back which was immediately put into effect. Col. Chester J. Hirschfelder, San Antonio, Texas, commanding the 9th Regiment, was placed in charge of the disengagement and withdrawal, and Col. P. D. Ginder of San Diego, Calif., spare combat team commander at that time, gathered all available men to coordinate defenses Southwest of Wirtzfeld where the Division CP was threatened.

Meanwhile Col. John H. Stokes, Assistant Division Commander from Freehold, New Jersey, was put in charge of all troops in the Rocherath and Krinkelt area, and Division Headquarters was alerted to prepare for defense of the CP now in imminent danger of being overrun. German tanks and infantry were already pouring through disrupted lines of another division into Bullingen, two miles from Wirtzfeld, where the Second Engineer Company, Second Signal Company, and Second Quartermaster Company were located.

When the first contingent of enemy tanks and infantrymen lunged into Bullingen, one group of engineers held them off until the majority of their force could be evacuated. They later made their way to a battalion of riflemen and joined in a counterattack on a German held town. Some of the engineers managed to infiltrate out, but one group went into cellars and took up the battle. They were ordered out two days later after artillery fire from both sides made the area a no-man's land. Twelve members of the Second Signal Company's supply and repair section concealed themselves in a cellar and when Nazis occupied the upper floors were forced to strangle their pet dog "Tuffy" to prevent being discovered. Later, they managed to get out under cover of darkness. Like the signalmen, the Second Quartermaster Company suffered a severe blow, losing all its supplies and managing to get out only a few trucks when the quick panzer thrust hit the town. Some of the men took off across the fields and plowed through the deep snow to safety. Trapped in a house, nine others hid inside a creamery vault and watched German tankmen loot U. S. clothing and supplies. That night they crept out and got back to American lines.

Overpowering small division forces in Bullingen, hostile armor and infantry from the crack 1st SS Panzer Division swept on toward Wirtzfeld where Division Headquarters personnel rallied to stem the attack until the arrival of infantrymen from the 23rd. When enemy tanks appeared on the skyline hardly 600 yards from the Division CP and opened fire on Wirtzfeld, General Robertson bluntly said: "We

are going to hold this CP." Then the brilliant Virginia tactician, part of Division Headquarters defense platoon, cooks, orderlies and clerks, proceeded to do just that against both tanks and troops. General Robertson himself helped direct traffic despite enemy tank and artillery fire, and supervised the placing of anti-tank defenses. Two enemy tanks and an armored car were knocked out in the first five minutes of the battle.

Only one road leading from Wirtzfeld to Elsenborn could now be used by the division, and this was a muddy, one-way route so bad in spots that often jeeps had to be winched through. Foresighted engineers, who knew that in the event the main road was cut an escape route would have to be available, had plotted it and worked over the worst spots prior to the breakthrough. Now the entire burden of maintaining the flow of traffic fell on the Division's MP's. Artillery and long-range small arms fire was falling constantly, but they remained at the posts, helping push stalled vehicles off the road and hurrying others through. It was only after all vehicles and infantry had moved back and the covering force from the 741st Tank Battalion was ready to pull out, that the MP's withdrew.

While the first enemy thrust at the Division was being repulsed at Wirtzfeld, and the 9th and 38th regiments were redeploying into Rocherath, General Robertson learned that the enemy had broken through another defense line Northeast of Rocherath and threatened to roll into the town before stabilized defenses could be established.

Meanwhile, the First Battalion of the 9th, commanded by Lt. Col. William D. McKinley, San Antonio, Texas, had reluctantly abandoned the 24 steel and concrete pillboxes taken after such bitter fighting, and was pulling back to the original jumping-off place to safeguard the East flank of the Division. It was General Robertson, who, in this emergency was in the field directing his fighting units, that intercepted Company K and the First Battalion of the 9th and led it into defensive positions along a vital road junction. Orders were to hold the road at all costs. German armor which had broken through on the Northeast was expected to use this road network into Rocherath and the junction must be held if remaining units of the 9th and 38th were to successfully reach Rocherath.

At 5 P. M. on December 17th word came down that a reinforced enemy armored column had worked its way into Rocherath and was being opposed by the 38th's First and Second Battalions. The two units had been spearheading the Division attack, but had been ordered to fall back into Rocherath when initial German thrusts resulted in the Second Division's flanks being exposed.

Commanded by Lt. Col. Jack K. Norris of Payette, Idaho, the Second Battalion reached the town before the main column struck and immediately began opposing 12 enemy tanks attempting to overrun the sector. The First Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Frank T. Mildren of Los Vegas, Nevada, was caught in route column before arriving, however, and suffered heavy casualties in battling tanks and foot troops.

The two battalions brought much-needed help to the 38th's Service Company which already had engaged an enemy task force that

also had struck at Bullingen and Wirtzfeld. Clerks, KPs, maintenance men, drivers and telephone operators had been organized into rifle squads and bazooka teams to halt thrusts on the edge of Rocherath.

While the First and Second Battalions were engaged in stiff conflict in Rocherath, the 38th's Third Battalion under Lt. Col. Olinto M. Barsanti of Tonopah, Nevada, was undergoing artillery and tank fire near Krinkelt, where it had been sent from Regimental reserve to protect the main supply route.

Throughout the day hundreds of disorganized troops from nearby units that had been overrun streamed back into the Second's lines in a frantic search for safety. Doughboys were given orders to hold their fire until they were able to identify the advancing forces. At times, in the murky, foggy atmosphere, this endeavor to spare the lives of friendly troops cost the lives of Second Division men behind the guns. Entire U. S. squads and platoons were wiped out when it was learned too late that the onrushing horde was German and not American. The degree to which this, combined with the unnerving appearance of friendly troops fleeing before the enemy, could have influenced the morale of doughboys less seasoned than the Second cannot be over-emphasized. But the Second held its ground. The disorganized troops were sifted into the Division and aided in stopping the push.

The night of December 17th was a nightmare for the 38th, commanded by Col. Francis H. Boos of Janesville, Wisconsin. There was no sleep for anyone. Both enemy and friendly troops occupied Krinkelt. The enemy armored column which had infiltrated unstable lines kept the regiment alerted throughout the night. Clashes between foot troops and friendly and enemy tanks were common during the hours of darkness. Communications between battalions were virtually impossible since artillery had severed all lines. It was not until noon of December 18th that the enemy finally was ejected from the town and contact again established with the units. Three of the enemy tanks had been destroyed within 200 yards of the Regimental Command Post.

While the 38th was battling tanks and infantry in Krinkelt and Rocherath during the night of the 17th, the First Battalion of the 9th, at their crossroad position, was hurling back intermittent German tank attacks.

The Third Battalion of the 23rd absorbed one of Rundstedt's best Sunday punches in another sector on the night of December 17 when it repulsed eight enemy attacks. Later this battalion joined the Third Battalion of the 38th Regiment and continued to battle tanks and infantry for the remainder of the critical period.

But it was the First Battalion of the 23rd, commanded by Lt. Col. John M. Hightower, Las Cruces, New Mexico, which bore the brunt of enemy assaults against this regiment and dealt inestimable punishment to the enemy. Fighting desperately on three sides and their escape route slowly closing behind them, the battalion organized a nine-man patrol led by Sgt. Floyd R. Swartz, Detroit, Michigan, to find an outlet from the trap. Without communications since telephone wires had been shelled and their radios were not functioning, the lives of many men depended upon this patrol. Finding a suitable route



What price glory at Krinkelt

partially obliterated by fallen snow, the tiny band made its way in darkness one and a half miles to Murringen, Belgium and then back to the battalion. Within a few hours the last of the 700 men had been guided to safety.

Over in another sector, Col. Jay B. Lovless, of San Antonio, Texas, commanding the 23rd Regiment, became commander of all troops in the Sourbrodt-Elsenborn area after his three battalions were split between commands of the Second Division and the 99th. He organized the "Lovless Task Force" which included a battalion of three rifle companies formed by Major Frank Hoke, Lebanon, Mo., Division Special Service Officer, from the rear echelon clerks, cooks, bandsmen, and drivers. This battalion was known as the "Hoke Battalion." The "Loveless Task Force" defended the area South of Elsenborn and prepared defenses East of Berg, Belgium, to which the division riflemen could fall back when the time was ripe.

Surveying the situation weeks later, General Robertson said that apparently the initial armored attack on the division was by a flank guard, which having hit solid resistance, shied away from Rocherath-Krinkelt. This striking force, the 1st SS Panzer Division, had an objective and route further to the South and West in the direction of Malmedy. The 12th SS Panzer Division followed this later in the day and apparently had the mission of going through the Rocherath-Krinkelt Elsenborn area. However, by this time, the Second had had time to organize its positions. Between these two attacks, there were abortive thrusts by the 277th Volksgrenadier Division, but these were handled without great difficulty. Had the attacks by the two panzer divisions been reversed and the Second hit hard in the morning before it had time to get set, General Robertson said he believed there would not have been sufficient strength to stop the blow.

The full force of the German offensive hit the division from three sides on the morning of December 18th. One tremendous German attack was intercepted by Lt. Col. William D. McKinley and his first Battalion of the 9th, which staged a gallant fight to hold the important crossroads just outside of Rocherath. The onrushing tanks and infantry were met with bazookas, cans of gasoline and phosphorous grenades while hasty mine fields helped to slow the progress of the enemy, later identified as the 12th SS Panzer Division. The Nazis threw masses of tanks and men at the 9th's sector and so severe was the battle for the crossroads that First Lt. Stephen E. Truppner, Baltimore, Maryland, whose company had been reduced to approxi-

mately 50 men, called for artillery on his own position. The last words from the officer were, "Artillery is coming in fine." Only 12 men from this company escaped, but Lt. Truppner was not among them. Practically surrounded and warding off attackers on three sides, First Lt. Eugene Hinski, anti-tank platoon leader from Haddenfield, New Jersey, intercepted four tanks from the 741st Tank Battalion. They counterattacked and kept the enemy occupied while the battalion withdrew. Three German tanks were disabled in this action. Troops were hard pressed as they took the back door out of the rapidly closing pocket, and when Col. McKinley and his operations officer left the site, the enemy was near enough to shout "Hande Hoche." This delaying action in front of Rocherath was a vivid example of the vital part a small unit can play in a great battle. When the first battalion of the 9th reached Elsenborn its ranks numbered only 217 out of a total battalion strength of 860 men.

Repeated enemy attacks by enemy forces ranging from one platoon to several companies were thrown back by the division throughout the day. The 38th regiment fighting gallantly on the very edges of Rocherath and Krinkelt, waged a see-saw battle which became so intense there was no semblance of a front line. At one time men from the First Battalion were completely cut off from supplies, but fought back with what they had from basements, attics, barns and dung heaps. The Anti-tank Company, led by Capt. James Love of Butte, Montana, had little rest during the melee as all men who could be spared from the guns fought up front as riflemen. In one enemy attack, anti-tank personnel and supporting artillery knocked out nine of 24 attacking tanks. Pvt. Isabel Salzar, Houston, Texas, a cook's helper, left his pots and pans long enough to knock out two German tanks with a bazooka and effect a road block for other German tanks. In one of the grimmest fights of the day, two platoons of Company C led by Edward C. Rollings, San Antonio, Texas, scattered a German attack spearheaded by 11 tanks. Fifty Germans were killed and 25 Second Division men captured the night before were rescued. First Lt. Sidney B. Dane, Chicago, Illinois, rounded up a herd of cattle to use as a road block when enemy tanks threatened the command post of the 38th regiment's first battalion. Riflemen from Company F commanded by Capt. John Dumont, San Antonio, Texas, fought off three enemy tank and infantry attacks leaving an estimated 75 dead. Capt. Joseph Skaggs, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, established a defense around the Regimental CP, and his riflemen picked off infiltrating Nazis and tanks. His company was credited with disabling five of the 78 tanks claimed to have been knocked out by the 38th combat team during the three-day period.

It was in this jumbled battlefield around Rocherath that T/Sgt. Frank (Hardtack) Kviateck, 47, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ace sniper of the division and oldest enlisted man in the 38th regiment, was captured when his machine gun section was overrun. He had 36 notches on his rifle at that time.

Wire communications had remained in good shape and General Robertson later commented that he was able to get contact with the Division CP from various points in its sector almost at will. It had

been the custom for the Division Signal Company to always lay an alternate wire line. When the main line was cut along with the supply route from Elsenborn to Bullingen, Murringen and Wirtzfield, the emergency circuit, running along the only exit road then open, was used.

General Robertson commenting on the particular action at Rocherath was inclined to believe that Lady Luck more than ever smiled on the Second Division. The 12th SS Panzer Division during the continued attacks it made for 36 hours never once diverted from its original plan but kept hitting the division head on. Yet for nearly three days, the flanks of the Second Division were exposed.

On through the night of December 18th and through the day of December 19th the enemy attacks continued relentlessly. But the Division by this time had established contact with all units, and were fighting an organized, but desperate defense. On the night of December 19th, the Division pulled out of Krinkelt and set up defenses on the Elsenborn Ridge. By the morning of December 20th it was a foregone conclusion that one section of Rundstedt's sweep toward Antwerp had been definitely halted after one of the hardest battles along the entire First Army front.

The nation's highest soldier honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, was later to be awarded two members of the Second for unusual acts of bravery during these desperate times. Pfc. Jose M. Lopez, 33-year-old Brownsville, Texas, machine gunner, killed more than 100 Germans and enabled his company to withdraw from an apparently hopeless trap. In the 23rd Regiment's M Company, he was attached to K Company when enemy troops began to break through the company's left flank on December 17. Grabbing his machine gun, he lugged it unassisted across the company front to get a field of fire and then set the weapon up in a shallow hole affording no protection from the waist up. He immediately cut down 10 of the Nazis, and then, when an enemy tank approached, ignored its machine gun and 88 mm gun fire coming at him, and killed 25 Germans following it.

Enemy foot troops had begun to penetrate the company's lines from the rear and so Lopez, still ignoring the tank fire, moved his gun back and halted wave after wave of advancing forces. His deadly fire had caused the Germans to concentrate on him, but he kept the gun blazing



Tiger tank kayoed near Krinkelt.

away. A round from the tank landed nearby and the concussion knocked him over backwards and blew the gun several feet away, but he yanked it back and opened up again. When the company finally withdrew, he dropped back 100 yards to another defensive position and blasted away until his ammunition was exhausted 10 minutes later. He then rejoined his company.

The award also went to T/4 Truman Kimbro of Madisonville, Texas, member of Company C of the Second Engineer's Combat Battalion. But unlike Lopez, who lived to receive the honor, Kimbro paid his life on a muddy road near Rocherath, Belgium, on December 17th. Kimbro was lead scout in a squad given the job of mining or blocking a highly important crossroad well ahead of U. S. front lines. On getting within sight of the intersection, he found it occupied by a German Tiger tank and 20 dug in infantrymen. Kimbro tried two other approaches to lead the men to a point where they could block the crossroads, but the Germans remained and the assignment appeared an impossible one. Then, in full view of the tank and infantry, Kimbro crawled to a road leading to the crossroad and began to creep out to lay the mines. Heavy fire rained down and he was severely wounded, but he continued on and placed the mines across the road. On attempting to draw back to safety, however, the fire became even heavier and he was hit innumerable times. Machine gun bursts actually rolled his body. Officers said the mines were a definite factor in delaying enemy armor long enough to permit U. S. forces to successfully evacuate to Rocherath. They also helped keep the enemy from attacking the rear of Division forces moving back.

During this border battle 2nd Division Artillery played its most important role. Massed artillery fire from the 38th, 37th, 12th and 15th Field Artillery units, was used to its greatest advantage, resulting in staggering losses on the enemy and in great measure helping to stem the tide of the German thrust. When the enemy first struck the rear of the division, artillery battalions were supporting the infantry attack from extreme forward positions. In order to give supporting fire to the rear where the Division CP was being attacked, the 12th and 37th Battalions, upon orders from General John H. Hinds, of San Antonio, Texas, each turned one battery completely around and placed fire on enemy tanks and infantry within 800 yards of the CP, continuing at the same time to fire support to infantry attempting to disengage from their forward attack positions. When it was learned the Cub air field of the Division on the outskirts of Bullingen had been overrun, the 37th swept the field with 40-battery volleys, destroying all planes and denying the use of them to the enemy. The 38th FA fired over 5,000 rounds on December 18th which indicates the tremendous volume of fire required to stem the attack. Members of the 12th and 15th FA Battalions made repeated trips to an abandoned ammunition dump near the enemy front lines while subjected to enemy rifle and machine gun fire and recovered several hundred rounds which permitted the battalions to maintain a continuous and devastating fire.

The breakthrough tested the ability of virtually every unit in the division to function under the worst possible conditions. The

Second Medical Battalion had one of the hardest jobs of all. Its evacuation highway was cut shortly after the attack opened and only one other serviceable road to the front remained. This, of necessity, had to be used mainly to bring up ammunition and supplies. The medics had to plot their own evacuation route, tearing down fences and shoveling snow to get the ambulances through in some instances. Back roads, trails and even footpaths were utilized. Other medics were at the same time venturing beyond U. S. front lines to bring in wounded left behind as troops dropped back. Despite intense fighting going on in the streets, they went out time and again to aid the fallen. Shells on several occasions blew down walls of the aid stations. So many wounded were brought in — 1,030 patients were admitted during the December 17, 18, 19 period — that ambulance facilities were not sufficient and jeeps and trucks had to be commandeered and used without protection of Red Cross markings.

A captured German major, asked why the German thrust was unsuccessful, replied, "We failed because our right flank near Monschau ran its head against a wall." The wall was built of men who had never known defeat and who would not bring themselves to admit it. The miracle was created by battle experience and superior command supervision, and the impossible was turned into victory by leadership and courage.



"I GOTTA ADMIT SAM, THEM SHOULDA' HOLSTA'S LOOKS DAMN SMAHT!"

CHAPTER IV

The Road Back

After darkness on December 19th, the last elements of the 2nd Division had withdrawn and taken positions on the Elsenborn Ridge, dominating terrain feature overlooking the twin cities of Krinkelt and Rocherath which were being shelled heavily by American Artillery.

The Division CP set up at Camp Elsenborn, where plans for reorganization and regrouping were formulated. Riflemen dug in, improved their underground homes by insulating them against cold and dampness with sides of ration boxes and pine boughs, and equipped them with makeshift stoves made from abandoned jerricans of German milk cans.

On the 20th of December the enemy felt out the defenses with several small attacks which were repulsed. Deciding that the sector was too strongly fortified and too firmly held, the Germans made no further efforts to continue their offensive.

The enemy shelled the Division area with artillery and rockets. The Luftwaffe reappeared to bomb and strafe supply routes and elements of the division at Camp Elsenborn. Buzz-bombs sputtered over the sector on almost constant schedules. It was a cold, white Christmas for the 2nd Division, but every one was busy with plans and preparations for future operations. Intermittent snows fell during the latter part of December and early January.

The 38th Infantry remained in line and in contact with the enemy throughout the Elsenborn Defense. The Regimental sector was submitted to heavy enemy shelling for several weeks, and twice the enemy scored direct hits on the kitchen of Regimental Headquarters. Scouting and patrolling became the vogue, and Capt. Edward L. Farrel, Jr., Boston, Massachusetts, carried off top honors when he led two patrols into no-man's-land and brought in a total of 17 German outpost guards without firing a shot. Shortly afterwards three strong combat patrols cleaned out a section between Wirtzfeld and Bullingen, taking 18 prisoners, killing 39 Nazis and wounding many others.

On New Year's Day, 11 hostile planes strafed and bombed the



Snowed in at Elsenborn.

division area. Several were shot down by 462nd Anti-Aircraft Battalion gunners, who had been waging a hot fight against the aerial invaders, and the pilot of one plane was captured.

On January 10th, Col. P. D. Ginder assumed command of the 9th Regiment.

During the middle of the month Nebelwerfers appeared again on the Second Division front, and riflemen began picking up a number of enemy deserters who walked voluntarily into American Lines.

On January 12, the 23rd Infantry Combat Team, consisting of the 23rd Regiment, the 37th FA Battalion and one company each from the 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 741st Tank Battalion, the Second Engineer Battalion, and the Second Medical Battalion, was organized and ordered to the Weismes-Robertville-Ovifat vicinity to prepare for an offensive in conjunction with the First Infantry Division. It was given as its final objective the Ondenval-Iveldinger Pass, which had to be taken in order that the 7th Armored Division could pass through and recapture St. Vith.

In the bitter fighting which the combat team engaged in from January 15-20, it gained five miles, took 373 prisoners, killed more than 500 and wounded a large number of enemy. Fighting was particularly bitter throughout the entire engagement and deep snow and severe cold made conditions miserable for troops. Numerous mines were encountered as well as heavy machine gun and artillery fire. But despite what it was up against, the team functioned so well it drew an official commendation for its work from the Corps Commander.

The heroic struggle of G Company, which won many laurels for its battling in hip deep snow and a blizzard, is a good example of the soldiering that was carried on at a time when all hope of an early victory over Germany seemed blighted. Commanded by Capt. John H. Stephens of Tyler, Texas, the company which entered the action with only 100 men, was credited with capturing 150 enemy and killing 100 in four days of bitter strife.

To overcome one obstacle, a crossroads with a cluster of houses,



the officer had artillery and tank guns force the Nazi defenders into cellars. Then in a quick maneuver, the first was lifted and two "G" Company platoons swept 400 yards to successfully storm the position. Another time, the captain ran into a machine gun nest, but found his

Hotel Foxhole, visitors welcome.

THE FRENCH HAVE A COUPLE OF WORDS FOR IT...

"ESPRIT DE CORPS"



IN SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY TURNS TO WHAT? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN? IT'S ME, BAK MOME, YOUR FANCY YEARS, AND SAM, IT'S NOT VERBOTTEN!



Sgt. S.Q. Weissman
CZECHOSLOVAKIA-1945

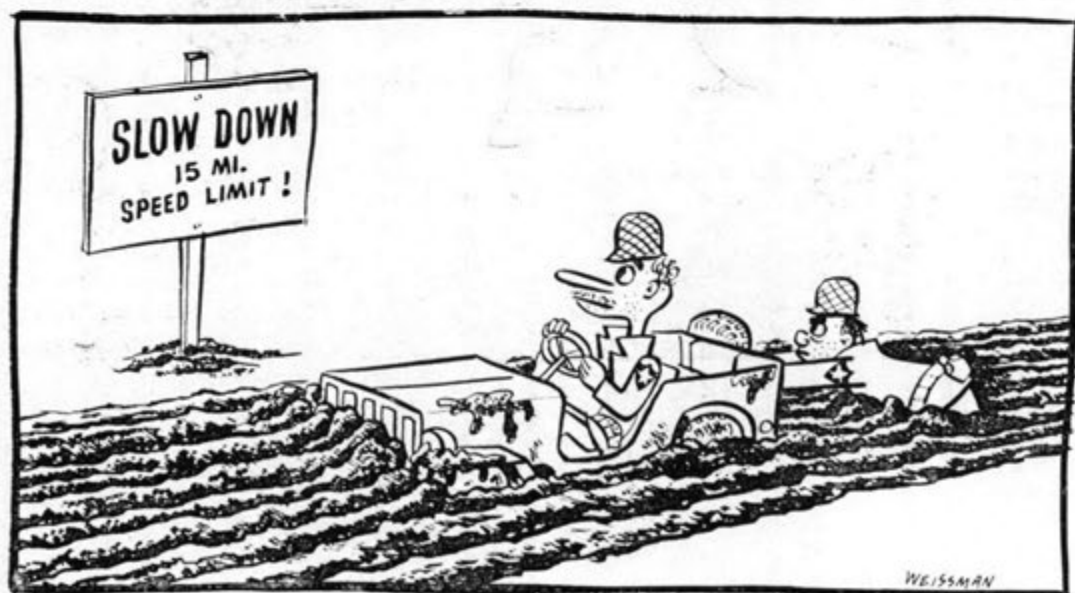
pistol holster so packed with snow from crawling that he couldn't get the weapon out. Thinking quickly, he grabbed a radio and threatened to throw it. The bluff worked and the enemy machine gun crew of two men surrendered, evidently believing the officer was about to attack them with a secret weapon.

Three days of fighting in sub freezing temperatures with only an occasional K ration to eat reduced the company's strength to 70 men, but it kept on. In the tiny town of Eibertingen, it ran into some of its toughest street fighting since Brest, with opposing forces firing at 12-yard range and exchanging grenades within houses. After the company killed 50 enemy and took 41 prisoners in the town, the Germans withdrew and began to organize for a counter-attack. It never got started, however. Artillery and a firing line of BAR's and rifles quickly met the challenge and 160 German dead were counted when the Americans halted their fire.

On January 30th, the 38th Infantry jumped off in a drive through deep snow drifts and bitter cold to retake the three towns of Wirtzfeld, Krinkelt, and Rocherath where it had successfully blocked Rundstedt's December drive. The Ninth Regiment pushed off at the same time with orders to pass through the First Division, make a limited objective attack and then go through the 38th after Wirtzfeld, Krinkelt and Rocherath were captured. It was then to continue into the Wehlerscheid area which it had previously taken in December. Chief obstacles were terrain and weather, with snow and forested country making progress slow and fatiguing. But the division was in a vengeful mood and anxious to return to the border towns which by now had been reduced to shambles by intense allied bombing and shelling.

The Second Battalion of the 38th Infantry took Wirtzfeld without resistance, finding the town and its approaches heavily mined. Lt. Col. Jack K. Norris, Battalion Commander stepped into a building to look at his map and he and his forward elements captured six Germans hiding in the cellar.

From here the First and Third Battalions pushed on into Krinkelt and Rocherath where enemy delaying action resulted in stubborn and fierce house to house fighting before resistance was overcome. Led



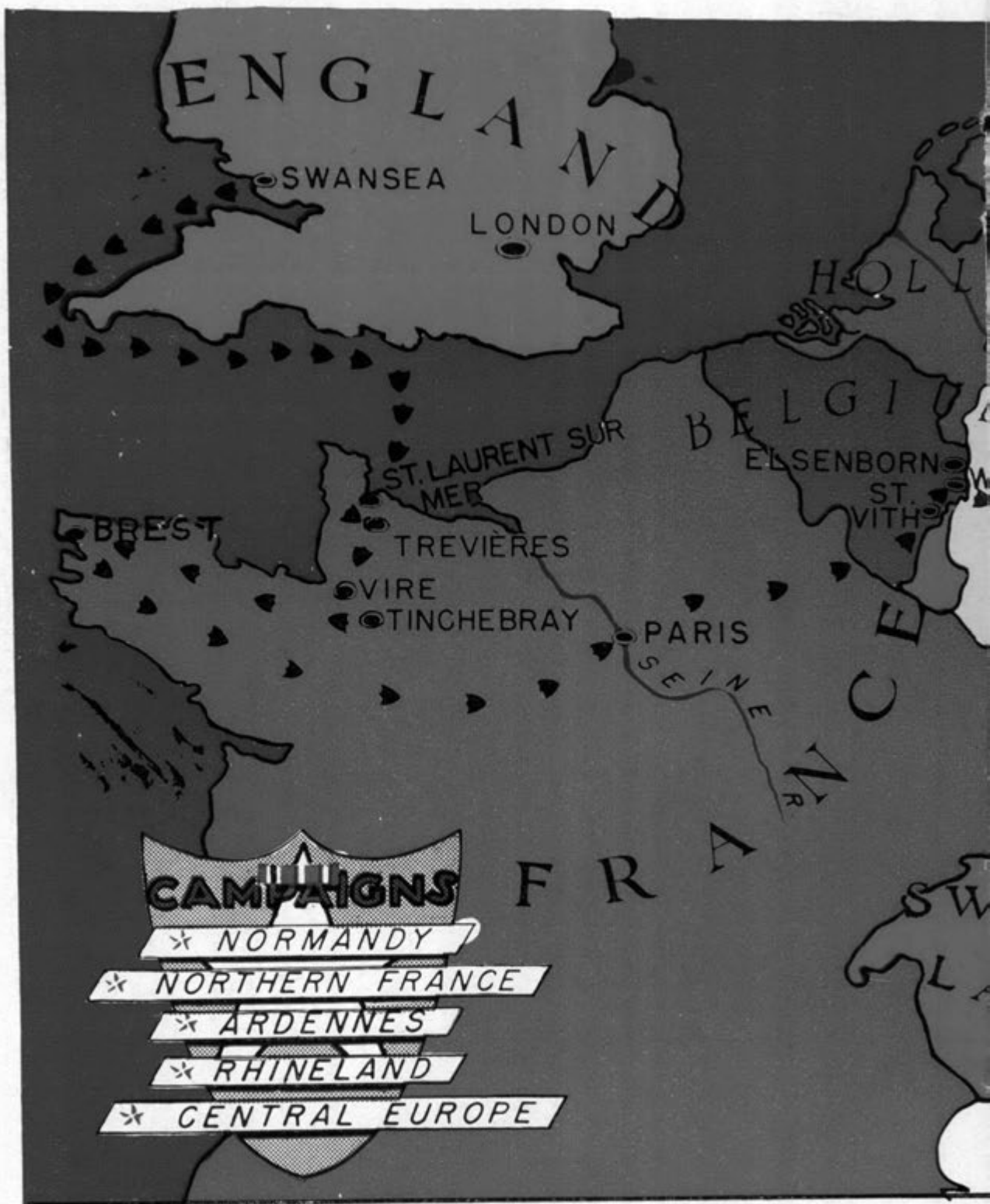
by First Lt. Albert Shelton, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, one platoon from Company K, 38th Infantry, spearheaded the attack into Krinkelt. They had been the last men to leave in December and were the first to reenter the shell-splintered town. First Lt. John S. Calhoun, Jacksonville, Florida, assumed command of the company when the commanding officer fell mortally wounded, and retook his old CP along with 15 German prisoners. While the Third Battalion was mopping up Krinkelt, the First cleaned out points of scattered resistance in Rocherath.



On January 31, the Third Battalion of the 9th Infantry, mounted on tanks, moved toward Wehlerscheid and "Heartbreak Crossroads," while the Second Battalion of the 23rd Infantry, attacked along the road leading to Hellenthal, gateway to the second line of Siegfried defenses. The terrain was so rugged and the roads so blocked with snow and ice, that tanks, towing trailers, were used to carry supplies and ammunition, and to evacuate the wounded. Weasels, the "Jeeps with tracks," which had been used by the Division in winter maneuvers in Michigan during the pre-invasion days, were again put in use.

February found the division driving back into Germany. On February 3, 48 days after the withdrawal from Heartbreak Crossroads, the 9th Infantry returned. This time it was different. The 9th Infantry Division, advancing from the North, had out-flanked Wehlerscheid and the Germans, instead of putting up the desperate resistance they had offered in December, cowered in the pillboxes awaiting capture. As men of the 9th Regiment trudged past the old battle-ground on the way to new ones, they paid silent tribute to the comrades who fell there and to the four grim days and nights at Heartbreak Crossroad.

Once beyond Wehlerscheid, the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Infantry, with Company F mounted on tanks, stormed into the German towns of Harperscheid and Schonesseiffen, capturing 250 prisoners and knocking out a tank and self-propelled gun. Entering Harperscheid, Pvt. Joseph A. Atkinson, Large, Pennsylvania, who had joined the company only two weeks before, knocked out a self-propelled gun with a rifle grenade. When a tank moved up to tow it away, S/Sgt. Vladis Lucan, Innis, Texas, rapped on the side with his rifle and demanded that the crew surrender. The crew surrendered. Company E, 9th Infantry, had hardly set up its CP in Harperscheid when a German



ROUTE of the SECOND



June 5, 1944 = May 7, 1945





**Kings of the Highway at
Harperscheid.**

corporal opened the door and walked in, surprised to find the Americans there. When the 23rd Infantry was held up by an enemy machine gun, Pfc. John M. Packard, Grande, Oregon, dashed across an open field and wiped out the crew with several bursts from a

tommy gun. On February 3rd the First Battalion of the 23rd Infantry cleared the town of Bronsfeld, and the 9th Infantry captured Ettelscheid and Berescheid.



CHAPTER V

Pillboxes Behind

One of the thorns in the general push forward was a group of pillboxes located to the front of Hellenthal which had defied repeated attempts by XVIII Corps troops to break through and seize the town. Situated in a narrow valley, Hellenthal had terrain features ideal for its protection. The entire area was to the right and out of the Second's sector, but when its troops began to receive fire from this vicinity, the Division found it necessary to clean out the town and surrounding high ground. By doing so, it put troops to the rear of the pillboxes



" IF WE DON'T SLOW DOWN SOON, SAM'L NEVER GET T'OPEN THEM XMAS PACKAGES OF HIS ! "

Crossing the Roer at
Heimbach.

and the Germans hastily abandoned them without a fight and fled. The obstacle in the path of XVIII Corps' advance was thus removed.

The battle for the city was a tough one, however. The enemy had good observation on the narrow, winding roads leading into the valley, which made it difficult for U. S. troops to bring in supplies or to reinforce the infantry attack with vehicles or armor without the enemy bringing down heavy concentrations of artillery or mortar fire on the roads. The Nazis had also blown the only bridge across the Olef River, thus preventing the employment of armor into the small village until a bridge could be constructed.

The Second and Third Battalions of the 38th Infantry jumped off early in the morning and succeeded in reaching the outskirts of the town without arousing the garrison. The Third Battalion pushed across the river by wading and swimming in the icy waters and by evening had secured the Western edge of the town against heavy resistance. The Second Battalion seized the high ground Northeast of the town, but when it tried to take the Southwest edge, the enemy fought bitterly. By the next morning, however, Hellenthal was in U. S. hands.

Meanwhile the First Battalion, 9th Infantry, launched an attack to take Scheurn and the high ground to the West. This was accomplished by the morning of February 6th, after troops ran into a heavy fire from automatic and small arms. The area was also under enemy observation and U. S. troops had to be supplied at night.

The Nazis continued to be very active in the Hellenthal area with patrols constantly probing Division lines. It was during this period that First Lt. Charles D. Curley, Richmond, Virginia, of "L" Company, 38th Infantry, picked up conversation on his SCR 536 radio from a German patrol. Using Pfc. Solomon C. Fink of Elgin, North Dakota as an interpreter, he succeeded in placing mortar fire on an enemy group trying to probe our lines. The last message heard was simple and terse: "Those bastard Americans are shelling the road, we can't get any nearer; there are casualties."

To the North, the Ninth and First Armies succeeded in forcing a crossing of the Roer River. The Division on February 17th side-



stepped to the North, assuming control of a portion of the 9th Infantry Division's sector, with the mission of controlling a sector south of the Urft Reservoir, uppermost of the system of Roer and Urft River dams.

Task Force "S", consisting of the 38th Infantry, the Third Battalion of the 9th Infantry, 38th Field Artillery Battalion, Company "B" of the 741st Tank Battalion, Companies "B" and "C" of the 86th Chemical Battalion, Company "C" of the 2nd Engineer Battalion, and Company "C" of the 2nd Medical Battalion, became operational on March 1st. On March 3rd it moved North through the III Corps sector, crossed into the bridgehead at Heimbach, and attacked South through the 78th Infantry Division, advancing approximately 4500 yards through heavily mined areas and scattered fire. The First and Second Battalions of the 38th Infantry cleared out pillboxes on the Western edge of Gemund and on the high ground to the Northeast of Gemund, and the Third Battalion, 9th Infantry, occupied the town on March 4th. Gemund was a bastion in the final belt of Siegfried Line fortifications and thus, after five long months, the 2nd Division had burst through the formidable West Wall and was entering upon an entirely new phase of the war.

By March 6 an enemy withdrawal was definitely indicated, and the Second advanced rapidly to the Southeast, taking many towns and villages including Mechernich, without any show of resistance.

The First Battalion, 9th Infantry, met a delaying force late in the day as it approached Weyer from the West, and at the same time the Second Battalion, 23rd Infantry encountered another force Northwest of Nethen which was quickly overrun. By the close of the day no enemy resistance was reported on the entire Division front. Of the 43 PW's processed at the Division cage during the period, 35 different units were represented. As the Division closed on the Rhine River at Rheineck, delaying forces in moderate strength, employing all available weapons, tried to delay the Division's advance, but to no avail. On March 11th all organized resistance in the Division zone West of the Rhine River was cleared.



Reports of enemy material captured during the period March 6-11 indicated the haste of the enemy withdrawal. Several houses full of ammuni-

Don't fence me in.

Presidential
Citations
awarded to units of the
Second Division
D+1 to V-E Day



3d Bn, 9th Inf. ✓ 1st Bn, 9th Inf.
3d Bn, 23d Inf. ✓ Regtl. Hq, 38th Inf.
3d Bn, 38th Inf. ✓ 2d Bn, 38th Inf.
2d Engr. Bn. ✓ 2d Signal Co.
A. T. Co, 38th Inf. ✓ 2d Bn, 9th Inf.
1st Bn, 38th Inf. ✓ 3d Bn, 23d Inf.
(Cluster)



tion were seized in Frohnau and Buir, and 22 carloads in a tunnel along the railroad west of Schuld. Guns of all calibers, a motor park of some 17 vehicles, and a map depot formerly belonging to the Fifth Panzer Army were found along the route of advance.

The Division then was ordered to assume a defensive position along the West Bank of the Rhine to protect the Remagen bridgehead against water-borne attack. On the night of March 19th the 9th Infantry Regiments Second Battalion made a night landing attack on the Rhine island opposite Hammerstein, and eliminated a small pocket of resistance that had continued to hold out.



CHAPTER VI

Victory Ahead

On March 21, the Division crossed the Rhine in the Southern sector of the Remagen Bridgehead to re-enter an area where the Indianhead patch was no stranger. Just 26 years before, in December, 1919, the Second had spanned the river in the same section and spent eight months as part of the Army of Occupation. Even after two and a half decades, traces and memories of the men from the last war were still prevalent.

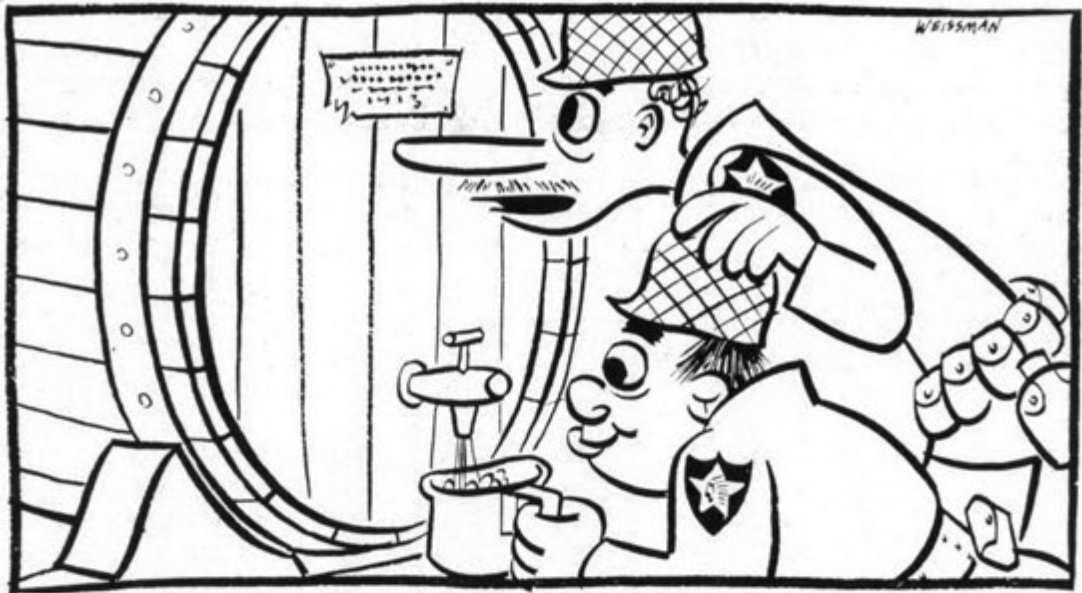
On several occasions, surprised German civilians ran into the streets, pointing at the patches and jabbering away that they remembered them from many years back. The Second Quartermaster Company set up its CP in a building in Heimbach and discovered the Division's 15th Field Artillery had had its CP in the same building in 1919. Pictures of the 15th's band and other members of the unit, their patches plainly visible, turned up in the quarters, and Heimbach's burgomeister brought in a mouldy Second Division jacket from World War I.

Ninth Regiment troops uncovered other photographs, one showing a Second Division soldier standing on the East bank of the Rhine, with Castle Rheineck, which the 9th captured in this war, in the back-

ground. To Colonel Hirschfelder, who commanded the 9th throughout most of its fighting in Europe, the Rhineland aroused strong memories. He was the only officer in the Division during its occupation duty who had returned with the unit.



Across the Rhine.
Ndr Breisig-Honningen.



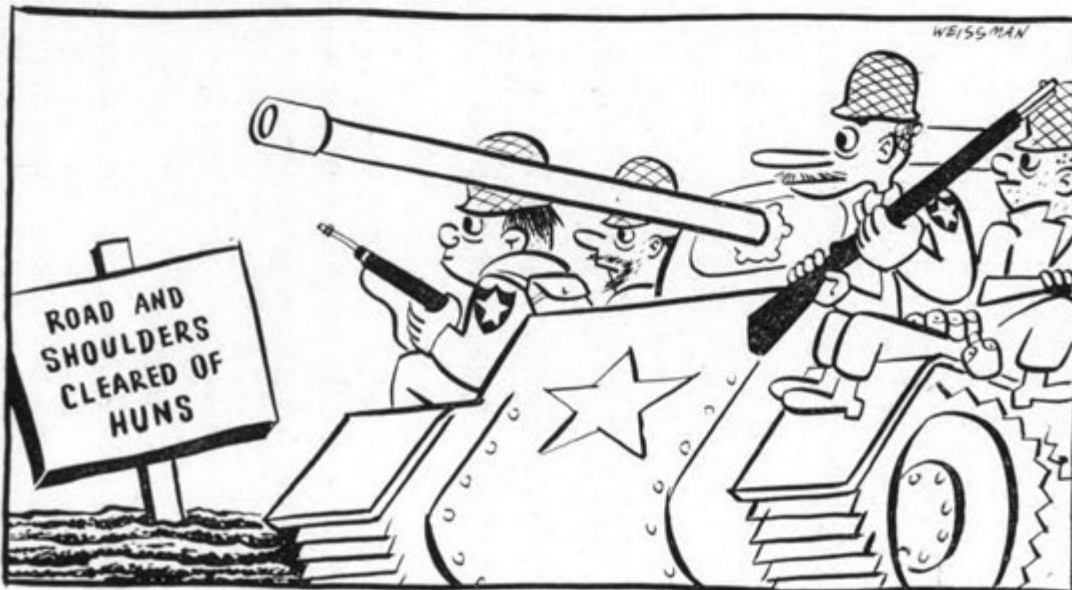
"CAN'T BE MUCH GOOD, SPUD — IT'S PRETTY OLD!"

The 38th captured the towns of Segendorf and Rodenbach, where the 18th company of the Fifth Marine Regiment, part of the Division in the last war, was billeted. In a building in which the 38th set up a CP in Rodenbach, a booklet containing pictures and a history of the 18th Marine company was found.

At Gonnersdorf, Herman Krohn, formerly of Milwaukee, who was in E Battery of the Division's 15th Field Artillery in the last war, was discovered living with the woman he returned to Germany to marry in 1920. After serving in the Army of Occupation, he obtained his discharge at Fort Slocum, New York, and then sailed for Germany. Now white-haired and 59, he said he had his fill of the country and wanted to take his wife and two sons back to the United States "as soon as possible."

Other old photographs and a 1919 edition of Stars and Stripes gave further evidence that the Germans either found it hard to obliterate traces of the Division or had not desired to do so.

But the Division in this war was not merely occupying the area. It had the important job of broadening the bridgehead and cutting a



Here we go again.



hole for armor to start its Eastward push. What was learned of the Second's occupation in World War I had to be gathered on the run. In the month ahead, the Division was to travel close to 400 miles to the very heart of Germany, take 19,000 prisoners and liberate slave

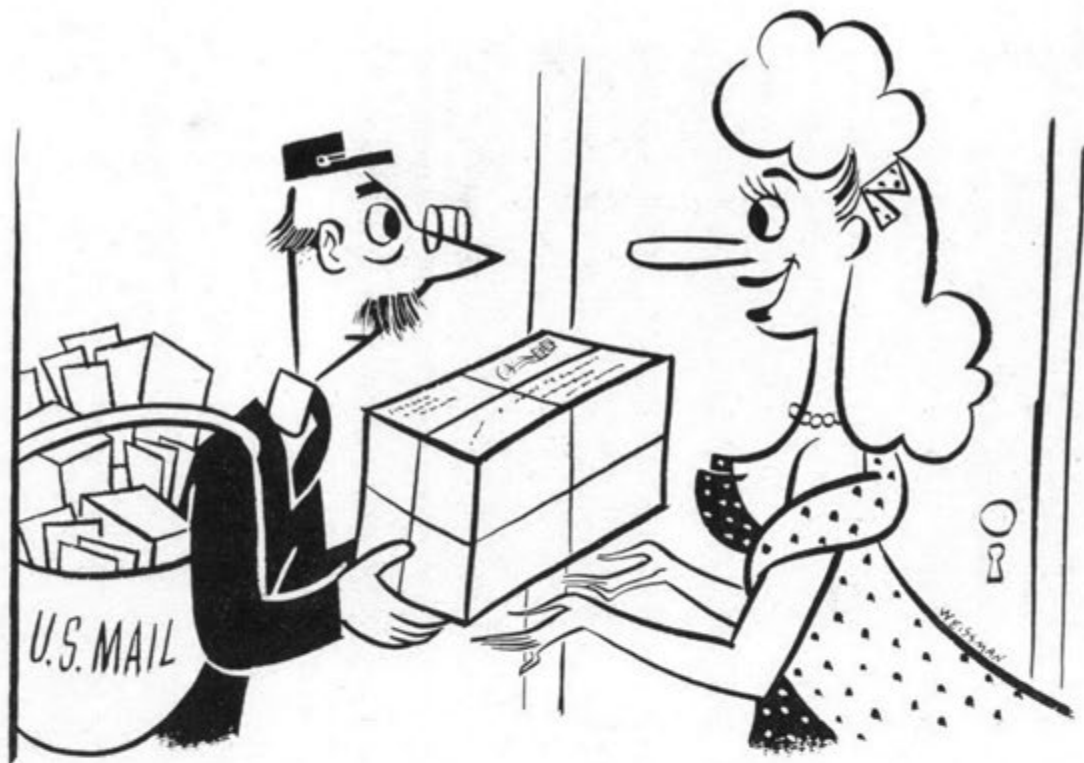
workers and prisoners by the thousands. All phases of Germany — murder institutions, concentration camps, Gestapo and SS headquarters, and the tremendous war plants that had kept the Nazi war machine operating — were to be uncovered.

The Division had relieved the 394th Regiment on reaching the Eastern bank of the Rhine and set up its Division CP at Honningen. Then it attacked Southward for five days, taking some 20 towns and encountering emergency units who opposed the advance with machine gun, rifle and moderate artillery fire. Following the occupancy of Baumbach, the Ninth Armored Division, with the 38th Infantry attached, passed through and from then until the end of the month the Second followed it in a wide encircling move which helped create the Ruhr pocket on April 1.

Tactical elements of the Division engaged in mopping up bypassed enemy groups and combing the woods and isolated villages. Prisoners rounded up during this period averaged some 200 a day, many of them stragglers in the rear areas.

At Hadamar, where the Division located its CP on March 29, military government and intelligence officers discovered a murder institution equalling in horror anything ever written by Poe. Germans themselves estimated that since 1941 at least 20,000 political prisoners, Jews and slave laborers had been put to death. The prisoners, too weak to work and no longer of value to the Nazis, were starved to the point of death and then killed by a hypodermic injection. Captain Brinkley Hamilton, attached to the Division's Military Government team, led the investigation, and said that in his 10 years of experience with the London police force he had never seen anything to equal the methodical cruelty of the plant. Killing of the 10,000th person, officers were told, was celebrated by a party at which guests drank from one of the victim's skulls.

It was during these days also that the Division began to run into the first hordes of liberated slave workers and prisoners. Thousands streamed down the roads, waving, smiling, and pushing their belongings on carts or carrying them. The non-fraternization rule



"ANOTHER PACKAGE FROM SAM IN GERMANY! I CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW THE DEAR BOY MANAGES TO BUY SO MANY GIFTS ON HIS SMALL SALARY."

did not permit association with these tired and ragged people, many of whom had been dragged into Germany five years ago, but there were few doughboys who did not slip them something from their ration boxes from time to time.

PW cages were bursting with prisoners collected in droves. Many gave up voluntarily when they saw the fight was over and their lives no longer in danger. Others changed to civilian clothes and had to be ferreted out of their hiding places. In Homberg, an advance detail of 11 signalmen entered a day after armor had passed through and rounded up 50 prisoners. A short while later the Division CP was established there. In another case, a woman went to the Military Interrogation Intelligence Office and said her husband, a former soldier dressed in civilian clothes, had tried to surrender several times, but guards could not understand him and he was waved away. Her request for help in the matter was met.

Americans were being liberated also, but some of their stories were sorry to hear. The Ninth Regiment found 25 emaciated, starved U. S. soldiers who had escaped from their German captors and met the Division in Braunfels. One man had lost 30 pounds under the starvation diet and beatings were frequent. At least three Americans suffocated, they reported, when they spent four days in freight cars, packed like matches.

The 38th Regiment liberated 47 Allied prisoners near Limburg and among them acting First Sgt. William E. Woolen of San Antonio, Texas, Headquarters Company, found T/Sgt. Sim Cartwright, Nashville, Tennessee, whom he had not seen since they served together in the Pacific nearly 10 years before. Cartwright, captured while in the 78th Division during the breakthrough, had lost 20 pounds on a

Two down, one to go.



bread and water diet during one period of his imprisonment.

At the turn of the month, the 38th's Anti Tank Company had one of the roughest battles of its career, battling some 800 SS

troops and 15 tanks in a raging seven-hour struggle in the town of Bonenburg. Trapped in a pocket, the SS troops had to come through the town held by the company to escape. When it was over and the Americans had held firm until tanks and armored infantry relieved them, more than 200 SS men, clad in sleek black uniforms, were dead, three truck loads wounded and 40 taken prisoner.

In the first feint, the company's nine 57 mm guns successfully met the tank thrust, knocking out two tanks and one halftrack. Two of the guns were silenced, however. First Lt. Joe E Steakley, Abilene, Texas, who had recently assumed command of the company, felt it was just the beginning and regrouped his forces. More than 12 hours later, the vaunted SS men, each armed with a machine pistol and many with machine guns and panzerfausts also, struck again. Accompanied by 15 tanks, they swept into the town in a blaze of fire. So close was the fighting that at times SS troops occupied the ground floor of houses and doughboys the top. Despite the grave peril it placed them in, the Americans called for artillery fire on their own positions to help halt the Nazis. For six hours the savage fighting continued. Then U.S. tanks and armored infantry arrived to help the gallant company still holding firm. Its casualties: Four dead, 20 wounded, three missing in action.



Ack ack alley at Leipzig.

On April 1, the jaws of the Ruhr trap snapped shut on some 340,000 encircled Germans and the Division swung East again. Since leaving the Rhine, it had made six moves, established command posts at Honningen, Niederbieder, Hohn Grenshausen, Hadamar, Homberg and Sachhausen. Now the reduction of the pocket was to be taken care of by other units and the Second struck out in coordination with the Ninth Armored Division, sometimes mopping up, sometimes swinging out in front to crush tough obstacles.

At the outskirts to Hofgeismar, it became apparent that the town was to be stubbornly defended and a heavy artillery barrage was laid down. It proved a rather curious obstacle. After being softened up by artillery, it was encircled and tanks pushed through, spraying machine gun fire. They found a defensive force composed for the most part of wild-eyed youths from 15 to 18 years old, a majority of whom had been receiving SS training. The greater percentage fought courageously in foxholes and buildings, but there were some who had been taken from their homes in Hofgeismar only several days before. One told how they gave him a Czechoslovakian rifle, but never a chance to learn to fire it. Terrified when the tanks and machine guns opened up, he buried his nose in the corner of a foxhole and waited for death or capture.

Bridging the Weser River at Veckerhagen, the Second swept toward one of its richest prizes, the famous old university center of Gottingen. It was taken by the 23rd Regiment with the firing of only a few shots and yielded 23 hospitals with 2,500 German patients, four Nazi generals and an airfield that was the best captured in Germany at that date. Fifty German planes, valuable instruments and repair shops and two American aircraft were found at the field. It was believed the U. S. ships either had been used in actual combat against American forces or were being tested to learn their capabilities. Retreating Nazis apparently left in a hurry as a single plowed furrow was the only damage to the field.

At a prison camp at Duderstadt, 700 Allied soldiers came into U. S. hands on April 9th following months of mistreatment, severe marches, beatings and miserable diets. Fifty of the men were Americans.

A medley of troops had been opposing the advance so far. Tanks





made their appearance from time to time and the once-powerful Luftwaffe even occasionally ventured out to strafe. Generally, the defense was scattered with spells of sharp fighting. Local reserves, Volkssturm members and miscellaneous groups came through PW channels

and one group had been in a battalion of men suffering from stomach ulcers. They poured in like a mountain brook, with the daily total generally running over 1,000. Every truck that could be spared was used to rush them to the rear. This was positive evidence that the final disintegration of the German war machine was at hand. Troops looked to the East where the Russians were driving and wondered if the joining of the two forces would bring V-E. It was a period also in which almost every doughboy got himself a German pistol. Sending of souvenirs home began to put a strain on mail facilities of the Division.

Several tons of documents, believed to be the entire SS Surgeon General file, were located in Bad Frankenhausen where the Division set up a command post. Many books, bearing Himmler's own signature, were picked up along with a card index file to what appeared to be the dossiers of all party members.

While there was only scattered fighting in the hurried push from the Rhine, the Second Quartermaster Company was tackling its greatest problem. It had a four-fold job. Tremendous quantities of gasoline had to be hauled to keep alive the hundreds of vehicles in the division, and thousands of prisoners had to be transported to the rear. Then in addition to moving its own large organization on each new advance, the trucks had to carry forward Infantry troops and the Division's Headquarters. It was a job that left little time for anything but work, and that's about all that was done. Truck drivers went for days at times with just a few hours of sleep and hurried meals of cold rations. Often supply dumps were moved just behind spearheading armor in order that the Second, when it came through mopping up, would find its stores ready. Some drivers covered 400 miles in a single day, and as much as 40,000 gallons of gasoline were brought forward. Prisoners in tremendous numbers had to be sent to the rear.

In the Leuna-Merseburg area, the wearers of the Indianhead patch ran into one of the heaviest concentrations of ack-ack guns in Europe, and the hardest fighting they had encountered since crossing

the Rhine. For the entire 14-mile stretch into Leipzig, they received furious artillery blasts from some 1,000 pieces that formerly protected this vital industrial area, but were now slashing at advancing ground troops with tremendous barrages. Many veterans said it was the heaviest artillery fire thrown at them since they came ashore in France 11 months before.

The Ninth Armored Division had turned South to by-pass Leipzig, leaving the Second the task of driving through the flak belt. Augmenting the 88 mm to 128 mm flak guns in each battery were numerous lighter caliber pieces, particularly multiple 20 mm guns. In some cases super batteries had been formed of three ordinary batteries and as many as 40 guns were emplaced at one location, generally in pits of brick with dirt piled around to a thickness of 30 feet. Communications trenches added to the picture.

At the approach of hostile ground forces, the Germans utilized the flak positions as strong points, sending direct fire hurtling at armor moving across the flat terrain and air bursts at infantry. When the troops drew close to the positions, the gunners fought as infantry from the trenches, at times with fanatical zeal. Often it was necessary to blast them out with grenades.

Merseburg, near where Germany's largest synthetic rubber plant was located, and Leuna, chief synthetic gasoline producer for the Reich, both were taken on April 15. Long a top priority bomb target, Leuna was a shamble of iron and steel when Ninth Regiment troops pushed into the tremendous plant. A year before it had been making 10,843,373 gallons of gasoline a month, but repeated air missions had cut the output to 1,446,975 gallons and it finally folded up in March. A subsidiary of I. G. Farben, it produced the vile-smelling gasoline from coal and coke and employed 28,000 persons, about 10,000 being slave workers. Nitrogen and coal alcohol also were turned out in smaller quantities.

Merseburg was stubbornly defended by 2,000 Volkssturm members, supplemented by Luftwaffe and labor troops, who used small arms, machine guns, ack-ack and panzerfaust fire to good advantage. It also marked the first time the Volkssturm had put up any form of an organized struggle against the Division. One battalion of the 23rd Regiment, which took the town, was cut off inside the city when heavy con-



The last round-up at
Leipzig.

centrations of ack-ack fire knocked out tanks and jeeps coming in behind for support. With murderous ack-ack fire falling on the battalion, U. S. Aid men and a German nurse and driver made a series of mad dashes to a Nazi hospital on the opposite side of town to carry out wounded. Following an all-night struggle, the town finally was cleared and 1,000 Volksturm members taken prisoner. It also yielded an airfield and a number of planes.

A large percentage of prisoners taken during this time were from the countless ack-ack batteries and a few were on the balmy side. One, ordered to stand at attention, burst into gales of laughter. Another, asked for his Soldier's book, leaped into the air and jitter-bugged off to hide behind a trailer.

Many German Wacs were among the prisoners also. Some had been members of trial flak batteries to determine if women could be used successfully in this type of work. On April 7, aircraft in raiding the Leuna works dropped a bomb wide of the target and hit the trial battery, blowing off legs and arms and causing hysteria among the Wacs. Prisoners who told the story said the high command concluded the experiment had not been a success and relieved the women.

Most of the battle for Leipzig was fought in the flak belt outside the city. Once that was pierced, the intense artillery concentrations dropped off and the going was much easier. The Second's part was to advance to the Weisse-Elster Canal, which separates West Leipzig — almost a third of the city — from the other portions. It was also to seize any bridges it found intact. The 69th Division had the mission of entering from the South and occupying the city.

The 23rd Regiment, followed closely by the 38th, was the first American unit to enter the city. Anti-tank, panzerfaust and intense small arms fire was thrown at U. S. tanks and infantry as they neared the canal, but they managed to push across on April 18 and secure three bridges found intact.

In its first attempt to cross the Zeppelin Bridge, the lead platoon of the 23rd Regiment met an intense barrage of machine gun and small arms fire and after sustaining numerous casualties was forced to pull back off the span. S/Sgt. Ernest L. Barber, of Tionesta, Pennsylvania, who was serving as lead scout, continued on across alone, however, and killed two Germans in hand to hand combat. In the action despite heavy U. S. artillery and mortar fire falling on this side of the canal, Barber began a one-man rampage, capturing five enemy and assaulting and killing the crews of two machine gun positions. The grinning doughboy, who then returned to the bridge and gave valuable information to his company coming back across, was credited with killing at least 11 Germans and covering 400 yards in his heroic sortie.

Fifth Corps had given orders for the division to continue into the city, but shortly afterward the command was to hold up and allow the 69th Division to come North and effect a meeting. This was done and the city fell the next day.



In addition to its other values, Leipzig enabled the Division's 702 Ordnance Company to resume its practice of getting essential materials from civilian sources when the Army was unable to supply them quickly. Guns and trucks were rusting for lack of OD paint so 500 gallons were obtained in Leipzig. Bushings to keep the trucks running were also located. Ever since the Second had taken up positions along the German border and the wear and tear of war had begun to impair the efficiency of equipment, First Lt. Robert W. O'Banion, Ordnance Supply Officer from Houston, Texas, had been buying and requisitioning from civilian factories in Belgium and Germany.

Leipzig in U. S. hands, the Second moved swiftly to the Mulde River to take up a defensive position and await a possible link-up with the Russians. Scores of anxious war correspondents roamed the Division for days after its artillery observation planes spotted Red columns moving up from the East. The linkup, which occurred at Torgau, was further North and out of the Division's sector, however.

Hundreds of Germans, caught between the two Allied forces, sought to cross the Mulde into U. S. lines during this time. Many had fled before the American advance, but now chose the U. S. as the lesser of two evils and wanted to return. But the policy was firm: German soldiers could come over into PW cages, the others must stay where they were.

There was every indication during the Division's stay in the Mulde River defensive positions that it had fought its last campaign against the Germans and was to sit tight until the fast-collapsing Nazis called it quits. But, as it so often happens for the doughboys, there was one more job to be completed. The Division was transferred from the First to the Third Army and a swift motor trip carried it 200 miles South to an area along the Czechoslovakian border. The collapse

of the German war machine then was in its final stages and in the Division's seven-day campaign in Czechoslovakia, the job mainly was one of clearing towns of German remnants and taking masses of prisoners. May 6 was a Red Letter Day in this latter respect with 8,000 giving up. This was the largest number of prisoners captured in a single day by the Second.

V-E and the wildly enthusiastic ovation given the Division by the happy Czechs made a tremendous climax for the war in Europe. In the Czech border towns, with heavy German populations, there had been little cheering. But on the approaches to Pilsen and in the city itself, the Czechs lined the roads and streets in a demonstration of gratitude that correspondents said was even greater than that of Paris.

The 16th Armored Division had taken the city and when the Second arrived soon afterward, the local populace was just beginning to realize the wonderful news that for the first time since 1939 they were free. This was one day before V-E, but it was the beginning of the carnival spirit that seized the Czechs and Americans alike and continued for days. Each of the white-starred American vehicles received a separate greeting as the Division rolled into the city. The crowds packing the sidewalks increased as the day wore on and as the last troops arrived at nightfall, the enthusiasm was probably at its highest pitch. Pilsen's mayor, just released from a concentration camp and given his job back, brought the traditional Czechoslovakian welcome of bread and salt to General Robertson and some of the country's finest musicians, allowed to play only certain compositions under the Nazi Regime, held a concert for the American commander.

The official V-E announcement the next day brought further celebration and entertainment by the Czechs in honor of their Liberators. Dances and parties also were held by the Division, but the question in most of the doughboys' minds was whether this marked the war's end for them or whether they would have to begin another campaign in the Pacific. This tempered news of the war's end and although there was happiness and satisfaction, there was no wild



elation. For the civilians of Pilsen, the war was over, but for the Americans it was a different story.

The Division had spent 320 days in combat since coming ashore on D plus one, June 7, 1944. It remained in line 71 straight days in Normandy. And after taking over positions in Germany on October 4, it was committed continuously for 217 days until the end of the war. The troops were tired and weary of war and new countries. But although two enemies had been defeated, they knew that one still remained.



INDIANHEAD ROLL CALL

Commanding General.....Major General Walter M. Robertson
Division Artillery Commanding General — Brigadier General George P. Hays,
Commanding July 1, 1942 to November 14, 1944.
Brigadier General John H. Hinds, Commanding since November 14, 1944.
Assistant Division Commander.....Brigadier General John H. Stokes, Jr.
Chief of Division Staff.....Colonel Ralph W. Zwicker

INFANTRY REGIMENTS

9th Infantry Regiment — Colonel Chester J. Hirschfelder, commanding June
10, 1942 to January 10, 1945.
Colonel P. D. Ginder, commanding since January 10, 1945.
23rd Infantry Regiment.....Colonel J. B. Lovless
38th Infantry Regiment.....Colonel Francis H. Boos

ARTILLERY BATTALIONS

12th Field Artillery Battalion.....Lt. Col. Alvan M. Muldrow
15th Field Artillery Battalion.....Lt. Col. Robert C. Cassibry
37th Field Artillery Battalion — Lt. Col. Tobias C. Eastman, to April 26, 1945.
Major Earl Hurt, since April 26, 1945.
38th Field Artillery Battalion.....Lt. Col. Donald C. Little

SPECIAL UNITS

2nd Engineer Battalion — Lt. Col. Robert B. Warren, to January 17, 1945
Lt. Col. Robert E. Snetzer, since January 17, 1945.
2nd Medical Battalion.....Lt. Col Cecil F. Jorns

SPECIAL TROOPS

Headquarters Commandant.....Lt. Col. Matt F. C. Konop
Headquarters Company.....Captain Frederick A. Palmer
2nd Signal Company.....Captain Keith E. Hall
2nd Reconnaissance Troop.....Captain General P. Hefley
2nd Quartermaster Company.....Captain Raymond A. Brimmer, Jr.
702nd Ordnance (LM) Company.....Captain Otto H. Allen
Military Police Platoon.....Major William F. North

ATTACHED UNITS

741st Tank Battalion.....Lt. Col Robert W. Skaggs
462nd AAA Battalion.....Lt. Col. Norman R. Stultz
612th Tank Destroyer Battalion.....Lt. Col. Joseph M. Deeley

INDIANHEAD STAFF

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Letters of Commendation
received by the
2nd DIVISION
from D+106 to V-E Day

HEADQUARTERS VIII CORPS
Office of the Commanding General
APO 308, U. S. Army.

Belgium,
11 December 1944.

Major General Walter M. Robertson, U. S. Army,
Commanding General, 2nd Infantry Division,
APO 2, U. S. Army.

My dear General Robertson:

On the eve of the relief of the 2nd Infantry Division from the VIII Corps, for important duty elsewhere, I desire to take this opportunity and this means to express to you, your officers, and your enlisted men my appreciation for the excellent service rendered while in this command.

The 2nd Division was assigned to the VIII Corps late in August, 1944, for the special mission of reducing the important enemy stronghold at Brest, France. Subsequently, the division moved east with the Corps and has occupied a defensive sector along the German border north of Luxembourg. The superior manner in which the division conducted itself at Brest is known to all and is now history. Since leaving Brest, the division has continued to perform its work in a most satisfying manner.

In departing the VIII Corps, we shall miss the cheerful attitude, excellent spirit of cooperation, and willingness and ability to do the job, so evident in the 2nd Division. We shall watch with interest the future actions of the Division. We feel confident that it will always acquit itself in a superior manner.

If the opportunity permits, please express my thanks and appreciation to the officers and men of your division for their excellent work since joining the Corps. To you personally, I thank sincerely for your spirit of cooperation and the able manner in which you have led the division.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Troy H. Middleton
/t/ TROY H. MIDDLETON,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

AG 201.22 1st Ind.
(11 Dec 44)
HEADQUARTERS 2D INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 2, U. S. Army, 17 December 1944.

TO: All Officers and Enlisted men of the Division.

It is a great pleasure to transmit to the officers and men of the 2d Infantry Division this well deserved commendation. I wish to add my own appreciation for the courage, stamina and fortitude which has carried you forward from victory to victory. With just pride in another job well done, I again salute you.

W. M. ROBERTSON,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS V CORPS
United States Army
Office of the Commanding General

1 January 1945

My dear Robertson:

I wish to express to you and the members of your command my appreciation and commendation for the fine job you did in preventing the enemy from carrying out his plans to break through the V Corps sector and push on to the Meuse River. Not only did your command assist in effectively frustrating that particular part of the plan, but it also inflicted such heavy losses on the enemy that he was unable to carry out other contemplated missions in other sectors of the Allied front.

General Von Manteuffel, Commander of the Fifth Panzer Army, stated in the address to his troops prior to the attack that "Our ground mission must be continuous; otherwise we will not achieve our goal". Due, in part, to the 2nd Infantry Division, this ground mission has not been continuous, and he will not achieve his goal.

My sincere thanks for all that you have done for the Allied cause during 1944, and best wishes for even greater and more decisive successes during 1945.

Sincerely,

/s/ Gerow
/t/ L. T. GEROW,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

Commanding General,
2nd Infantry Division,
APO 2, United States Army.

HEADQUARTERS V CORPS
APO 305
Office of the Commanding General

7 March 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding General, 2d Infantry Division, APO 2, U. S. Army.

1. On 13 December 1944, while the 2d Infantry Division was in the midst of an offensive operation aimed toward the capture of Dam No. 5 on the Urft River, the now historic German counteroffensive struck a formidable blow on the V Corps front. To the northwest in the Monschau area, heavy enemy attacks were received on 16 December, and to the south the 99th Infantry Division was attacked by powerful armored and infantry forces. Serious penetrations were made in the 99th Infantry Division sector in the Krinkelt-Bullingen-Butgenbach area. It became necessary to suspend your attack and to intersperse 2d Infantry Division units with elements of the 99th Infantry Division along the general line - Rocherath-Krinkelt-Wirtfeld-Butgenbach.

2. Due to the rapid movement of 2d Infantry Division units into the line and stubborn and courageous fighting on the part of all troops engaged, the Elsenborn hinge of the Corps front, "Purple Heart Corner", was held against a series of furious enemy assaults. This spirit of courageous defense was demonstrated all along the line and the desperate enemy efforts to break through and seize control of the Elsenborn plateau and the important road net extending to the north and northeast were frustrated.

3. Following the defeat of the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes Salient, the 2d Infantry Division resumed the offensive on 30 January 1945, retaking the towns of Wirtfeld, Krinkelt and Rocherath and generally restoring the line as it existed prior to 16 December 1944. The attack was continued successfully, resulting in the capture of Harperscheid, Ettelscheid, Bronsfeld, Hellenthal, Scheuren and the high ground along the west bank of the Urft River overlooking Schleiden. The operations of the 2d Infantry Division during this period contributed greatly to the success of V Corps in capturing the series of dams on the Roer and Urft Rivers.

4. During these actions, the 2d Infantry Division inflicted upon the enemy heavy losses in personnel and equipment. The magnificent defensive stand at "Purple Heart Corner", blunting the fury of the hostile attack and protecting the critical Eupen-Malmedy road, cannot be praised too highly.

5. My personal thanks and appreciation to the 2d Infantry Division for its noteworthy and commendable achievements during the period 12 December 1944 - 12 February 1945.

C. R. HUEBNER,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS V CORPS
APO 305
Office of the Commanding General

29 May 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding General, 2d Infantry Division, APO 2, U.S. Army.

1. The 2d Infantry Division was part of the V Corps at the time of the invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944. It rejoined this command 13 December 1944 and continued to serve with the V Corps until the cessation of hostilities on 9 May 1945.

2. The brilliant accomplishments of your troops have been a source of pride and pleasure to everyone who has served with them. The heroic stand of the 2d Infantry Division at the Elsenborn Corner during the battle of the Ardennes in December 1944 will be numbered among the greatest achievements of the European campaign. The personal efforts of yourself and the officers and men of your command in that battle greatly influenced the tide of subsequent operations on the Western front.

3. The skillful execution of operations by the 2d Infantry Division in capturing the Schleiden-Gemund position enabled the V Corps to break the German defensive dispositions west of the Rhine and vitally contributed to the success of the First and Third Armies in their advance to that great river. The operations of your command preliminary to the V Corps breaking out of the Remagen bridgehead, its subsequent support of the 9th Armored Division in the race to close the Ruhr pocket, the advance on Leipzig and finally the march into Czechoslovakia, were executed in a manner characteristic of the work of masters in the art of warfare.

4. We do not know what the future holds, but I sincerely hope that any coming combat operations which may be in store again will find the wearers of "The Indianhead" with the V Corps.

/s/ C. R. Huebner
/t/ C. R. HUEBNER,
Major General, U.S. Army,
Commanding.



"I KNEW SOME; SOME I SAW; PART OF IT I WAS."

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70

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