

19TH ARMORED



INFANTRY BATTALION

COMBAT HISTORY

OF

19TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION

OCTOBER 12TH, 1944 TO MAY 9TH, 1945

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I THE TRIP ACROSS AND MARITIME ALPS CAMPAIGN	1
CHAPTER II FIRST DRIVE TO THE SIEGFRIED INTO GERMANY	8
CHAPTER III BATTLE OF SARRIENSBERG—GOETZENBRUCK . .	16
CHAPTER IV BATTLE OF HATTEN	33
CHAPTER V REORGANIZATION AND DEFENSE OF ALSACE . .	46
CHAPTER VI SECOND DRIVE INTO GERMANY AND THE RHINE	58
CHAPTER VII FIGHT FOR LOHR AND GEMUNDEN AND DASH FOR HAMMELBURG	66
CHAPTER VIII THE "MASTER RACE" IN HAND	75
CHAPTER IX INVENTORY	93
THE SEVENTH ARMY INFANTRY COMPANY (NUMBER 4, PROVISIONAL)	97

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion, 14th Armored Division. Necessarily there can be mentioned in this story only a few of the many acts of heroism which were made during our campaign in France and Germany. The long months of training for the task ahead under the fine leadership of Lt. Col. Forrest B. Alspach, who gave his life for his country, contributed immensely to the successful accomplishments of our assigned missions. To have participated with you, men of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion, in establishing such a good record, has been the greatest privilege of my life.

We must not stop here. Upon returning to civilian life, it is my hope that the same spirit which drove you onward to your achievements in this war will cause you to take the lead in your communities in doing everything possible to make our country a better place in which to live and promote international peace so that our heroic dead shall not have died in vain.

FOREST T. GREEN
Lt. Colonel, Commanding.

DEDICATION

To the fighting men and service elements of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion, whose spirit, courage, and heroism in the field of battle place them among the nations great, it is a true example to a doubting world that a liberty-loving, free thinking man can and will fight and die for his freedom and rights!

These men made history—this book is only an attempt to disclose a small portion of what they did and to act in a small way as a reminder or a guide to their many deeds. No book could even begin to reflect all the actions that took place or even a small part of them. There are incidents too numerous to mention that are as great and greater than those narrated here—some known only by those who gave their lives, and others that still can be told.

It is a desire and the intent that this book be accepted by our men as just a reminder, a keepsake, or treasured souvenir of an act in which they played a strong part—the conversion of a war-torn, barbaric, world back to a state of Godliness and normalcy, that all civilization might continue in its right to "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness".

WALTER R. DICKSON
1st Lt., Infantry.

WRITTEN BY
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Company "B"

Pfc. James R. Benzinger.

Company "C"

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S/Sgt. Joseph Thibedeau.

Pfc. Henry Jib.

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CHAPTER I

THE TRIP ACROSS AND MARITIME ALPS CAMPAIGN

His knees were a little shaky that Thursday afternoon of 12 October 1944, as Sgt. Jack B. Mooney of Company "A", staggering under the burden of his pack, horseshoe roll, carbine, duffle bag, and a box or two of company records, dragged himself up the gangplank to be the first man of the battalion to board the USS "Le Jeune" at Staten Island. His were not the only knees shaking that, and the following day, as there were 1015 officers and enlisted men of the battalion who followed him aboard with the same bewildered uncertain feelings. "A" and "B" Companies went aboard the 12th, followed by "C", Hq. and Hq. Co., Service Company and Medical Detachment the next afternoon, 13 October.

The day had finally come, and yet the realization of the long awaited climb aboard was not quite so exciting as anticipated. Possibly the more sober feelings of all could be attributed to those seemingly tons of equipment each had to carry when marching to the train at Camp Shanks, hanging on to it during the train ride to the Staten Island Ferry, and then to the pier for a good wait before the draggy trek up to the mile-long gangplank. Brave soldiers though we thought we were, it was hard to keep from swallowing deep, and we yearned to bend down and kiss the precious ground... the ground we knew would be so long before we could touch again, and some would never see again. There were no cheering crowds, no pomp and glory as we filed aboard one by one, trying to hold the piles of equipment together and grab the slips given to each of us as we scrambled on up the plank, and also sounding off by name in passing the checker.

Spirits had been aided somewhat by the candy, doughnuts, and coffee furnished by the Red Cross on the pier, but nothing then could have satisfied the real empty feeling we had.

Each man went straight to his bunk upon going aboard; gladly, too, after carrying that weight around all day. Minds were very busy then thinking of everything in the past, the loved ones left behind; and when would we be back home again? Where are we going? What will the trip be like? When will the ship pull out?

The "Le Jeune" not only carried our battalion but also the 68th Armored Infantry Battalion, 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion, Division Band, a tank destroyer battalion, and another separate tank battalion, all of whom loaded on the ship the afternoon of 13 October, after we were aboard. We, however, were to furnish the ship's details, with "A" Company as ship guard, "B" Company as mess personnel, and our other companies assisting when necessary. Colonel Hudelson of Combat Command Reserve

was commander of all army troops aboard, and from his office emanated all orders, instructions, and plans of coordination between Army-Navy personnel.

We were loaded, ready, and also afraid we were going to sail that "Friday the Thirteenth", but it wasn't until the next day, Saturday, 14 October, that we pulled away from the pier at 1600 into the bay ready to go. We picked up our convoy in the bay and moved out, passing "The Lady", who looked as though, she was waving and bidding us "Bon Voyage", while she and the unforgettable sights of the bay and New York Harbor faded out of sight as we headed for the open sea. There were now but few men left who doubted we would go overseas.

Everyone began adjusting and making himself as comfortable as possible and in short order became seasoned seamen.

The "Le Jeune" was a converted, captured, German Luxury Liner, which afforded as good accommodations as could be expected with the overload. We found later it wasn't bad sleeping after all, even though your buddy's foot was in your face and the air a little hot and stale. You could take showers and promenade on the decks except at specified times. The weather was good most of the time and the sea fairly calm. We were very fortunate to have the Division Band aboard to play daily concerts on both the fore and aft decks. Meals were fairly good, but it took a few days to get accustomed to beans for breakfast. There were regular daily church services and a good many were allowed to attend some of the Navy crew's movies. Letter-writing was at its greatest peak, for there was plenty of time with not much to do, and hearts and minds were full of dreams of the past and the uncertainty of the future. The Navy lingo was absorbed in short order, with the constant piping of "Smoking lamp is out --- sweepers man your brooms --- clear the decks --- all troops lay below to your assigned quarters --- and all hands man your battle stations"; but then there was need of many strange occurrences to break the monotony of the trip.

The two weeks dragged and at times rolled along; yet they were fairly pleasant. There were some who had the usual seasickness; plenty of wild rumors were floating around, and the usual inevitable bitching, was an indication that the general morale was good. The first evidence of our destination was the sight of land, whereupon we were notified by the ship's speaker system that we were entering the Strait of Gibraltar, Spain on the left and Africa on the right. As we passed by, the "Rock" stood in all its glory, and the Navy's speaker system added to the visual splendor by giving a regular "Cook's Tour" lecture of points of interest.

Recapturing the thought of a map, we realized we were now some distance from home.

On into the blue Mediterranean we sailed for a couple of days before finally learning our destination was officially Marseilles. It was the day before landing in Marseilles that we encountered our roughest sea in a 55 mph wind and an experience one only likes to look back upon. We sailed into the Harbor of Marseilles at 1500, 28 October, 1944, just fourteen days after leaving New York.

Port facilities were crowded because of numerous ships already in dock, and previous bombings had damaged a good portion beyond use. We stayed aboard ship that night and started debarking at 1630, 29 October. Companies "B" and "C", Hq. and Hq. Co., and the Medical Detachment left the ship and marched to our new "bivouac area" at Delta Base Station, Marseilles, France. Service and "A" Companies remained behind to clean the ship and then debarked at 1930 that evening.

That march to the area was one never to be forgotten. Fortunately, we were not compelled to carry duffle bags, but the weight was still almost unbearable for the approximately eight mile march, all of which was uphill, and, after the two weeks boat ride, our legs weren't in shape for long marches. It was here we first learned from the kids such terms as "Chocolat" and "Cigarette for papa". Upon arrival at the bivouac area, tents were pitched immediately by those with enough energy to put them up, while others just fell to the ground and slept despite the rain and mud. This was our first night on foreign soil. "A" Company followed the wrong road after someone pulled the road guides before they came by, walking some four extra miles before the error was discovered. Trucks, ambulances, peeps and any available vehicle came to pick them up.

Certainly it wasn't the nicest place in the world to bivouac, due to the abundance of rain and cold weather, which is not so conducive to outdoor life; but we managed to get by. Company streets were formed, tents were lined up in an orderly bivouac area, and everyone proceeded to make himself as comfortable as possible for what was to come. The following period of two weeks was spent in straightening out TAT equipment, issuance of clothing and equipment, drawing of vehicles, rigid maintenance, welding racks on vehicles, cleaning of weapons, getting basic ammunition loads, more training and the millions of things necessary in preparation for combat. It wasn't all work, as there were many passes to Marseilles and Aix, and orientation on how to act and what to expect in France. There, many again learned it could not all be drunk in just a few days, as drinks were plentiful.

We were alerted for a special move of some kind, and, after a scramble to get equipment together and loaded, we pulled out of our Delta Base Station in Marseilles at 0430, 12 November, destination Nice, to the joy, surprise, and curiosity of all. Our motor march took us along the beautiful coastline, the Riviera, and through Cannes to Nice, arriving at 1700 that afternoon. The column pulled off the side of the road in the northern part of Nice and bivouaced there for the night, but all were tired, and any place would have been welcome just to lie down. Here the first signs of actual combat were seen when a truck pulled alongside and stopped for some reason. Curious G.I.'s pulled back the tarp, disclosing a Kraut and a G.I. that had been killed.

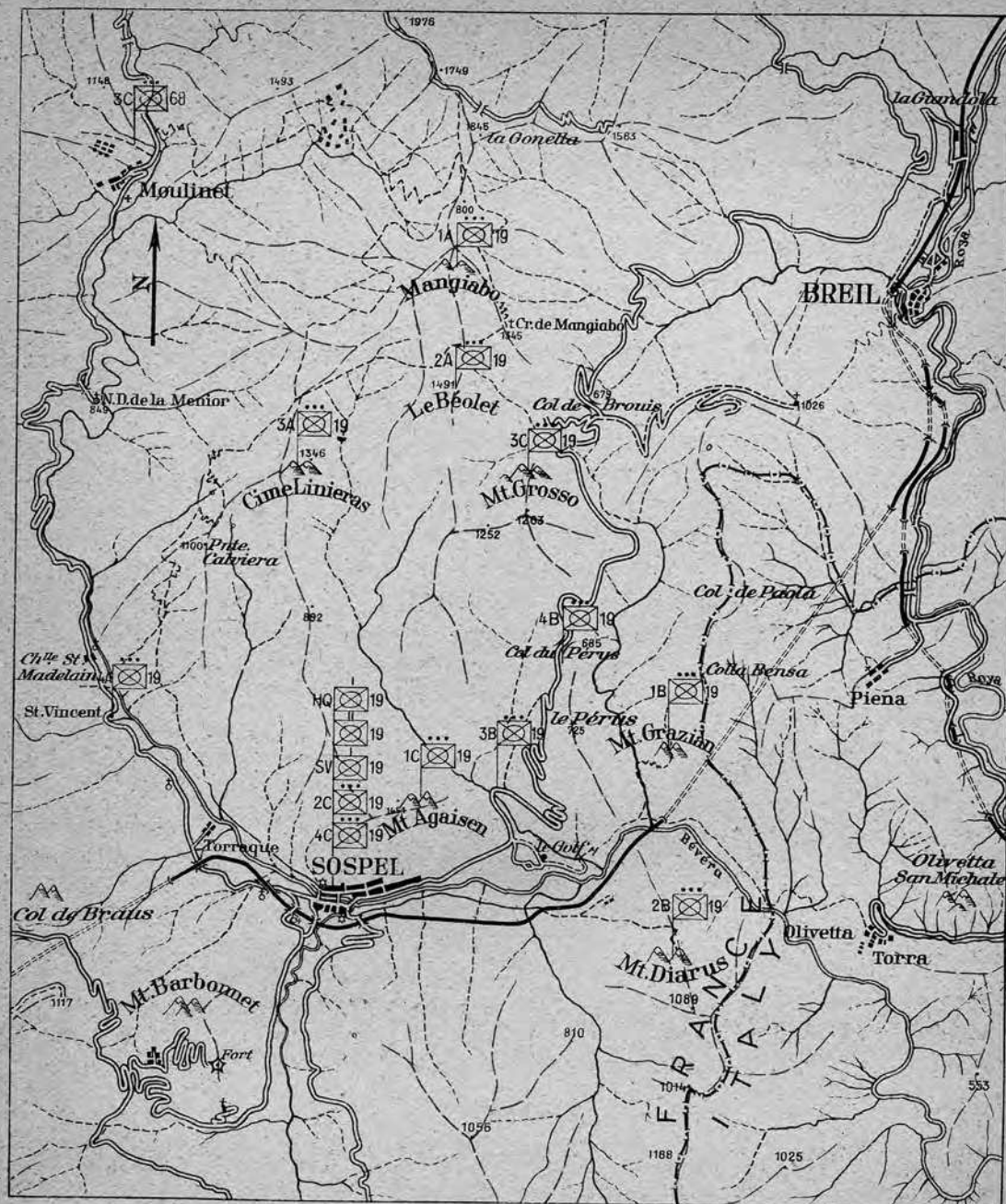
Next day the column started moving in the morning to L'Escarene up in the mountains. On arrival the bivouac area wasn't exactly what we had been accustomed to despite all our funny experiences, for tents were pitched in very scant spots on the side of the mountain. Our stay in L'Escarene was but for the night, as we started

to move on to our objective, Sospel, the next day, 14 November. It was a hard, mounted march up through the rugged mountains, with their treacherous turns, and was a challenge to any driver. At the top of the mountains, at Col de Braus, just before the long drive into the valley and Sospel, we came under long-range observation of the enemy for the first time. They backed that observation up very well too by adjusting fire on you with artillery at any point. Track vehicles were left in L'Escarene, and our company and Service Company trucks were used to transport personnel and equipment over the mountains to Sospel. Since there was too much artillery fire to move a column intact, the trucks were used to carry larger groups by shuttling in five minute intervals.

Our mission was to relieve the 517th Airborne Regt. (a part of the 51st Airborne Task Force H, Nice, France), which was occupying a defensive position along the French-Italian border. We were attached to Combat Command Reserve under Col. Hudelson, with headquarters in Nice, and operating under the 44th AAA Brigade, also with headquarters in Nice. The composition of CCR was the 19th and 68th A.I.B., with the 19th to occupy positions on the mountains around Sospel, France, and the 68th on the north side around Peira Cava, which was a tremendous area for our battalions to occupy, as we were relieving areas occupied by the equivalent of two regiments.

It was a slow, tedious job moving into the mountains and our positions, as troops were dismounted in Sospel and moved by foot and pack mule up to their towering positions on the mountains. "Mule Skinners" were at a premium, as our T/O called for none, and mules were then our only means of transportation of food and supplies to positions. The M-8 Assault Guns were driven to the area occupied shortly after by "C" Company. The M-8's were driven up the treacherous mountain trails at night during a hard rain, later described by one of the drivers as a trail he wouldn't even drive a peep on in daylight. The next morning, 15 November, after relieving the 75 Pack Howitzers of the 51st ABTF, the Assault Gun Platoon registered their guns and fired what is claimed to be the first round fired by the 14th AD against the enemy. These three guns took over positions occupied and defended previously by 16 guns.

Company "A" took up positions with its 1st Platoon on Mont Mangiabo, 2nd Platoon on Le Beolet, 3rd Platoon and the Company C.P. on Cime Linieras, and the AT Platoon near St. Vincent. Company "B" set up positions with its 1st Platoon along the ridge from Colla Paola to Colla Bensa, 2nd Platoon on Mt. Diaurus, AT Platoon on Le Perus, the 3rd Platoon being initially used to carry supplies and run patrols. Company "C" took positions with its 1st and 3rd Platoons on Mt. Crossa, and 2nd and AT Platoons remaining in Sospel as support and C.P. guards. The Battalion C.P. was located in Sospel, as was Service Company and Hq. Company C.P. The Mortar Platoon and Machine-Gun Platoon was attached to "C" Company, and the I & R Platoon remained in Sospel for battalion use in patrolling. The Medical Detachment was split in three sections, one attached to "A" Company, one to "C" Company, and the Base Station in Sospel.



It was extremely difficult to take over and readjust positions from the unit relieved, but arriving early at the positions, gave us opportunity to gain necessary information for proper relief. Patrolling was instigated by each company immediately, and there was constant effort to keep supplies coming to positions by foot and pack mule. There were miles and miles of wire running to these positions that continually had to be repaired, and they served a twofold purpose in aiding as a guide to all moving around from position to position at night. The service company trucks ran a never ceasing train of supplies from Nice into Sospel over the mountainous roads that had to be driven under blackout conditions all the way down from Col de Braus.

The main line of resistance ran generally along the French-Italian border down the Roya River Valley, with the Germans occupying the mountains to the east. The rugged mountainous country can best be described by the fact that the altitude of Mt. Grossa was 1263 meters; the other peaks were just as high and even higher, while Sospel itself was only 400 meters. The Germans were reported to have done a very thorough job of mining and booby-trapping the entire area as well as isolated houses, deserted Maginot fortifications, and all other installations. Every step off the beaten paths was taken with hesitation and trepidation. There were numerous abandoned Maginot forts of incredible size, with the latest and most complete equipment. We occupied those parts that were practical for protection from weather and artillery fire.

Intermittent artillery duels and daily patrolling kept everyone on the alert. The mortars and assault guns were constantly laying down harassing and called-for fire. The rugged peaks made perfect observation posts, yet by the same token they limited the effect of fire. From O.P.'s we could watch our own patrols meandering down the mountainside into the valley and frequently see German patrols passing our own patrols not too far apart. S/Sgt. Howard Nick Johnson of the 1st rifle squad, 3rd Platoon, "C" Company took one patrol out, and encountered enemy machine-gun fire that pinned him down. A flanking move failed to reveal the gun or gunner, but the patrol managed to get away to continue its mission of investigating a pillbox in the valley below. The patrol stopped on the edge of a 100 yard clearing, surrounding the objective, while the patrol leader proceeded across the clearing alone into the pillbox as the rest covered him. As he jumped through the pillbox window, he barely missed a booby trap. The pillbox was unoccupied at the time, but there were communications lines intact which Sgt. Johnson cut, and also other evidence that it had just been abandoned. This patrol, as were many others, was made just across the boundary into Italy.

On 18 November the battalion suffered its first casualties when a shell landed near a group of men from "C" Company, killing one and injuring four. One of the men, T/5 John W. Smith of the Medical Detachment, who rendered first aid to the others though wounded himself by the same round, received the battalion's first Purple Heart. The 57 mm AT guns had been pulled into position near the 3rd Platoon of "C" Company, but the effect of their fire was rather limited.

Sgt. Maurice Shortt of "A" Company decided that he was going to find the Krauts when he went on his morning patrol to the north. He pushed beyond the usual limits of his route, and as he was leading the patrol near La Gonella, a machine-gun opened up. The patrol withdrew, crossing a fallen telephone pole on the way. As Sgt. Shortt climbed over the pole, the broadest part of his anatomy was sliced by the heavy fire. He assembled his patrol in defilade and told them he would make a break across an exposed portion of the trail leading home. If he drew fire, the men were to leave him and return to our lines by going down a steep ravine while he distracted the Germans. Shortt drew the enemy fire, and the other four members of the patrol took the alternate return route. He moved around the east face of Mont Mangiabo, drawing fire from the 4th Platoon on Le Beolet. He then climbed over the top of Mangiabo and came down into his own platoon area. For his actions, Sgt. Shortt was later awarded the Silver Star, believed to be the first awarded in the division.

Contact patrols were continually run between companies and the 68th A.I.B. on the left. "B" Company patrolled the battalion front on the east, extending from Cola Paola to Mt. Diarus in order to keep enemy patrols from penetrating our lines. S/Sgts. Ronald C. Henwood and Paul D. Brown were credited with leading the first "B" Company patrol on 16 November. The large area and difficult terrain made it impossible to avoid some penetration, but there was never anything but small patrols that did get through, so little damage was caused. "A" Company secured the left or north flank of the battalion, maintaining contact patrols with friendly units and patrolling the enemy lines. The thoroughly booby-trapped area was not only difficult but dangerous to move around in, and the fact that everyone was trigger happy in his new role of combat soldier added to the instability of the situation. There were a few occasions of our troops unintentionally firing at each other but fortunately no casualties. One small German patrol managed to slip through into Sospel, succeeding only in scaring everyone including the civilians by telling that they would very shortly retake the town. They disappeared as slyly and quickly as they came into town, but they didn't retake the town or attempt to while we were there.

Though most of the action was confined to artillery duels, patrolling, and small skirmishes, it was our first combat experience and we learned to distinguish the sounds of artillery and when to duck, as well as the "crack and burp" of the German automatic weapons. We learned here also that you could actually smell a Kraut like any other snake. Casualties were fortunately light, with six for the period, one of which died of his wounds.

We were alerted 20 November in preparation to move out of the area, as we were to be relieved by another unit. The unit to relieve us was to be an element of the already famous 100th Japanese-American Infantry Regiment. Again the difficult task of moving down from positions on the mountains was begun, as relief was effected, moving by foot and pack mules down into Sospel where trucks shuttled

the battalion back to their vehicles in L'Escarene on 23 November, and where a weary, hungry bunch of men late that night devoured a belated Thanksgiving turkey dinner. Service Company trucks efficiently moved 900 men and 120 tons of equipment during the 48-hour period allotted to effect the relief. There was little rest that night though, as packing and loading of vehicles continued preparatory for the move early next morning.

At 0430 next morning, 24 November, we moved out of L'Escarene in convoy, back through Nice and Cannes to St. Raphael, France, arriving at 1800 that evening, where we were loaded on trains for a move to Chatel, France. All track vehicles were loaded and blocked on flatcars, after a tough all-night job by everyone. "A" Company received one accidental casualty, who was evacuated 30 miles, plasma being administered enroute. General purpose vehicles with essential personnel were to make the move by convoy. Personnel to go by rail loaded in the 40 and 8 (40 hommes et 8 chevaux) boxcars of World War I fame to the amusement, amazement, and discomfort of all. The motor convoy moved out at 0600, 25 November. The bulk of the battalion moving by rail, loaded on three separate trains departing from St. Raphael at 1830, 24 November; 0200, 25 November; 2300, 26 November. The motor convoy took the route, Aix, Avignon, and Dijon to Chatel, a total distance of 600 miles, arriving in Chatel, France, after a 2½ day trip at 1900, 27 November. The three trains moving along at anything but a fast rate of speed, pulled into Thaon, France on the 28th and 30th of November, after a weary, unforgettable ride. From the yards in Thaon, troops and vehicles were moved to Chatel. A few managed to get a little sleep, but with the hustle of trying to unload vehicles and equipment and reorganize it was incidental. From Chatel the companies all moved into the woods around Porteaux for a general hasty reorganization of the battalion.

CHAPTER II

FIRST DRIVE TO THE SIEGFRIED INTO GERMANY

On the morning of 2 December, we moved by motor convoy to the vicinity of Lixhausen, France. Bn. Hq., Hq. Co., Medical Detachment, and Service Company were located in Lixhausen; Company "A" was billeted in Wickersheim, France; Company "B" in Ringendorf; and Company "C" in Ettendorf. Security was put out in each of the villages, and we quickly learned how to billet ourselves as comfortably as possible. Time still had been inadequate to completely reorganize and get our vehicles, weapons, and equipment in shape for the apparent action we would soon see. Everyone worked continually to get in shape, with rigid maintenance a priority. The roar of artillery and flashes were very audible and close by. Several lone enemy planes at different times dived and strafed positions in the area, but little or no damage resulted.

"C" Company was alerted for an immediate movement on 6 December to reinforce elements of the 94th Reconnaissance Battalion, who were having trouble in Gamsheim. They moved out in a rush, picking up their artillery on the way, arriving in Kilstett where the CP for the 94th Rcn. was located. Here they received orders for the attack on Gamsheim. In the meantime, "B" Company was alerted and moved to the next town, Hoerd, preparatory to the attack and moving then on into Kilstett. Meanwhile, CCB released "A" Company back to our battalion control, and that evening the remainder of the battalion moved into Kilstett under cover of darkness, setting up headquarters there. Plans were made to jump off at 0700, 7 December, with the dike east of Kilstett as the LD. It was still dark as the companies jumped off that morning on foot, after a brief artillery barrage on Gamsheim. "B" Company, followed by "C", moved from Kilstett to the east behind the dikes for a covered approach to the town, with elements of the 94th Rcn. moving straight from Kilstett toward Bettenhofen along the main road. After reaching positions almost east of Gamsheim, and still unnoticed by the enemy, with "B" Company on the right and "C" Company on the left, they started the attack on the town across the open field.

"B" Company, well dispersed, scrambled over the dikes and headed for town through corn and cabbage fields, crossing a stream that soaked all as they crossed. On the right were pillboxes of the Maginot Line, but fortunately they were flooded and undefended. A few mortar rounds began to come in, but no one at the time was hit. As they edged into town, the tempo of mortars and artillery increased rapidly, wounding two men, so everyone hit the ground. Capt. Thomas E. Conboy, seeing the

plight of staying in the open fields, gave orders to rush the houses, whereupon the company moved into houses in the edge of town under cover. Pvt. Ruggieri and Pfc. Bernotas, at their own risk, went out into the open field under fire to bring the two wounded men into one of the houses, where first aid was rendered. There was confusion after the initial rush, and the sound of small arms was like rain on the roof as we fired into the houses occupied by the enemy. The attack was a complete surprise to the enemy. As we had come in from their rear, the cooks and bakers were the first prisoners taken, and from them we learned the town was defended by one tank and a company of infantry. Civilians were running out of houses waving white flags, cheering and crying. The company was scattered out and had to be reorganized, while the mortars and artillery continued pounding in, inflicting a number of casualties, including medics. A bridge had been blown, and since it was impossible to evacuate the wounded, Pfc. Harold Chandler, the only medic available, having so many wounded to care for without evacuation facilities, set up his own aid station in one of the houses in the edge of town. The slow process of edging forward in "B" Company area continued, and by dark their assigned area was taken and securely outposted.

"C" Company on the left had jumped off from the dikes, with the first platoon on the left and second on the right. The third platoon was held in reserve at the dikes. For fifteen-hundred yards, the company crossed a low level plain without being sighted by the enemy. About five-hundred yards from the town, the second platoon mortars set up and fired six rounds. This was to cover "B" Company while they made a turn to come in on the east end of town. The company advance was held up momentarily by flooded areas, but got under way again when Pfc. Albert Booher led off by wading through waist-deep water. The enemy opened up with small arms fire when the men crossed the water. No casualties were inflicted. The two platoons entered the town, and took their first four prisoners almost immediately. Good progress was made, with rifle squads leading on each side of the street, followed by mortar and machine-gun squads.

A few hundred yards up the main road "C" Company had to cross a bridge that proved to be quite an obstacle in taking the town. The second platoon machine-gun squad set up a base of fire, as the rest of the platoon and the first platoon started to run across the bridge. Parts of the rifle squad had crossed when a withering hail of enemy machine gun and sniper fire opened up. Four men, including the platoon sergeant and platoon runner, were wounded in the first burst. Several men were also pinned down on the bridge. Each time someone moved a sniper opened fire. In trying to bring machine-gun fire to bear on the sniper, four more men, including the platoon leader Lt. Alvie E. Nixon, were wounded. Medics were called, so T/5 John W. Smith came forward, and though seeing the danger of enemy fire, ran out on the bridge, and began administering first aid to Lt. Nixon. The sniper shot and wounded Smith, who bandaged himself and continued to give aid until wounded again. Again he bandaged himself, and then helped Lt. Nixon

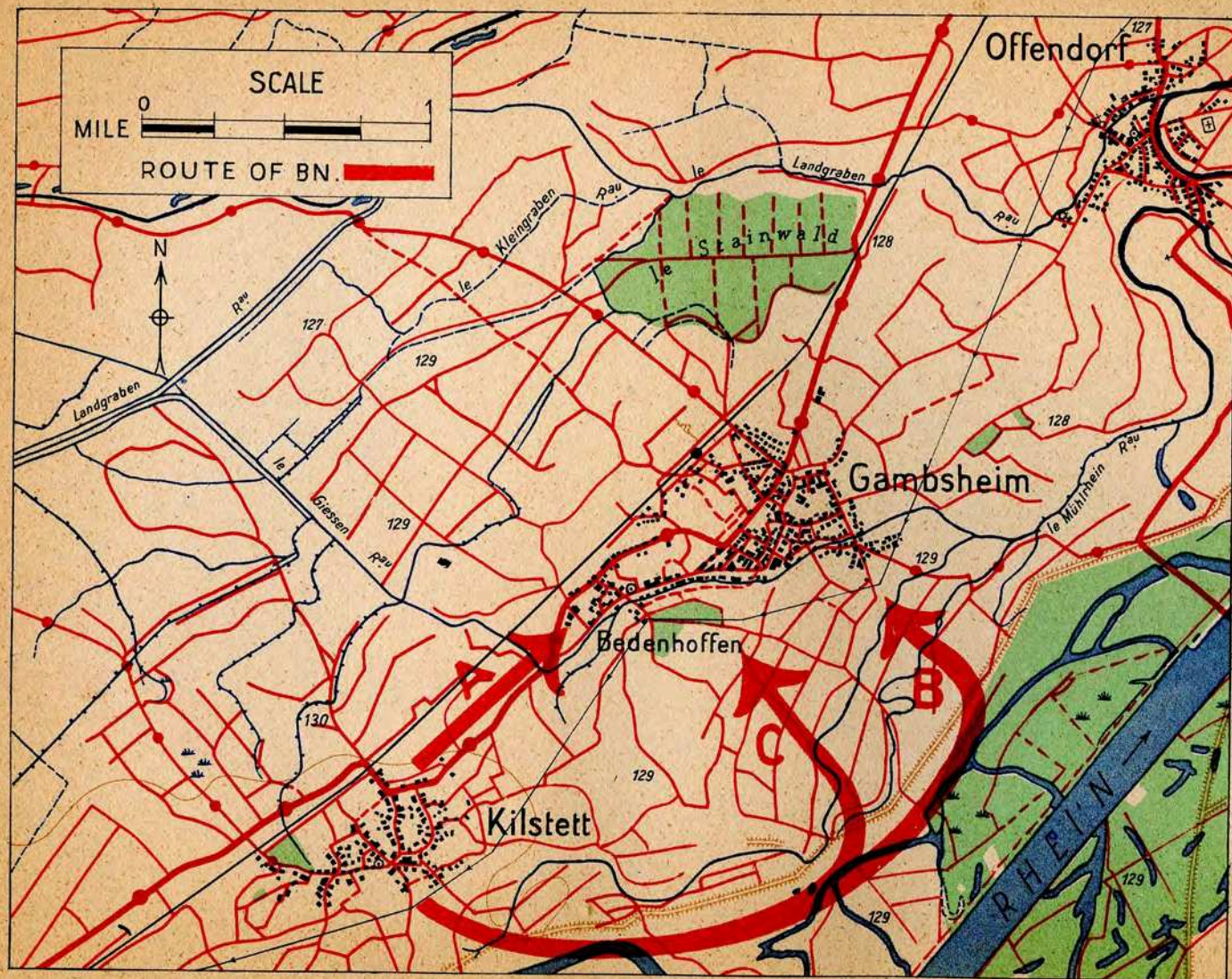
to cover at the end of the bridge. Enemy mortar and artillery then began pouring in as T/Sgt. Robert E. Lingle assumed command of the platoon, effecting reorganization. After calling for mortar and bazooka fire along with machine-gun fire, the enemy was forced to withdraw. The advance continued slowly, without further casualties for a while, but several of the enemy were killed or wounded. Meanwhile the first platoon of "C", having helped clear the enemy at the bridge, was having its troubles with a sniper. Lt. Robert W. Eckert dashed ahead entering a building containing the sniper. Out he came with the sniper, but on his way back he stopped to recover a machine-gun abandoned because of lack of men to operate it, when another sniper shot and severely wounded him. The prisoner he had brought back will never be able to tell his folks what happened then, thanks to the third platoon. The company continued clearing houses until overtaken by darkness, when outposts of the occupied portion of town were set up for the night.

That night as "B" and "C" Companies were outposting their areas, radio contact had been lost, whereupon the wire crews, under cover of darkness, laid a line to "C" Company, which was the first contact other than runner for several hours. Engineers built a bridge during the night on the main road into Gamsheim so vehicles could cross the next morning. Ammunition and some rations were carried to the companies that night by drivers and cooks, and many casualties were evacuated back during the night along the main road up to reinforce "C" Company, which had been hit hard. The night was comparatively quiet with only intermittent enemy mortar and artillery fire. The men were cold, tired, hungry, and unable to rest, as everyone was on guard or assisting in getting ready for the next day's attack.

At daylight the morning of 8 December the two companies found that the town was nearly clear, as the bulk of enemy troops had retreated to Offendorf during the late afternoon and evening, but continual artillery kept coming in, and two enemy planes strafed the town with little damage. House to house search was made, so the town was completely cleared by noon, with a casualty list of 31. Twenty-seven prisoners were taken and an unknown number killed and wounded. Rations were brought up, and the bulk of the men ate for the first time in two days.

The battalion was relieved early that afternoon by elements of the 94th Rcn. The troops marched by foot back to Kilstett, where they loaded on vehicles and proceeded by motor, during darkness, back to the original areas around Lixhausen; here the men rested, cleaned up, and got equipment back in shape again.

On the morning of 13 December, CCB, consisting of 19th A.I.B., 48th Tank Bn., and supported by 499th AFA Bn., was given the mission of moving to and seizing Soultz-Sous-Forêts, and then to proceed to Salmbach, France, on the German border. The order of march was the 19th, 48th, CCB Res., and 499th AFA. "A"—19th was attached to the 48th, and "A"—48th was attached to the 19th, with the 1st Platoon of "C" Company attached to CCB. The battalion, with "B" Company as advance guard, moved out by motor convoy at 0130, passing through Hagenau Forest at daylight without resistance. The column proceeded through Schwabweiler



and Niederbetschdorf with only slight opposition on into Hatten, where the civilians lined the streets, waving, shouting with joy, and serving drinks and throwing apples to everyone. After the advance guard was well into the heart of Hatten, civilians warned us that the enemy held the next town on our route, Buhl.

Both "B" and "C" dismounted, with two platoons of "B" starting on the road to Stundweiler, and "C" starting down the road to Buhl. Both upon reaching the lowland along the creek between Hatten and Buhl, came under heavy mortar and machine-gun fire, pinning them to the ground in the swampy flooded area. Fire was coming in from Oberroedern, Stundweiler, and Buhl, and was causing considerable damage, as it was well directed fire. Our artillery, mortars, assault guns, and tanks pounded these towns, but did not succeed in knocking out the guns that continually pounded our positions. Night overtook us, and the knowledge gained from reconnaissance revealed that the bridges to Stundweiler and Buhl were blown, so we would have to hold these positions until a bridge could be constructed to get our vehicles and tanks across. "C" Company was undergoing a tremendous barrage of mortar fire as they lay in the muddy half-frozen ground, with the platoons of "B" Company alongside them. Men were suffering from exposure and shell fire, but the bridgehead had to be established that night so the bridge could be constructed. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons of "C" Company, after the engineers had built a small foot bridge, crossed the creek and started digging in on the opposite side. The AT Platoon stayed on the south side of the bridge. Foxholes or any other cover at all was welcome, for the barrage kept coming in, but was nothing compared to the wet muddy ground. Water filled foxholes as quickly as they were dug, and casualties from exposure and shellfire continued at a high rate.

Permission was granted to CCB to release our "A" Company back to us to use for the night as relief for the men of "C" and "B" Companies who were so badly in need of medical aid. "A" Company reached us just before dawn in the morning—too late to do much good. The AT Platoon of "B", with cooks, drivers, and all other available men, early in the morning successfully relieved the men at the bridgehead, while the companies pulled back into Hatten, where the Medical Detachment had a warm house, with some food and coffee as well as medical supplies to care for the badly exposed. The men were resting and warming up as fast as possible, ready for continuation as soon as daylight came. During the early morning while it was daylight, engineers put the bridge in, ready for the crossing.

At daylight "B" Company dismounted, moved along the road from Hatten to Stundweiler, and took the town without opposition, as the enemy had just pulled out. They then continued on immediately to Buhl to meet "A" Company. "A" Company had jumped off from Hatten at the same time as "B", and proceeded into Buhl with slight opposition; "C" was held in reserve. Vehicles that had all been left in Hatten for the attack were called forward. The battalion mounted immediately and started off again for Salmbach, with "B" Company still as advance guard. "A" Company waited for its vehicles in Buhl, and rejoined the 48th Tank Bn. which proceeded

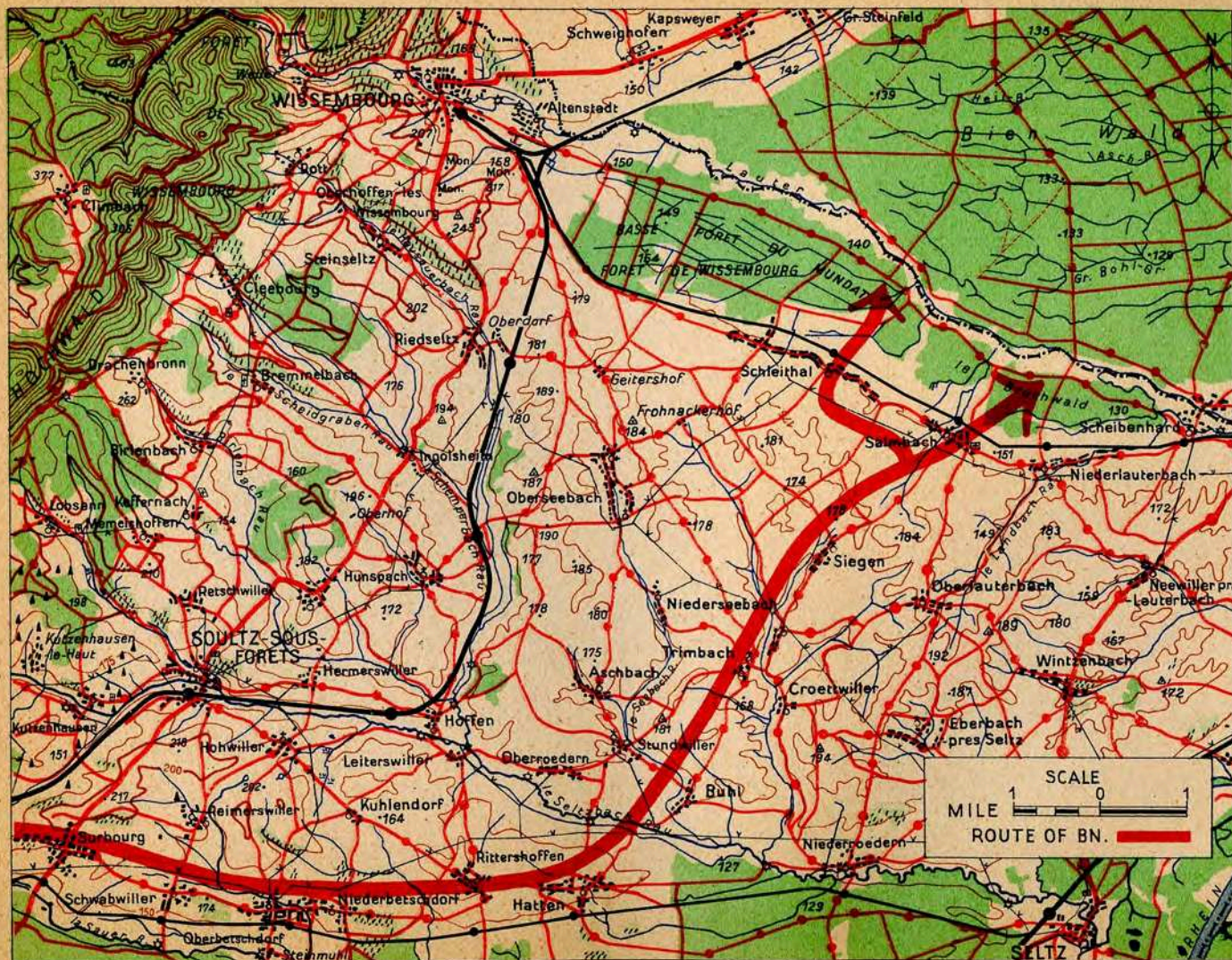
along the road to our east and parallel to our route to Salmbach. The enemy was reported to be retreating rapidly back into Germany, so we continued the drive as rapidly as possible.

Our column met no resistance until having passed through Siegen, where enemy machine-guns and mortars again opened up. "B" Company dismounted and, supported by Hq. Machine-Gun and Mortar Platoons, attacked the town along the left side of the road leading into town from the south, assisted by the 3rd Platoon of "A". Tanks were brought up, and the town was thoroughly shelled. The tanks fired direct at point targets and houses. The assault guns were set up along the road, and they also fired directly into town. "A" Company with the 48th Tank Bn. was at the same time moving into town along the road coming in from Oberlauterbach. Heavy enemy mortar fire, tank fire, and small arms fire were falling on our positions, but "A" Company's 2nd Platoon under Lt. Jack R. DeWitt, with tanks attached, skillfully entered and proceeded to clear the town. "B" Company also entered town, and with its tanks soon had cleared the rest of the town. The vehicles and the rest of the battalion, less Service Company, then moved on into Salmbach during darkness, and the battalion CP was set up there. The town was outposted for the night, with the aid of "A" Company. The enemy continually shelled the town intermittently through the night.

Our mission was to continue an attack and establish bridgeheads across the Lauter River into Germany. Plans were made to send platoon patrols to seize the crossings NE of Salmbach and Schleithal. The AT Platoon of "B" under Lt. George R. Irwin and the AT Platoon of "C" under Lt. Joseph M. Murphy started out shortly before daylight, but both had no more than gotten out of the edge of Salmbach when heavy mortar and artillery fire of almost incredible accuracy forced them back into town. An enemy observer with a radio who had been adjusting this fire was caught in Salmbach shortly afterwards. The bridgeheads still had to be established, and plans were made to make a general battalion attack after daylight, with companies to attack the positions the platoons' patrols were originally to have attacked.

During the afternoon, Pfc. Frank J. Bonanno of Company "A", using a compass and his ears, accurately located the mortars which were making life miserable in the town. To do this, he had to be in several exposed positions to hear the mortars fired, and on one occasion was in the target area. As a result of his work, the next time the mortars fired, a barrage of artillery silenced them for good.

Both "B" and "C" jumped off early the morning of the 15th in a coordinated attack supported by tanks, and were promptly met by a hail of small arms, mortar, and artillery fire. "B" Company was held up for some ten hours before being able to move across the open field toward the woods NE of Salmbach, astride again with the tanks. Smoke was called for, but it became so dense the tankers could not observe their fire; so they were forced to discontinue the immediate attack as the company continued its attack. The smoke was so thick the men had to walk at arms length



to keep contact, but the Lauter River was reached and the bridge found to be already blown. The AT Platoon was deployed to protect the crossroads, and the 1st and 3rd Platoons advanced on to the blown bridge, receiving heavy mortar fire, its effectiveness increased by tree bursts. The 3rd Platoon received a dozen casualties. Sgt. Joseph M. Minning, who had brought up rations in a jeep, evacuated the seriously injured back to Salmbach, and the others walked to the road where an ambulance picked them up. The other platoons also had their share of casualties, and T/5 Edwin A. Bullard, a medic aid man, left his foxhole during the heavy barrage to administer first aid, whereupon he was caught in the barrage and killed. The remainder of the sleepless night was spent in the cold, damp woods, where positions were consolidated.

"C" Company, in its attack, was at the same time having trouble, as they were pinned down by heavy mortar, small arms, and artillery fire. The weather was bitter cold and the ground wet, and men were dropping out from exposure. The company was unable to move across the open field, so pulled back on the south side of the railroad under cover. Here they were forced to remain under the shelling until midnight, when two platoons mounted on tanks and entered the east edge of Schleithal, after crashing several roadblocks. After a few minutes in the houses to warm up and grab what food was available, the company continued its attack on the road directly north toward the bridgesite. Two platoons protected the crossroads just short of the bridge. The AT Platoon went ahead to find the bridge was blown, so they dug in for the night. That same afternoon before "C" Company had moved into Schleithal, the 1st Platoon of "C" under Lt. Rexford H. Graves, with tanks attached, had already moved into Schleithal and cleared the remaining enemy troops.

Both bridges across the Lauter, where bridgeheads were to be established, being blown, it was necessary to get across the river to establish bridgeheads, where the engineers could build bridges. The next morning, 16 December, right at daybreak, "B" Company jumped off to cross the Lauter, and, under cover of tank and machine-gun fire, two scouts ran across an open field to the river's edge. They were followed shortly by the 2nd Platoon, carrying a rubber boat. Lt. Gray Thoron, Pvt. Robert J. Michael, and Pfc. James R. Benzingey scrambled into the boat, and are believed to be the first in the 14th Armored Division to cross the Lauter River into German soil. The 2nd Platoon proceeded to cross the river, and continued on for about one-half mile to a crossroad, where the area was outposted and a bridgehead firmly established. Engineers began constructing the bridge immediately, which was completed by noon ready for use. The next evening the AT Platoon relieved and outposted the bridgesite, supported by a tank. A German patrol armed with bazookas attempted to get the tank, but were halted by Pfc. Eli Plaxe at the farthest outpost. He was fired on and injured in the hip, but managed to throw grenades causing the enemy to withdraw. S/Sgt. Edward D. Collins immediately ran to cover Plaxe, and brought him back for first-aid treatment. Fire was brought into the woods where the enemy patrol had retreated to, followed by wild screams, so the patrol was assumed to be disposed of.

"C" Company that morning had also crossed the Lauter on a foot bridge built by engineers, and, with but little resistance, had firmly established a bridgehead in their area. Engineers built a vehicular bridge, but the approaches were under water so much that it was impractical for use.

Both companies left one platoon each at the crossings for the next several days, moving the remainder of their company back into Salmbach and Schleithal, and rotating the platoons on guard at the bridgeheads. The enemy had been pushed back from the Lauter River north into the woods and the edge of the Siegfried Line about two miles away. In retreating, they had done a thorough job of mining and booby-trapping the woods. The next few days were spent in rigid patrols by each of the companies for lateral contact and also to probe the woods north of the river. At one time, Lt. Russell T. Blair took his platoon of "B" Company about five miles into enemy territory to the edge of the Siegfried forts in order to gain information of the enemy, and then returned. The I & R Platoon was used extensively in patrolling, maintaining a constant patrol just on the north side and parallel to the river between the two bridgeheads. Engineers built another bridge across the Lauter about halfway between the original two bridges. The mortars and assault guns supported the battalion from positions in Salmbach and west of Salmbach.

Enemy planes came in one day to attack, but the thousands of rounds fired from our guns and attached AAA Platoon kept them away. Heavy Corps Artillery was brought up around our positions to pound the Siegfried Line, and they did a good job. It was here we first instigated the famous "Turkey Shoot", whereby all mortars, assault guns, artillery, tanks, .50 cal., and water-cooled machine-guns, at a designated time, fired for a short period of time into enemy positions. It was quite an effective display of fire-power to see, and was amazing to watch real armored fire-power turned loose at one time. No one could say how effective this firepower really was against the enemy, but certainly it achieved its mission creating diversion for them.

Company "A", attached to the 48th Tank Bn., assisted in outposting Salmbach and running numerous patrols. One 2nd Platoon patrol advancing through the woods was fired upon by enemy machine-guns, killing the patrol leader, Sgt. Harold D. Rudicel, and wounding Pfc. Albert E. Colby. T/5 Stanley Adams braved the fire to bring in the wounded man, while Pfc. Irwin Cox covered him with fire. One patrol (the battalion's first combat patrol) under Lt. Jack R. Dewitt spotted some German snipers ahead, and his men, after working their way around a heavily mined road-block, took up positions so they could fire on the enemy and drive them toward the rest of the platoon, where they would be easily picked off. A German machine-gun opened up, so Sgt. Mike Auer started firing his weapon with the rapidity of an automatic, keeping the machine-gun out of action as his men drew back, leaving Pfc. Oscar Vogt who was killed by a mine.

On 22 December, the commanding officer, Lt. Col. Forrest B. Alspach, was killed by a "Bouncing Betty" anti-personnel mine near the site of "C" Company's bridgehead just north of Schleithal, while attempting to assist an enlisted man who

had just been hit in the same manner. That afternoon memorial services were held in Salmbach, with officers under his command and a few enlisted men attending. His loss was felt by all, and our predicament would have been grave had we not been favored with an executive officer, Major Forest T. Green, who was familiar with the situation and who took command quickly and effectively.

On 20 December the 25th Tank Bn., previously with CCA in Wissembourg, replaced the 48th Tank Bn. of CCB, so our "A" Company was then attached to the 25th Tanks, with "A" of the 25th being attached to the 19th. CCA in Wissembourg, on our left flank, had made gains well into the Siegfried Line when it was ordered to pull back. The 79th Infantry Division was occupying positions on our right flank.

Christmas Eve, 24 December, we were relieved by elements of the 79th Inf., and then proceeded, just after dark, by motor convoy to an area around Hohwiller, France, on a perfectly clear and moonlight night, ready to enjoy a peaceful Christmas day. Bn. Hq., Hq. Co., "C" Company, and the Medical Detachment were located in Hohwiller; "B" Company was located in Hermerswiller; "A" Company in Rittershofen, with the 25th Tanks; and Service Company in Surbourg. A grand Christmas was had by all, with a truly wonderful Christmas dinner and all the trimmings; but the best gift of all was a day of peace and rest. That peace was somewhat disturbed next day, however, when twelve American-marked P-47 fighters soared overhead in a rather peculiar manner, then dived down bombing and strafing the next town to our east, Soultz-Sous-Forets, causing considerable damage, and shaking even our own town. Surbourg, in which Service Company was located, was also bombed and strafed by the same planes, and though none of our men were hurt the planes did cause considerable damage, inflicting several casualties on other units there. The next few days were spent peacefully, with everyone getting weapons, equipment, and vehicles back in combat shape again. Those few days of rest were most welcome, for we were a tired, nervous bunch from the previous operation.

CHAPTER III

BATTLE OF SARRIENSBERG-GOETZENBRUCK

We had a rather peaceful Christmas and a few days rest, with enough time to read and write several letters and catch up on the news of the war in general. Every front along the Western Front had been having serious threats and breakthroughs by what seemed to be a last effort on the part of the Germans to put in a bid for victory. We, at this time, were among the farthest troops to the east, sticking out like a sore thumb right on the German border, but for some reason our front was rather quiet up until now. It was quiet also all along the entire 7th Army Front, of which we were a part. It didn't take long to change this situation though. Suddenly our whole front was hit by a mighty attack of tanks, infantry, and planes, which bent us badly, but did not break through.

On 30 December we were notified that Task Force Hudelson, then at Baerenthal, with the 62nd A.I.B. and 500th AFA Bn., who were supporting the 117th Mechanized Recon. Squadron, was receiving a determined coordinated attack in the Forêt de Neiderbronn, and were to be prepared to move up to assist them. The entire Combat Command was moved that day to the area around Reidheim, France, and alerted to move to Baerenthal. Plans were made for the mounted march to that area the next morning.

At 0530, 1 January, Major Green left Reidheim for Baerenthal, and the rest of the battalion under command of Capt. J. E. Donahey, Executive Officer, marched to Baerenthal in the following manner: The Reconnaissance Platoon moved out and posted road guides along the route Reidheim, Bouxwiller, Ingwiller, Zinswiller, and Baerenthal; at 0600 Companies "B" and "C" left Imbsheim for Baerenthal; and at 0620 Headquarters Company, Medical Detachment, Company "A"-25th Tank Bn., and Bn. Maintenance Section moved out for Baerenthal in one column. "A" Company, 19th A.I.B., which had been relieved from its attachment to 25th Tank Bn. at 0530, moved to Baerenthal from its bivouac area in Newwiller, France, at 0752.

At Task Force Hudelson C.P. in Baerenthal, Major Green received an order making the following distribution of troops: Company "A", 3rd Platoon-"B" Company, and "A" Company-25th Tank Bn. less one platoon were attached to Task Force Hudelson at Baerenthal; the rest of the battalion (Companies "B" less 3rd Platoon, "C" less 1st Platoon, Headquarters, Service, one platoon of "A"-25, and 19th Med. Det.) were attached to 117th Cavalry Recon. Squadron commanded by Lt. Col. Hodge at Mouterhouse, France. Major Green reported to the C.P. of the 117th Cavalry Rcn. Squadron at Mouterhouse after leaving instructions to carry out the disposition of troops as indicated by Col. Hudelson's order.

The weather was extremely cold. Snow and ice covered the roads, making tanks and half-tracks hard to control; in fact, coming up the hill, just before reaching Baerenthal, the tanks had to pull aside and let other vehicles pass, as they could not make the grade, so it was some time before they ever got started. They never did reach us to join in the attack. All our vehicles were brought to their objectives in good order, and by 1000, Companies "B" and "C" were dismounted in an assembly area just north of Mouterhouse, with their vehicles well dispersed along the road. The assault guns went into position along the side of the road, the Machine-Gun Platoon attached to Company "C" followed their advance, and the Mortar Platoon, dismounted, followed the advance of the two companies in support, carrying their heavy weapons through the snow up the rough hills. The Battalion C.P. and Medical Detachment were set up in Mouterhouse.

The situation prevailing in this sector was confused and fluid, with elements of engineers, tank battalions, cavalry reconnaissance squadrons, and tank destroyers disposed along the high ground and network of roads and trails north and west of Mouterhouse. The mission of the battalion was to attack to the north and restore the original line held by friendly troops. Orders for the attack had been given to "B" and "C" Companies, so they had left their assembly areas, moving through the snow-filled woods up the rough hill to the line of departure. We were then receiving intermittent artillery and mortar fire, coming down in tree bursts as it fell in the woods. Just as they were about to jump off, Major Green received an order from Lt. Col. Hodge to hold up the attack until further orders. Major Green drove back to Mouterhouse to determine the situation, as it was very vague at this time, especially with all the intermingled friendly troops around the area. While he was gone a German attack was launched against our right flank about 350 yards from our Battalion OP, and a heavy fire fight with small arms, mortars, and artillery took place. It was evident then that our right flank was completely exposed, for "B" and "C" Companies to our front had received no fire at all. The vehicles, tank destroyers, half-tracks, and reconnaissance cars of other friendly units, cluttering the road in front of us, started pulling back out of the way. The fire fight was raging when Major Green returned and ordered a withdrawal.

As we were to withdraw to the west, it was evident that with all the other vehicles jamming the roads it would be best to move our vehicles back close to Mouterhouse, out of the way completely before the rest of the vehicles pulling out made it an impossibility. Capt. Donahey and Lt. Price hurriedly gathered the drivers and their vehicles together and moved them out along the road west and into Sarreinsberg, some four miles down the icy river-valley road. "B" and "C" Companies were withdrawn from their assembly areas, and all other units were ordered out. There was complete confusion until the other units had moved their vehicles and personnel out of the way, and "B" Company started withdrawing down the road to Mouterhouse with "C" Company, alternating successively in setting up organized delaying actions. They successfully withdrew to a high-ground position on the

northeast side of the road junction at the west end of Mouterhouse, that was now receiving accurate enemy artillery fire. Lt. James Phillips and his Hq. Co. Maintenance Crew had set up hasty road blocks just to the east of this road junction to slow down any enemy vehicular movement down that road.

The Reconnaissance Platoon under Lt. George K. Beine had previously placed road guides at Zinswiller, when the battalion column originally moved through on its way to Baerenthal. After the column had passed, the road guides were picked up, and the platoon moved on to Baerenthal to join the battalion. Upon arrival there, they discovered the battalion had moved on farther toward Mouterhouse, and as Baerenthal was then under attack, the platoon remained and aided "A" Company. When the enemy's first attack was repulsed, they remounted and started for Mouterhouse, with the exception of Lt. Beine and his driver, Pfc. Charles L. Campbell, who stayed in Baerenthal for another mission. They left town, the reports say, and were never seen again. The other four peeps of the platoon were then winding their way through the icy, hilly roads when they saw American half-tracks coming down, but gave them no thought. A few seconds later, however, the tracks opened fire on them with .50 cal. machine-guns and small arms, so to avoid hitting the track that had pulled across the road to block it, the peeps made a sharp left turn going off into the ditch. Sgt. Gregory Guzzey and Cpl. Billy Monks were hit as the peeps left the road. Cpl. Monks was thrown from the peep into the ditch. Pfc. Robert Thogmartin, driving for Sgt. William Dougherty, thought that his peep was about to turn over as he left the road, so he jumped out and was evidently knocked unconscious, because he wasn't heard of again. When the peep hit the embankment, Sgt. Dougherty jumped out and immediately opened fire at the enemy. Cpl. Ray Reasoner and Pfc. Jim Whatley, his driver, were never seen after their peep turned off the road. The other men, Pfc.'s Connie Rowell, Earl Hamilton William May, Edgar Meyers, Robert Housh, and Joseph Todarello joined Dougherty after their peeps hit the embankment. The men used two of the light machine-guns from the peeps to set up an intensive field of fire—some of the enemy were seen falling. It was a hopeless case, however, and Sgt. Dougherty ordered them to proceed along the embankment to a house about 40 yards back from the road. At the same time, he told Pfc. Housh to take off to see if he could get some help. Pfc. Meyers was hit slightly in the head about this time, but managed to make it up to the house before receiving some first aid. The men reached the house and set up a field of fire while Sgt. Dougherty took a look around to see what possible route of escape they could use. The only plan that seemed to offer escape, was to take off from the side of the house across a clearing about 100 yards wide, and head for the woods on the hill. Pfc. Housh had already crossed this field. Dougherty feared that he might have been hit, so he sent Pfc. Rowell out to see if any friendly troops were nearby. Housh, however, had not been hit, but was moving through the woods with two men from "A" Company who were lost. Housh made it to Reipertswiller that night and reported the happenings to CCR there.

Meanwhile, Rowell had made it to the woods, so he stopped to cover while the other men tried to do the same. Dougherty sent Pfc. Meyers next, and then followed a few feet behind. The remaining men figured that it was useless, so decided to stay and either fight it out or give up. As Meyers and Dougherty were entering the woods, Meyers was hit in the arm and leg and could go no farther. The two of them gave him a piece of white cloth and fixed his wounds as well as they could before taking off. They made it to the top of the hill, where they stopped on the reverse slope to take a short rest. Here they picked up a man from the 40th Engineers who was lost. The three finally worked their way back to Reipertswiller late that night, where they reported to CCR and were returned to the battalion a few days later.

Due to the uncertainty of the situation and acting on orders, both "B" and "C" Companies were then pulled away from the high ground they were defending near the crossroads at Mouterhouse. They scrambled down the hillside across a frozen creek on to the road, and marched back down the valley some four miles into Sarriensberg. "C" Company furnished a rear guard to cover the withdrawal of the battalion down the road, and the assault guns were set up along the side of the road just east of Sarriensberg as protection against tanks or vehicles. With the enemy close at our heels as we left Mouterhouse, we effectively broke contact and set up defensive positions at Sarriensberg immediately, closing in on the area about 2300, 1 January.

As we were having our troubles near Mouterhouse, "A" Company, who was with Task Force Hudelson in Baerenthal, was also having its troubles. Also, the 3rd Platoon of "B" Company, which was attached to the 62nd A.I.B., was having its troubles, for they lost all their vehicles when they had to pull out before getting a chance to mount up.

Company "A" was given the mission of assisting "C"-62nd at Bannstein, and after a reconnaissance of the route as far as Forneau Neuf, orders were given for the 1st and 2nd Platoons to seize the high ground on the west of the Forneau Neuf-Bannstein road. Then the 1st Platoon was to hold that ground while the remainder of the company moved to Bannstein, with the 2nd Platoon last in column. About 1000, a staff officer from CCB came and asked for a platoon to repel Krauts one kilometer east of Baerenthal. The 2nd Platoon was chosen, the 3rd to assume its part of the plan. The company, with the 1st Platoon leading the column, set out for Forneau Neuf, leaving the half-tracks about one km. east of town. The remainder of the company did not appear, so Major Owings said he would send them up. The 1st Platoon proceeded to the L.D. in Forneau Neuf. After considerable wait, it was decided to have the 1st Platoon seize the ridge alone and then proceed with the remainder of the plan. The 1st Platoon moved out at about 1115.

As the 3rd and AT Platoons, sent forward by Major Owings, pulled into the area where the 1st Platoon had parked its vehicles, they came under enemy artillery fire. In dispersing, two of the AT vehicles bogged down. Several men were wounded,

for there was little cover available. As there was no contact with the company, it was decided that the AT Platoon would remain and extricate its vehicles while the 3rd Platoon returned to Baerenthal. There they joined the 2nd Platoon and Co. Headquarters in the defense of that town.

The 2nd Platoon was given the mission of protecting Task Force Hudelson's Headquarters in town. The enemy attack on Baerenthal began as Lt. Jack R. DeWitt was receiving his orders. In the absence of Lt. DeWitt, T/Sgt. Junior Wright hurriedly and expertly set up the platoon to defend the town. He placed all the drivers on the .50 cal. machine-guns on the half-tracks and had each squad put their .30 cal. light machine-guns into action. After he assigned the mortar squad its position, S/Sgt. Welson Schickel asked what targets he was to fire on. Wright replied. "Oh, just drop them anywhere in those woods; there are so many Jerries up there you just couldn't miss if you tried." When Lt. DeWitt returned, he found the platoon already hard at work.

In the meantime, Capt. Spokes left the command track of the 1st Platoon in Forneau Neuf and went to the nearby road junction to find his artillery F.O. Instead, he found S-3 of the 62nd, who told him that his battalion had been driven from Bannstein, and was going to organize on the high ground south of the Baerenthal-Mouterhouse road with the troops available. Those troops were the 3rd Platoon, "B"—19th, under Capt. Spokes. Capt. Spokes set out to contact the 1st Platoon, so climbed the steep mountain with Pfc. George Caddish on the route taken by the 1st Platoon. Yelling at the top of their voices to the 1st Platoon, but receiving no answer, they climbed to a small saddle which overlooked the road from Bannstein to Forneau Neuf and saw an enemy column moving south. It was decided that the 1st Platoon must have seen them too, and also that to shoot would jeopardize that platoon, so a strategic withdrawal to Forneau Neuf followed.

Forneau Neuf was alive with Krauts, so Capt. Spokes and Pfc. Caddish pushed west and then turned south on to the high ground where Lt. Loken was supposed to be digging in with his platoon. They didn't find Lt. Loken, but did find a platoon of the 40th Engineers and sent them on the way to their company. They then swung around to where the vehicles had been parked and found the AT Platoon there.

At about 1600, a patrol of six men was sent out to contact either Lt. Loken or Lt. Hodge. The patrol, consisting of Pvt. James Robbins, Pvt. Joseph Day, Pvt. Edward Berry, and Pvt. William Finley, never returned before the platoon withdrew from Baerenthal with the rest of the company. Lt. Osborne took one squad of the 3rd Platoon, who were mounted, nearly to the house at the road junction south of Forneau Neuf, but they were forced to withdraw by an enemy outpost. It was later learned that the patrol was hiding in the house at this time.

The 2nd Platoon of "A" was ordered out of town about 1630. It proceeded to Reipertswiller followed by the remainder of the company at 1730. They found the way blocked by a column of tanks which were unable to move on an icy hill. The company, less the 1st and 2nd Platoons, was caught in this traffic jam, but managed to by-pass the tanks and proceed on their route.

When the company arrived at Reipertswiller, the 2nd Platoon was placed on an outpost on the road leading NW out of town towards Mouterhouse. During the night the men took turns walking up and down the road to keep warm. Shortly after daybreak a company of German infantry was spotted. It passed within a couple of hundred yards of the platoon, cutting it off from town. The platoon was not spotted, so the Germans were permitted to pass by unmolested, as it was too big a force to tackle. After the enemy force had passed by, the platoon began a forced hike over the steep snow-covered hills to outcircle the enemy. The 3rd Platoon was ordered to establish an outpost guarding a forked road leading into Reipertswiller from Forneau Neuf to Baerenthal. They dug in their positions all night. Next morning, 2 January, a column was seen advancing up the road. The column was fired upon and stopped. An enemy armored car was brought up to destroy the forward outpost of the platoon, but Sgt. Elmer Bruns and Pfc. Richard Hoff stopped it with effective machine-gun fire, and Pfc. Edward J. Chittenden damaged it with a bazooka. The German infantry attempted to advance on the left flank of the platoon. Pvt. Felix Gomes, waiting until they were dangerously near to his position, hit a large number of them with his BAR and forced them back. T/Sgt. William Driscoll, acting platoon leader, received the order to withdraw. He called for and adjusted a very effective barrage of artillery fire to cover his retreat.

Lt. William C. Hodge, 1st Platoon, Company "A", was ordered to outpost a hill not far from Baerenthal. After he had set up his positions, he sent Pfc. Sheppard and Pvt. Columbus Clark back to notify Capt. Spokes that he was ready. The two men were fired at when they entered the valley, but managed to get through and find their way back to Reipertswiller on the morning of the 20th. Lt. Hodge sent some men into the valley to see who had fired on the men, but the patrol returned reporting that the platoon was completely surrounded by the enemy. As yet the platoon had been unnoticed. At dusk a patrol was sent into the town at the foot of the hill to find out who occupied it, but found it also was in enemy hands. At midnight Lt. Hodge decided he must get the platoon back to friendly lines while they were still unnoticed. After descending the hill, the platoon had to cross a flat open field made even more dangerous by the bright night. The field had been planted with mines; however, Pfc. Ed. Shannon picked a path through which the platoon could pass to safety. While the platoon was crossing the field, a German staff car passed along the road within fifty feet. Still the platoon was unnoticed. They passed an enemy outpost and the guard asked the last man in the platoon where they were going. The man, a member of the 62nd A.I.B., miraculously could speak German; he told the guard they were going to the front, so the platoon passed by unmolested. The platoon hiked about twenty hours over some forty miles of snow-covered hills before reaching safety. There were no casualties from enemy action.

After the 3rd Platoon withdrew to Reipertswiller, it furnished local security to the town along with the AT Platoon, a platoon of tanks, one of T.D.'s, and one of engineers. About 1500, the 2nd Platoon rejoined the company from Wingen.

About 1630, Task Force Hudelson was relieved, so the company moved to Obermodern by way of Wimmenau, where they remained for a few days.

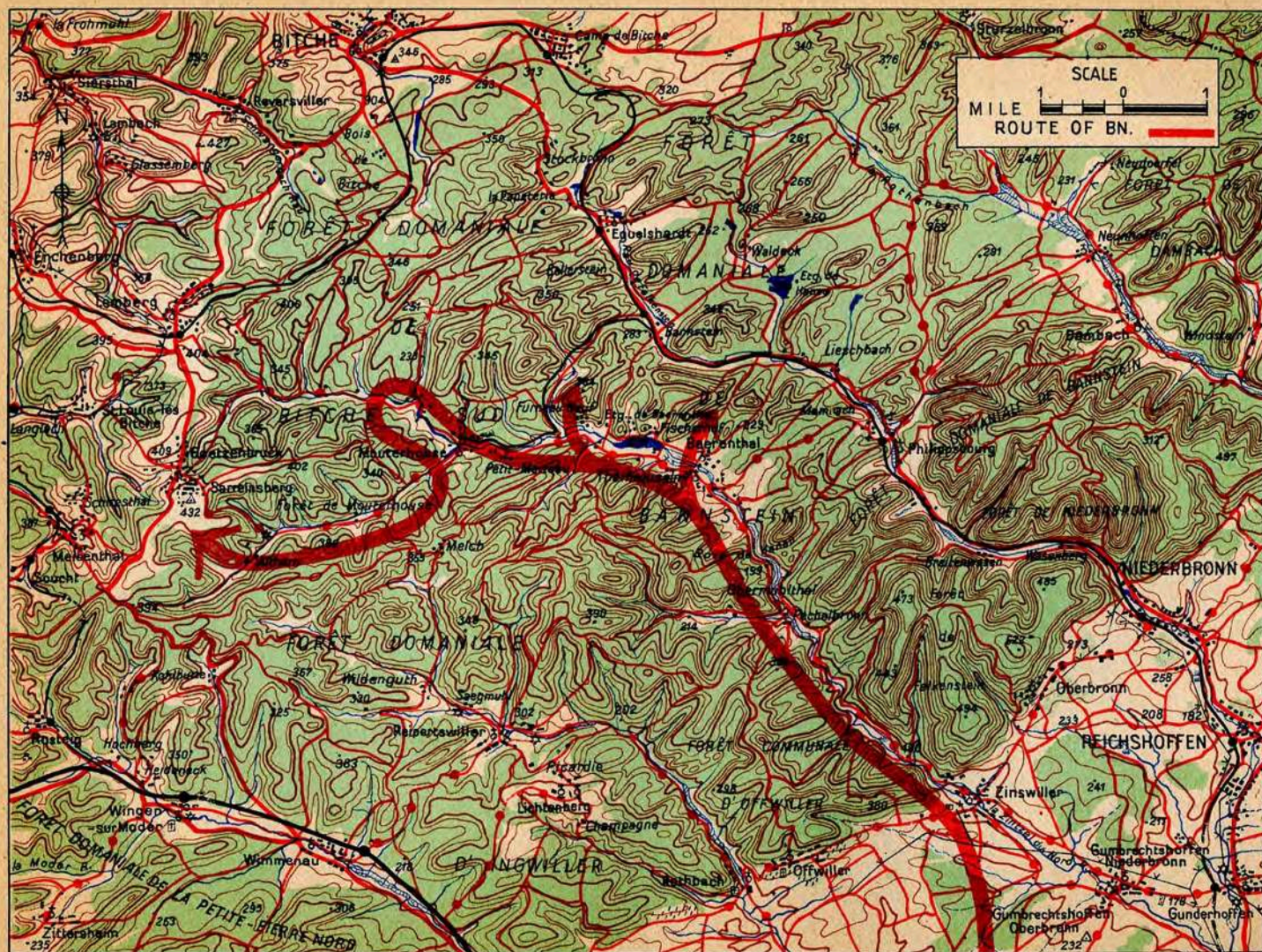
As the battalion was pulling back into Sarreinsberg, 1 January, Major Green had contacted Lt. Col. Hodges at Wingen, France, and received instructions to withdraw to Rostieg, France, but when he rejoined the battalion at Sarreinsberg, he decided that the battalion should reorganize there and proceed to Rostieg in the morning. Utilizing fully the commanding ground on which Sarreinsberg was located, the battalion organized a hasty defensive line with "B" Company on the eastern and northern portion of town and "C" Company on the southern and western edge.

The 2nd Platoon of "B" Company was situated in four buildings which were perpendicular to and east of the village. These buildings sat on a gradual sloping hill that jetted out from the village like a peninsula. The farthest house they occupied was two-hundred yards from Sarreinsberg, with a forest to the front. To the right and the left, the bare hill sloped gently downward until it ran into a deep black forest. It was here the enemy first penetrated. About 1000 yards to the right of the 2nd Platoon, Lt. Russell T. Blair and T/Sgt. Johnnie M. Taylor, with the 1st Platoon, set up defensive positions on the forward slope of the hill. The 1st, 2nd, and Hq.'s rifle squads were in line, with the machine-gun squad on the right flank, and the mortar squad to the rear in a well fortified position, also with communications to each of the squads. The AT Platoon was held in support in the village.

Company "C", on the southern and western edge of town, used its 3rd Platoon to outpost a roadblock on the road leading into the village from the southwest, with the 2nd Platoon in mobile reserve. The AT Platoon was attached to "F" Company, 179th, and jointly held an anti-tank outpost with tanks and T.D.'s.

The Battalion CP was located in the south central part of Sarreinsberg. The Mortar Platoon, Machine-Gun Platoon, and Assault Gun Platoon set up in the open ground nearby to support the companies with fire. A forward aid station was set up on the edge of town, and a base station also was set up in St. Louis de Bitche, where the vehicles and battalion rear CP were located.

A march order was issued by battalion at 0800, 2 January, but enemy patrols were already pushing into our positions. "C" Company had mounted their vehicles along the road leading southwest toward Meisenthal, with the rest of the battalion vehicles ready to follow. Before they could get started, we learned of a German breakthrough across the road some 2000 yards to the south of town, consisting of tanks, anti-aircraft artillery, and infantry. The convoy was halted immediately. "C" Company dismounted, setting up defensive positions along the road, with the 2nd platoon occupying positions on the high ground south of the town, and also tying in with elements of the 141st Regt. of the 36th Inf. Division who had occupied and defended the southern part of Sarreinsberg early that morning. A patrol, consisting of 10 men under S/Sgt. Eugene M. Lynch, was dispatched immediately to the west side of the road in the woods to determine if the enemy had cut us off from the west as well as the south. The mission was not completed as the patrol



was needed for firing flanking fire on the main road in the direction of the attack. A patrol from the 141st Inf. Regiment was sent down the main road south through the 2nd Platoon's position to determine enemy strength and weapons, but it was fired upon and forced to retire before they had gone but a short distance.

At this time four P-47 fighter-bombers led by an artillery liaison plane came in and bombed and strafed the woods and road just west of Althorn. A prisoner of war which we took later that day testified to the damage done to his unit by the planes, and its effect was obvious to us also by breaking-up and disorganizing a coordinated tank and infantry attack in progress. "C" Company then pulled on back into Sarreinsberg and set up defenses along the road on the west side of town.

As the road to Meisenthal had been cut, we were left with but one road open and that was to St. Louis de Bitche. Enemy patrols were aggressively probing our positions, and by 1145 a full-scale attack was in progress against "B" Company at the eastern side of town. Withdrawing, as we had previously been ordered to do while engaged in these fire fights, was impossible, but we managed to send all vehicles except those absolutely necessary to our operations to St. Louis de Bitche.

The main attack came into "B" Company's positions, and as they advanced up the winding road and through the woods they were screaming and yelling in broken English to surrender. They evidently were hopped up or drunk by their actions. "B" Company's reply was an opening with all they had, rifles, BAR's, machine-guns with free traverse, and 60mm mortars firing round after round into their positions. The enemy was firing as they moved forward with all they had, but it wasn't enough this time, so they went back into the woods to reorganize. They came back in even greater numbers, and some penetrated the lines right on up close to the Battalion CP, where they were fired on by security guards; with the assistance of the Machine-Gun and Assault Gun Platoons, who fired point blank into their positions, they were again repulsed and run out of town. The Mortar Platoon continually pounded their positions.

The attacks against our east positions of "B" Company continued throughout the day, and while they were going on we contacted elements of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Division and 179th Regiment of the 45th Division which were moving up to Sarreinsberg. "C" Troop of the 117th Cavalry was with us. Their radio was our only means of getting artillery fire, as we were completely away from any of our own artillery. We also had one officer and 23 men from "C" Company, 62nd A.I.B., and four T.D.'s of Company "B", 645th TD Battalion. All of these units were consolidated with our own defense. One battalion of the 36th Inf. Division was thinly defending a sector of the village of Goetzenbruk and extending on north along the road to Lemberg, but they weren't in sufficient strength to give us any support other than flank protection. During the day ten prisoners of war were taken, and information was gained that the unit attacking us was part of the 257th V.G. Division.

During the night of 2 January, the 2nd Platoon of "B" Company withdrew from their outlying positions to the edge of town approximately 250 yards away, and into

houses which were to the left of the 4th Platoon's position. Shortly after midnight the enemy attacked in force down the road and open field. While all the men were ordered to hold their individual fire, the enemy infiltrated to within twenty yards of our position.

Headquarter's Mortar Platoon was called upon for emergency close-in fire, which was brilliantly directed by Lt. Alvin Sweitzer. The resulting mortar fire was very accurate, but, although it slowed the German advance, it did not halt it. Lt. Sandhoff's mortars followed the Germans down the field until they were twenty-five yards in front of our position, when Lt. Sweitzer called for more mortar fire. "That's too close", Lt. Sandhoff yelled on the phone. Lt. Sweitzer said he knew it, but we had to take the chance. He said, "Be sure your bubbles are level, and give us 'on the way' so we can hit the floor!" The mortar rounds came in as called for, right on top of the enemy not more than thirty-five yards from the house. Once again the attack was thrown back and dead Krauts could be seen strewn over the field, many still clutching their burp guns and panzerfausts in a death grip.

The silence was broken only by our mortar fire and by guttural cries of "Companie, fünfte companie, vorwärts . . . Otto . . . komm her. Fünfte companie, companie, companie". Their cries may have filled us with fear, but they had lost the element of surprise. It was a moonless night, and all that could be seen were the occasional dark forms and shadow-like figures as the Boche slowly moved towards our position.

When the nearest Kraut was well within hand grenade distance of the platoon positions, the order was given to open a murderous cross-fire from the houses, which began mowing down the enemy, and which stopped their advance. Four of the leading krauts were apparently instantly killed, but others, more fortunate to be in a slightly defilade position, began noisily digging into the frozen ground not more than a hundred yards to our front. Intermittent mortar fire failed to discourage them. One of the enemy infiltrated into the 4th Platoon's house. S/Sgt. Edward D. Collins tossed a fragmentation grenade into the room, and silence reigned. The next morning the German walked out of the house with a burp gun and surrendered.

When the attack was at its height, "B" Company had asked for reinforcements and "C" Company sent Lt. Robert E. Lingle's 2nd Platoon, which arrived at about 0300, to reinforce "B" Company's precarious position. This platoon was scheduled to make an attack at 0700 to regain the four abandoned houses of "B" Company's original position, but instead the Germans attacked, this time after a three-minute artillery and mortar barrage. Pfc. John R. Hultmen continued to fire and man his machine-gun from the window of the house while some of his companions sought cover.

After firing had ceased there were still Germans behind the stone wall and in foxholes only a short distance from our positions. Pfc. Robert J. Erickson and Pvt. Robert J. Michael crawled out toward the Germans' positions, tossed hand grenades, and fired their rifles into the surprised Krauts, wounding several.

Shortly after this a call notified S/Sgt. Eugene M. Lynch of the 2nd Platoon of "C" Company that there was a Kraut in a foxhole right in front of the house. Sgt. Lynch proceeded to toss grenades at the foxhole, and finally the stubborn Kraut came out. Two more were picked up close by playing dead, but were persuaded to give up. Then the company commander came out, cleanly shaven, sober, and all that a typical true German officer usually is. Not long after these men gave up, the balance of the company came in from the four houses with white flags waving, and all total there were 38 that gave up at this time. Later, T/Sgt. John J. Conroy boldly led a patrol up to the four houses in which there were still a few of the enemy. Lt. Alvin Sweitzer pulled his assault gun into position and shelled the houses. After this preparation, the patrol went up toward the houses, but were momentarily pinned down by .50 cal. machine-guns from friendly elements along the high ground 1000 yards to the left who failed to recognize our men and mistook them for retreating Krauts. Identifications were finally established and then the patrol assaulted the houses, capturing eight Krauts. All told, a German company of about 80 men had been completely annihilated, its men almost without exception being killed or captured.

Throughout all this action, our positions all over Sarreinsberg were receiving heavy mortar and artillery fire. A Nebelwerfer (Screaming Meemie) fell on the Battalion CP and inflicted much damage, knocking out a light tank parked in front of the CP. "B" Company was receiving the weight of all enemy activity, but beat it off with practically no casualties to themselves. The aid station at first on the southwest end of town had been shelled and of necessity moved into town just across from the Battalion CP. The litter haul from the forward elements to the most forward troops was about 1500 yards. The hills were impassable to vehicles, so litter squads had to be used to carry the wounded from the front lines back to the aid station.

On this date, 3 January, Major Green traveled to Wingen, France, and contacted Lt. Col. Hodges of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, where he gave our situation, and was told that we would be relieved by the 45th Division; however, this relief was not effected, and at a later date we were assigned to the 45th Division, which attached us to the 2nd Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment.

Early that afternoon we could again hear tank movement in the valley, and at 1550 tanks and infantry were observed advancing along the road towards "B" Company's 1st Platoon. When they came into range, Pfc. James N. Anders opened fire with his machine-gun, scattering the infantry. The tanks stopped, presumably fearing to advance further without infantry support. Pfc. Anders kept firing at the enemy on each side of the road, inflicting casualties. The enemy tank then opened fire on the 1st Platoon's position with 88's and machine-gun fire. S/Sgt. Harold Chandler kept his mortar firing constantly, expending 385 rounds. Lt. Sweitzer and Pvt. David Glick from the Assault Gun Platoon were observing and adjusting artillery and mortar fire when the enemy tank came around a turn in the road. They spotted it and started firing tracer ammunition at it, alerting a TD nearby. The TD pulled up, fired one round, and knocked the tank out. Another tank was missed by the TD, so

pulled away before another shot could be fired. Completely beaten, the Krauts withdrew after having suffered severe casualties.

As the battalion had moved into Baerenthal on 1 January, Service Company combat trains and maintenance followed and set up their CP in Sinswiller. Due to the change in battle conditions, Transportation and Maintenance were ordered to shift to Ingwiller. On arrival there, trucks were immediately dispatched to Saverne for diesel oil which was badly needed by a TD unit attached to CCR. On 2 January, enemy action cut off supply roads between Service Company and battalion fighting elements. On the morning of 3 January, word came through that battalion needed ammunition and rations badly. Lt. Norman W. Michelson and Mr. Brasher started out with seven trucks for the battalion, but were forced to turn back because of weather and road conditions and enemy action. One of the trucks, driven by Pfc. Steve Chovan and assisted by Pfc. R. A. Handschuck was struck by mortar fire, seriously wounding the driver. Later that day, Lt. W. O. Eckel, who had been at battalion, succeeded in reaching the Service Company CP by a circuitous route through St. Louis de Bitche. Over this icy, nearly impassable route the supplies began to roll. Ammunition was being used in large quantities, so made up the bulk of the loads. On 4 January, Transportation and Maintenance moved their CP's to St. Louis de Bitche, and for the next seven days continued to use this route which involved one-hundred miles of travel. Even the one passable open road to the battalion, though kept open by continual patrolling, was continually subjected to mortar and artillery fire and enemy patrols.

During the early morning hours of 4 January, the shelling of our area increased, and at 1000 we vacated our CP in Sarreinsberg and moved to another location in Goetzenbruck, closer to the CP of the 2nd Battalion, 179th Infantry, to whom we were then attached. By 1400, enemy activity was reduced to mortar and artillery fire; our southern flank, which had been wide open during this period, was in the process of being closed by elements of the 179th Infantry Regiment (the 1st and 3rd Battalion) which were pushing up from the south, but were a considerable distance away and moving very slowly.

The aid station and Hq. Co.'s CP were also moved near our new CP location. The Mortar Platoon had taken up new positions in the valley just east and between Sarreinsberg and Goetzenbruck. The Assault Gun and Machine-Gun Platoons moved with Hq. Co. and were used on call, in addition to furnishing road blocks near the CP and the west entrance to town.

Our own activities throughout the morning were confined to directing mortar and artillery fire on known enemy locations. At about 1430, an enemy force was spotted moving into positions about six-hundred yards from our northern perimeter. This location had been under close observation during daylight hours because the sounds of digging and movement had been heard during darkness. Mortar fire from our 81mm mortar platoon was directed on the spot, and very shortly enemy soldiers were seen rushing out of a house which had received three direct hits and started to

burn. The soldiers dropped to the ground, so the mortars started a systematic pounding of the area. As the house burned, a crew of enemy soldiers was observed pulling a short-barrelled gun mounted on wheels away from the structure. The mortars immediately adjusted on it, whereby the second round killed some of the crew and upset the gun. The gun was demolished with the next three rounds, and then small groups of enemy could be seen running away from the area.

The rest of the day and night was spent laying mortar fire in the defiladed approaches to our position, with two mortars firing intermittently on a building at the road junction north of Althorn, France, which had been designated as an enemy battalion CP by a prisoner-of-war. By this time, the P.W.'s taken by our own battalion and other friendly units in the area had identified nine companies of the 457th Volks-Grenadier Regiment operating against Sarreinsberg. P. W. reports on the damage done by our mortars and artillery indicated that we were battering enemy positions, especially the Battalion CP at Althorn, with great accuracy.

At 1715, a patrol led by Lt. George A. Miller was dispatched by the 3rd Platoon of "C" Company to determine the foremost enemy position in the vicinity of the crossroads north of Althorn. The patrol located an 88mm towed-gun and a very elaborate defensive set-up. Pushing on farther they were fired upon, so returned to the CP closely followed by a mortar barrage.

Up until 5 January enemy activity had reserved itself to intermittent mortar, artillery, and nebelwerfer fire. On this date, we began to receive artillery of heavier caliber than that previously noted. Rounds estimated to be 240mm fell regularly on the town. They were evidently reaching for the 81mm mortars which were firing some 300 rounds per day. The enemy fire was well directed, as it landed all around the mortar positions. It became necessary for the mortar crews to run out when missions were called for, set their mortars, fire, and then scramble back up the hill to cover.

Our activities consisted of consolidating our lines and replacing "B" Company with "C" Company in order to allow them to relax a bit in the comparatively quiet southern sector of town. Tentative plans for an attack against German positions in the woods south of town were made. The Reconnaissance Platoon was continually running day and night patrols back and forth from Goetzenbruck to St. Louis de Bitche, where our rear CP was. This was to keep our main and only supply route open for incoming supplies and evacuation of wounded. The CP personnel and vehicles in St. Louis de Bitche had not escaped action either, as they had been continually shelled, and, with the limited personnel, maintained a vigilant guard for possible infiltration.

On 6 January we were alerted to launch an attack through the woods north of Althorn while a Battalion of the 179th Infantry approached from the southwest, but that unit did not reach the required position, so our activities then consisted of engaging enemy combat patrols throughout the night, after a day devoted to mortar and artillery firing by both sides. "Turkey Shoots" were held on this day as they

had on several days previous, firing into the woods south, southeast, and east of town to harass and demoralize the enemy. Although results could never actually be learned, they certainly must have been a little concerned as to what was going on.

On 7 January new plans for the attack on the woods south of town were made. "B" Company was to move into the woods from assembly positions along the road southwest of Sarreinsberg, some 1000 yards from the edge of town, with the assault guns in direct support. Mortars and artillery were to lay a barrage which was to be lifted at the command of the C.O., 2nd Battalion, 179th Infantry. They jumped off at 1200, "B" Company on the left, "E" Company of 179th on the right. Both received very heavy mortar and machine-gun fire as they reached the west edge of the woods. AT mines prevented assault guns and two tanks from the 191st Tank Battalion from moving up; the leading elements of "B" Company were completely pinned down by mortar and small arms fire, with the 1st and 3rd Platoons in the woods and the 2nd Platoon in reserve on the edge of the woods. As the enemy mortar fire lifted, men pushed forward but ran into a curtain of machine-gun fire at a draw in the woods so were pinned down again. While everyone was taking cover and waiting for the word to attack again, T/Sgt. John J. Conroy was ordered to have a row of tellermines removed, but finding no volunteers, he removed them himself.

Many men of the 3rd Platoon, "B" Company, including the platoon leader, Lt. Loken, had been wounded by the heavy barrage, so the platoon was put in support with the 4th Platoon. With the attack stalled by automatic weapons, Lt. Sweitzer of the assault guns made a hasty survey of the ground, then lead his two M-8 Assault Guns around the mines, thence attacking the woods from the northwest. The M-8's fired directly into the well-dug-in emplacements of the enemy.

As the assault guns were moving along with the infantry, they moved over the hill and started down but slid most of the way on the slick, icy ground. They got ahead of the infantry, so stopped at the foot of the hill and started firing at bunkers to their front. Sgt. Josiah Stephens, who was close to the woods, was taking care of the nearby targets while Sgt. Leo Bartus, about 20 yards to his left, took care of those farther away with his 75mm and .30 cal. machine-gun, mounted on top of the open turret. Firing and moving, the two tanks saw that they were getting too far away from the infantry, so they stopped and gave the whole area a good working over. There were several tunnels which the guns couldn't hit, so Sgt. Stephens dismounted and attacked them with hand grenades and a "grease" gun. Cpl. Fred Riccardi, seeing what was going on, also dismounted and fired with his carbine. When the infantry caught up with them, they remounted and started to fire and move with them. The enemy shells started coming in again. A couple of Krauts, seeing the tanks coming towards them, crawled out of their holes and gave up. As the two tanks crossed a small path running out of the woods they saw some infantry and a tank moving towards them. Not knowing whether they were friendly or not, the guns traversed around to prepare for a fight. Two "B" Company men, seeing what was about to take place, ran up and told the tank crews that those were friendly troops of Company

"E", 179th, and stopped them just in time. The guns then moved on along the edge of the woods attacking the bunkers. Cpl. Wilbur Widmann fired at a bunker, hitting the tree just behind. As he started to fire another round, a Kraut appeared and his head was removed by one of Widmann's 75 rounds. Word was received to wait for the infantry, as they were suffering quite a number of casualties from mortar and artillery fire. When "B" Company did come up, it was decided to hold up and dig in, for "E" Company on the right was moving too slowly. The assault guns then moved into the woods so the infantry could deploy and dig in around them, and a patrol was sent out to see what was ahead. The patrol was detected, and ran into heavy small-arms and mortar fire. Medics were sent out to aid the wounded men of the patrol but were fired on also, so one of the assault guns accompanied them then to recover the wounded. The attacks made by the assault guns during the day had accounted for eight machine-guns, caused numerous casualties among the enemy, broke the backbone of the German resistance, and even captured four P.W.'s.

While the assault guns had been moving forward in this attack, the 2nd and 1st Platoons of "B" Company also moved forward in the attack through the woods, firing machine-guns, BAR's, and rifles from the hip, and eliminating several machine-gun nests as well as capturing many prisoners. The white-clad men of "E", 179th Regt., on the right had difficulty in keeping up with the attack. Several times "B" Company had to hold up the attack until they could catch up. The objective was shortly reached about 1000 yards ahead, which was along a high ridge dropping off into a deep draw, where the attack halted and everyone dug in for the night. Foxholes were dug, and dug deep with logs placed on top, as the tree bursts from enemy mortar and artillery fire would have been terrific in this type of wooded terrain.

"E" Company of the 179th Infantry was tied in on "B" Co.'s right. "C" Company sent a patrol to contact "B" Co.'s left flank, and then spread out along flat terrain to accomplish a tie-in of the two companies that would give us a solid line from some 350 yards south into the woods, south from Sarreinsberg, on a line running north all the way to the north side of town. The flat, open, high terrain made this extension possible, and our automatic weapons effectively covered the entire line.

The night was bitter cold, with snow all over the ground. The men also began suffering from exposure and lack of food. Lt. Joseph F. Price, with the aid of 1st Sgts., peep drivers, and Supply Sergeants, rounded up blankets, food, and coffee and carried them by peep and on foot to the positions, so the men managed to get through the night. Casualties were being evacuated by the medics and everyone else available, back to the aid station by hand-carried litters, then peeps. As we were completely away from our own unit, casualties had to be evacuated through the 179th Inf. Regt. This was a never-ceasing job, to bring back and care for the wounded.

During the same night, "B" Company sent out several reconnaissance patrols and kept constant watch for enemy activities. Two English-speaking Germans, armed with machine-guns, infiltrated the lines to positions where Pfc. Joseph Lowinger and S/Sgt. Ronald C. Henwood were digging a foxhole. When the Jerries approached

and called, "Comrades", Lowinger replied, "Nix comrades", and using his shovel in a threatening manner he demanded their surrender and got it.

All units held their positions on 8 January, as the attack was not continued because the unit of the 179th Infantry which was supposed to be moving up on our right (southern) flank, had not been able to move as quickly as planned. There was no enemy activity in that sector, but patrols were engaged by "C" Company along the entire front of their sector. Prisoners taken in these patrols reported their missions as being, "To determine whether the houses were occupied by American troops"—they found out.

The usual artillery and mortar fire was exchanged by each side; this situation continued throughout 9 January also, with everyone consolidating and improving elaborate defensive positions.

During 9 January a relief of "B" Company by "C" Company was effected. "C" Company sent out a patrol of twelve men along the north edge of the woods to determine whether the Germans still held the high ground west of the road junction north of Althorn. The patrol ran into an enemy patrol at the corner of the woods west of the road junction and were pinned down by automatic weapons. Our patrol finally withdrew though under cover of "C" Company's heavy machine-gun.

During the night of 9—10 January, German artillery and mortars laid a very heavy barrage on "C" Company's positions. The heavy shells detonated, for the most part, in the tops of trees, spraying the entire woods held by our troops with a deadly hail of shrapnel. This barrage lasted, without interruption, until 1000, and the only thing that saved "C" Company from more than six casualties it suffered, was the extremely well-built dugouts the men had made.

At about 1000, 10 January, "E" Company of 179th Infantry, with two M-8 Assault Guns from our Assault Gun Platoon, launched an attack through the woods to Althorn. The attack was proceeding slowly but smoothly, when the assault guns got a little ahead of the infantry and were forced to wait for them to catch up. As they came up and around one of the guns, a shell landed between the two guns, wounding several infantrymen. At the edge of the woods, the road took a sharp left turn and ran down hill to Althorn below. One tank moved on down with the men, while the other moved to the edge of the woods and fired across the valley to the right. Moving on into the edge of town, the men were "sniped" at by the enemy in houses and the church steeple. Several well-placed rounds soon put an end to this. In the first three houses 52 Krauts were taken, merely by Cpl. Fred Riccardi pointing the muzzle of the 75 at the house.

At the end of the street that the tanks and men had moved into town on, more snipers opened up and received the same fire the others had. When the troops had first come out of the woods and were overlooking the town, an officer from "E" Company stated he had seen a Kraut tank move away from the end of town, under fire. When the main street, running perpendicular to the street the assault guns were moving down, was reached, the officer gave Bartus instructions to load up with an

HEAT, turn the corner, and knock the Kraut tank out. Riccardi traversed the gun around to the side of the tank so that he wouldn't have to waste any time in getting the enemy in his sights. Sgt. Bartus told the driver, T/4 Frank Nicholls, to move on to the street, while Pfc. Uno Tervo, the loader, put the HEAT in the chamber. The tank got about one-fourth of its length past the house onto the street, when the Jerry tank, evidently just sitting and waiting, opened up. The first shell, an HE, hit the house on the right. Another quickly followed, hitting the tank. It immediately burst into flames. Then T/4 Nicholls was seen jumping over the side, badly burned. Riccardi jumped over the front end of the tank, and a Kraut machine-gun opened up on him. Nicholls had wriggled his way through Bartus and Terve, both of whom never managed to get out of the assault gun as the Kraut tank fired two more rounds into it. The road was blocked, so the men were told to take up defensive positions in the four houses they already held. Upon taking count, it was discovered that there were only eleven infantrymen and four men from the remaining assault gun left. Later that afternoon, contact was made with the forces attacking the town from another direction, and, although they didn't come into town that night, it was a relief to know that they were nearby. A horrible night was spent, with Jerry trying to take the houses back. The next morning T/Sgt. Kenneth Earhart, who had come on foot with the tanks and had been their only communication with the foot troops at the time, was told to take the assault gun and return to his unit.

As the attack on Althorn was nearing completion, the rest of the battalion held their positions until relieved at 0600 on 11 January by the 2nd Battalion, 179th Infantry.

Relief was effected in the following manner: "I" Company of the 141st Inf. Regt. relieved "B" Company during the night of 10—11 January. "B" Company then marched to St. Louis de Bitche, arriving there before daylight, and moved out, mounted, at 0800 for Ringeldorf, France. Headquarters Company, less Mortar and Assault Guns, departed from Sarreinsberg, with Battalion Headquarters Detachment vehicles at 0530 and arrived in St. Louis de Bitche at 0600, departing from there with "B" Company for Ettendorf, France. "C" Company was relieved by "F" Company, 179th Inf. Regt., at 0600, and marched to St. Louis de Bitche by squads, with the 81mm Mortar Platoon, Assault Gun Platoon of Hq. Co., and 1st Platoon, "B" Company, acting as rear guard. This march unit departed from St. Louis at 0905 for Bueswiller, France.

During the march from St. Louis, the march objective for the battalion was changed to Forstheim and Laubach, France. Company "A" had already reached Laubach, after rejoining us for the first time since 1 January, while the rest of the battalion closed in Forstheim at 1805. On 12 January at 0540 the march was resumed. Company "A" and the Medics marched to Hoelschlock, and Hq., Hq. Co., "B", and "C" marched to Merkswiller, closing in at 1135. Service Company moved from Ettendorf to Forstheim by infiltration, 12 January.

During the period of 1 January to 12 January the battalion had suffered 96 battle casualties, had stood off untold numbers of attacks, captured some 120 P.W.'s, and inflicted heavy casualties on an enemy of much greater numbers than ours. The units, identified by the P.W.'s taken, which opposed us during the operation were: Companies 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 from the 457th Regiment; 13 and 14 from the 466th Regiment, supported by an unknown number of tanks; and 6—75mm Howitzers and 10—105mm Howitzers, all part of the 257th Volks-Grenadier Division. Little credit was given the battalion for its valiant and proven, effective power, as we were attached to another unit during the entire operation. It is firmly believed, however, that the battalion, in its strategic position at the mouth of the valley, leading from the wooded, hilly country of Foret Domaniale to the open country toward Saverne Gap, actually stopped the spearhead of a terrific, German-coordinated attack of tanks and infantry, that would probably never have been stopped until it had satisfactorily crossed the comparatively open country and closed and denied allied troops the use of the important Saverne Gap.

CHAPTER IV

BATTLE OF HATTEN

Weary from the two weeks battle in Sarriensberg and Goetzenbruck, the battalion, after closing into areas around Merkswiller at 1135, 12 January, prepared and hoped to be able to get a little rest, or at least a night's sleep; but things were happening fast and furiously all over the 7th Army front, so rest was just a little too much to expect. Those fortunate enough to do so, went immediately to bed on arrival in the area, but they were very few. At 2030, 12 January, CCR, to whom we were now attached, issued orders for the battalion to move to Niederbetschdorf preparatory to attacking Hatten the following morning, as there was another German drive gathering momentum in that area. Reconnaissance was made to select a route to the line of departure and to see if it could be reached. At 0300, 13 January, the battalion, dreary-eyed and tired, marched to Niederbetschdorf, arriving at 0430. The vehicles were left there, and at 0630 the battalion marched to the line of departure.

On 12 January, at 2030, at the same time the battalion was alerted to move to Niederbetschdorf, Major Green had received an order from Col. Hudelson of CCR to dispatch a ten-man patrol, led by an officer, to contact the C.O. of S-3 of CCA at Kuhlendorf, France. He was to obtain answers to the following questions: (1) Is the road Kuhlendorf to Niederbetschdorf open to our troops; (2) What is known of enemy troop dispositions south of Hatten; (3) Are the enemy in woods south of Hatten and Rittershoffen; (4) Can the road junction southeast of Hatten be reached; (5) Is the stream southeast of Hatten fordable; (6) And do roads from Niederbetschdorf allow for passage of vehicles into woods south of Hatten and Rittershoffen? The patrol led by Lt. William Driscoll was directed to reconnoiter the area south of Hatten and obtain answers to any questions that CCA couldn't answer, and to be back at 2400. The patrol returned with information that (1) Road Kuhlendorf to Niederbetschdorf was open; (2) There were no enemy in either the woods south of Hatten nor the fields north of the woods; (4) Nothing definite could be determined about the road junction southeast of Hatten, as the time limit did not allow for reconnaissance; (5) Not Answered; (6) Roads from Niederbetschdorf were negotiable by vehicles.

With this information the following attack order was issued: German hold most of Hatten in unknown strength. One battalion of friendly infantry occupy the western edge of town, cut off. CCA attacking in Rittershoffen; CCB is north of Rittershoffen, in Corps reserve. CCR attacks Hatten from the south, with the mission

of reestablishing a M.L.R. east of Hatten, and advancing to the east astride railroad tracks, with the 47th Tank Battalion on the left, the 19th A.I.B., with 3—"C"—47th attached, on the right. Artillery will shell Hatten and smoke out the southeast portion of Rittershoffen. Units cross L.D. at 0800.

Our battalion jumped off at 0800, 13 January, on the south side of the railroad tracks running east into Hatten, with Company "A" on the left, "B" on the right, and "C" in reserve. The Assault Gun Platoon supported us with fire on the railroad station south of Hatten. The Machine-Gun Platoon supported "A" Company, and the Mortar Platoon supported the battalion from positions near the railroad on the L.D., where the Battalion O.P. was located. The Battalion C.P. and all non-essential vehicles were in Niederbetschdorf. The 3rd Platoon of "C"-47 had attached one section of three tanks to "A" Company and one section of two tanks to "B" Company.

At the same time that our battalion jumped off on the south side of the railroad, the 47th Tank Battalion had jumped off on the north side to proceed to a high ridge just west of town, where they were to have set up a base of fire until our battalion could move into town from the south. They did partially reach this ridge, but were stopped cold by a hail of anti-tank gun and direct tank fire. A look, out across the fields on both sides of the railroad tracks, would make anyone shudder, for artillery and mortar fire was falling everywhere, and tanks were being knocked off one right after another in the exposed, open fields. The enemy just had too many anti-tank weapons and tanks well placed, dug in, and on the commanding ground. To add to the fury, a raging battle was also going on with CCA in Rittershoffen, the next town just to our west, but we were too busy to pay much attention.

Under cover of smoke, Companies "A" and "B" moved out across the bullet-and-shell-swept field, which was clear and level for three-thousand yards; "C" Company followed in reserve. Slow but fairly steady progress was made despite the terrific shelling, until the companies got within about 300 yards of the southern edge of town, where a devastating hail of automatic weapons to the front and left front pinned them to the ground, stopping them cold. Attached tank platoon was called up to engage the enemy automatic weapons, but three of the tanks were immediately hit by direct anti-tank fire and knocked out. Some of the tankers climbed out of the burning tanks and dashed into the town, where they were presumably captured. Contact with the other tanks was lost, so Major Forest T. Green went across the open field to the woods to send them forward, where he was caught in a heavy "tree burst" barrage of artillery fire. Fortunately, he was not hit. He gave instructions to the tankers, but they were never able to move forward and knock out the automatic weapons. "C" Company, though in reserve, was following within a few hundred yards of "A" and "B". They got caught in the terrific, "tree burst" barrage, with the 1st and 3rd Platoons getting the worse of the fire. The 3rd Platoon managed to take partial cover in shell holes, but there was actually no good protection from the continual shelling.

Casualties were mounting in the companies; the aid men with the assistance of all were braving the heavy fire to care for and evacuate those possible. The situation was desperate, for the companies could not move forward nor flank the enemy positions, and the enemy fire was incessant. Tanks could not be brought forward, as they would have been knocked off as soon as they came into the open. Everyone was either aiding the wounded, trying to dig in, or find a small spot to take cover. The situation became so desperate that the companies were ordered to withdraw at 1055, while an attempt to lay a smoke screen was made. As they started pulling back toward the line of departure, everyone was carrying or assisting in bringing back the wounded. Before Lt. Jack R. DeWitt would permit his 2nd Platoon of "A" to withdraw, they had to find a way to evacuate Pfc. Marrion C. Gilbert, who had been wounded while firing at a sniper who was causing casualties in the platoon; however, Gilbert died before he could be moved, so the platoon continued its withdrawal with a small rear guard. As the platoon was withdrawing, two Germans jumped into the same ditch, under cover from the platoon's fire. The railroad track had to be crossed, but in doing so everyone would be exposed. The first few men made it across all right, but the two Germans soon started shooting at everyone who raised his head. S/Sgt. Mike Auer used a white Phosphorous grenade to screen the crossing as the rest went across.

"B" Company had lost communications, and as they were badly in need of artillery support and smoke, T/Sgt. John J. Conroy volunteered to run the gauntlet of fire to restore communications, so stripping himself of all excess equipment made a dash across the field. The situation became steadily more critical. A field of fire was laid down as the company started to withdraw, leaving nine dead or dying and evacuating some twenty-five wounded. Among the many gallant deeds performed was Pfc. Roy Thompson's picking up an abandoned machine-gun and firing it from the hip, as everyone else started firing with all they had. Thompson was hit by shrapnel, but still wanted to fire; however, S/Sgt. Raymond L. Hart took the machine-gun from him, and with the aid of Pfc. Samuel L. Lhober carried him to safety. The bravest act of the day was the futile attempt of Pfc. Jan Bradley to evacuate Pfc. Don Reagh at great danger to himself. The company, inspired by those and many other acts of extreme bravery, managed, after much difficulty, to reorganize on a line along the east-west road running south-west of Hatten.

Though the companies had withdrawn back to the L.D., there was still one group unable to withdraw, because they were too close to the fire that was pinning them down, just south of town. This group consisted of Lt. Robert L. Policek, 499th Forward Observer, Captain Ernest H. Spokes, 2nd Lt. Joseph Osborne, T/Sgt. Floyd Haskins, S/Sgt. Charles A. Raymond, Pfc. Frank S. Bonnane, Sgt. Harry Wood, Pvt. Marlowe D. Gephart, Pfc. Marvin Murphy, and Sgt. Jack B. Monney, all of "A" Company. Lt. Policek called for artillery, which scattered the Krauts everywhere and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, but there were always still more to keep the group down. Smoke was called for in order that a withdrawal could be made,

but the smoke just wasn't falling where it would do any good. Lt. Policek and Pfc. Bonnano then took off across the field, after crawling and running, while their withdrawal was covered until they reached the tanks, where Lt. Policek directed their covering fires. Then, on back to the Battalion C.P. he ran, where he contacted his artillery battery and adjusted smoke, while the men who remained in the dugout he had left, managed to pull out, carrying the wounded that they were able to evacuate. Lt. Policek was killed later in the day when attempting to enter Hatten in a halftrack. During this time, Pfc. Arthur Wellens had left a covered spot to aid a wounded man and bring him back to the dugout. When the group withdrew from the dugout, Pfc. Wellens stuck by the wounded man until later when he could be evacuated.

It was 1530 in the afternoon before complete withdrawal could be effected back to the original L.D. A hasty reorganization along this line was made, preparatory to either launching another attack or taking up a defensive position between the Rittershoffen Railroad Station and the north edge of the woods. During this operation, a collecting group of two litter squads from the Medics had followed the attack and set up an auxiliary aid station in the railroad station at the Battalion O.P. Sixty-two casualties that morning had been taken care of in the aid station that was too crowded to even move around in. One aid station was not sufficient, so a private home across the street was used to alleviate the situation.

The tank battle on the north side of the railroad was still raging, with artillery and mortars still falling heavily everywhere. At 1630, orders came down from CCR, directing that the battalion go into Hatten on tanks to reinforce the 2nd Battalion of the 315th Inf. Regt., 79th Inf. Div., who were cut off in the western end of town. Planes had flown over in the morning dropping food and supplies to this unit, as they had no supply routes open at all; but most of the supplies dropped, fell into enemy hands.

It was growing dark fast, but light was hardly a problem, for the whole town of Hatten was ablaze, casting ugly shadows over the snow-covered countryside. At 1650, "A" Company reluctantly loaded on medium tanks standing by and headed for town, with "B" and "C" Companies following as fast as the tanks could shuttle them forward. Headquarters Company's Mortar, Assault Gun, Machine-Gun and Reconnaissance Platoons were left in position south of Rittershoffen to establish a defensive line from the railroad station to the edge of the woods. Artillery, mortar, and small arms rounds were flying everywhere as "A" Company started down the open field, north of the railroad tracks toward the western end of Hatten. The men soon gladly scrambled off the tanks and cut north on foot to the road leading into town. There was complete confusion as they began to bunch up, and companies ran together trying to take cover along the road bank until an entrance into town could be made. Many casualties were sustained, including Lt. Joseph M. Murphy, "C" Company Commander, who walked back to the aid station though wounded. Lt. Richard M. Young assumed command of the company. While the troops waited in the open fields and along the road, shuddering with each round that came in, recon-

naissance struck ahead into the edge of town and contacted the friendly troops there. As quickly as possible, the companies moved on into the edge of town, taking as much cover as possible, and attempting to avoid the bright light from fires. The companies for the night more or less moved into the same buildings occupied by the 2nd Bn., 315th Regt., who were assisting in reinforcing and outposting the small area of the town occupied. To put it mildly, the friendly troops were glad of our entrance, for we had not only reinforced their positions but opened a thin supply route that they had been completely deprived of for several days previous. "A" Company took up positions on the eastern perimeter of the main street, "B" Company moved in with "E" Company of the 2nd Bn. at the east end of the block, and "C" Company moved into position on the southern perimeter, which was the street just south of the main street. The whole area being occupied was actually only about one and one-half blocks square along the main street at the western edge of town. "A" Company that night did use its 2nd Platoon to occupy outposts in houses on the north-eastern part of our sector. During the night a German patrol attacked their houses, set them afire, and after a fire-fight the platoon was forced to abandon the burning houses. Artillery, mortar, and tank fire continued to pour into town all during the night, so very little rest was had by anyone. A Battalion C.P. was set up in the same "room" with the C.P. as that of the 2nd Bn.

Late that night when we were trying to get situated, an order came down from CCR that we were to continue the attack in the morning in conjunction with the 2nd Bn., 315th Infantry. Tentative plans were made for the attack to start at 0800 next morning, 14 January; however, the attack didn't get under way until around 1100. "A" Company, together with "E" Co. of the 2nd Bn., was to have attacked north to the main north road, then to go east through town. "B" and "C" Companies were to attack after "A" Company had reached the Hatten-Stundwiller road, with "B" Company turning left up the road to meet "A" Company, and "C" Company to continue east through town.

This attack started around 1100 when "A" Company, with two medium tanks attached, jumped off and moved along the road to the north road at the west end of town. "E" Company, 2nd Bn., moved east first, cutting north across the wooded area toward the first road junction of the north road. "A" Company, though harassed with mortar and artillery fire, reached the north road and started fighting its way down the street eastward. They were met with intense small arms, sniper, bazooka, and direct tank fire. Each house had to be taken individually by first firing a bazooka to make a hole, if doors and windows were not available, then throwing hand grenades, and mouse-holing from house to house. The two tanks were also firing into the houses and spraying the street and buildings with machine-gun fire. A German tank on one of the side streets was spotted; hence word was given to one of the attached tanks to be careful; however, the tank's gun jammed. It was therefore, hit by the German tank before bazookas could be used against it. The tank crew piled out of the tank and, instead of running into the buildings on the south side of the road, ran into those on

the north side occupied by the Jerries, so were captured. Lt. Robert Donovan and Pfc. Edward Pahel threw grenades at the exposed members of the German tank crew; then Pvt. Hendrickson and Pfc. Pahel moved in with a bazooka and put the tank out of action. The tank crew was captured.

Looking from the window of the most forward house held by the company, a man was seen motioning the other men on. As it was assumed it was the friendly troops from the 2nd Bn., T/Sgt. Robert Anderson started in that direction but was fired on by a sniper and never returned. Lt. Donovan, who was immediately behind him, was wounded in the leg and evacuated. The attack continued slowly and under heavy fire. When contact was finally made with "E" Company at the road junction, both companies continued on down the street until after dark, when a German counterattack with infantry and tanks started from the north. "E" Company pulled out, leaving the right flank exposed. It was a desperate situation; "A" Company was ordered to withdraw immediately back down to positions on the north side of the street. The withdrawal was somewhat disorganized, but the company managed to get back across the wooded area to the road to join the rest of the battalion.

The battalion during the day had set up its own C.P. in one of the houses, with wire and radio contact to each company. Contact with CCR and our rear C.P. in Niederbetschdorf had been insufficient, so the Command half-track was sent forward to Hatten, with a relay station at the railroad station, where Hq. Co. C.P. and Battalion C.P. were located. The Command half-track, artillery F.O.'s half-track, and the wire peep were the only vehicles that were kept in Hatten, for there was neither room nor cover for them. The two tracks were kept in a partially protected barn behind the C.P. and the peep was kept under a shed next door. A forward aid station had been set up in one of the houses in Hatten and manned by Capt. Charles F. Hawkins, T/3 Robert Munson, T/4 Clinton M. Cox, T/4 Henry R. Drake, T/5 Daniel Sperberg, Cpl. Ernest E. Guenette, and Pfc. Stanley Weinberg. There was no route of evacuation for the first two days, so wounded had to be cared for and left in the aid station until later.

The former Battalion O.P. in the railroad station south of Rittershoffen proved to be the hub of activity between Hatten and Niederbetschdorf. Not only was it the communications center, but also the C.P. for Hq. Co., O.P. for directing artillery fire on the southern part of Hatten, emergency aid station for the wounded coming out of Hatten, control point for all vehicles moving into and out of Hatten, and a defense line to avoid penetration from the east and southeast. One light tank from the 94th Rcn. was used extensively to carry personnel and supplies and to evacuate wounded from Hatten, making some 13 trips back and forth in the face of artillery and anti-tank fire. The O.P. received considerable shelling from artillery and tank but withstood it all. On the night of 14 January, an enemy patrol of some ten men boldly passed by the guards into the building, opened the door, and tossed in a grenade, causing but little damage. Another grenade was thrown into a radio vehicle outside, but no one was hurt. After the excitement, the patrol ran, but were engaged by small

arms fire. Next morning revealed that the patrol had departed leaving about six Teller Mines, a bazooka, and ammunition behind. Blood stains on the ground indicated the patrol had been hit, but evidently the wounded were carried off.

Throughout the night of the 14th, mortar and artillery fire fell heavily on our positions. An enemy patrol that penetrated to the center of the sector was also engaged in a fire fight that resulted in the capture of four and killing of five. During the early morning hours, a strong German attack was launched against "F" Company, 2nd Bn., 315th Inf. Rgt., who held the eastern perimeter of town. After a short battle, in which German flamethrowers and bazookas set fire to the two houses, "F" Company fell back four houses and, from the new positions, beat off the German attempt to follow up their gains. This was merely one of numberless attempts by the Germans to attack and set fire to our buildings with flamethrowers, bazookas, and by any other means possible to deny us use of the houses.

Ammunition, food, and supplies were getting scarce, and the route back to the O.P. during daylight was impossible for use, since it was under perfect observation and direct tank fire from the ridge just north of Hatten and Rittershoffen, as well as from the southern part of Hatten. Supplies had to be brought in at night; hence, a dump was set up along the road on the western edge of town, where companies could pick up supplies. The supplies had to be brought in on half-tracks. The wounded were carried back on these tracks. This dump was located by the enemy and shelled continually, making it not only difficult but very dangerous for those who came from the companies to pick up their supplies. No amount of credit could reward the men well enough who worked so hard and courageously to bring supplies to the dump in Hatten, and also those who carried supplies to their companies and platoons. Anyone coming into Hatten by daylight had to come in by tank, for small arms fire was continual along the supply route, and even the tanks were subjected to heavy artillery and tank fire. There was no safe place—no safe way to do anything.

As fast as possible, artillery and defensive fires had been adjusted in and Lt. David L. Graninger, L.O. with our battalion for the 499th AFA Bn., worked continually day and night to get these fires just right. A wall of artillery fire had been adjusted all around our positions, with concentrations given numbers. Each and every man in the battalion knew these concentrations, for every man was actually a forward observer and had a chance to adjust. The concentrations used were not exactly normal, as most of them were adjusted of necessity to within 35 to 50 yards of our positions, for this was where the enemy came and had to be stopped; one of the concentrations was fired, and upon detonation almost half the shrapnel went into our positions, but that was just right as the enemy was coming in close, so it had its effect. The concentrations had to be so close that when an "on the way" was given everyone stayed in the cellar or took cover. There was one concentration that will never be forgotten by the battalion, for it was fired more frequently than all the others and was actually only a few yards in front of our positions. This was concentration "Five Zero Nan", covering the street and houses at the eastern end of our

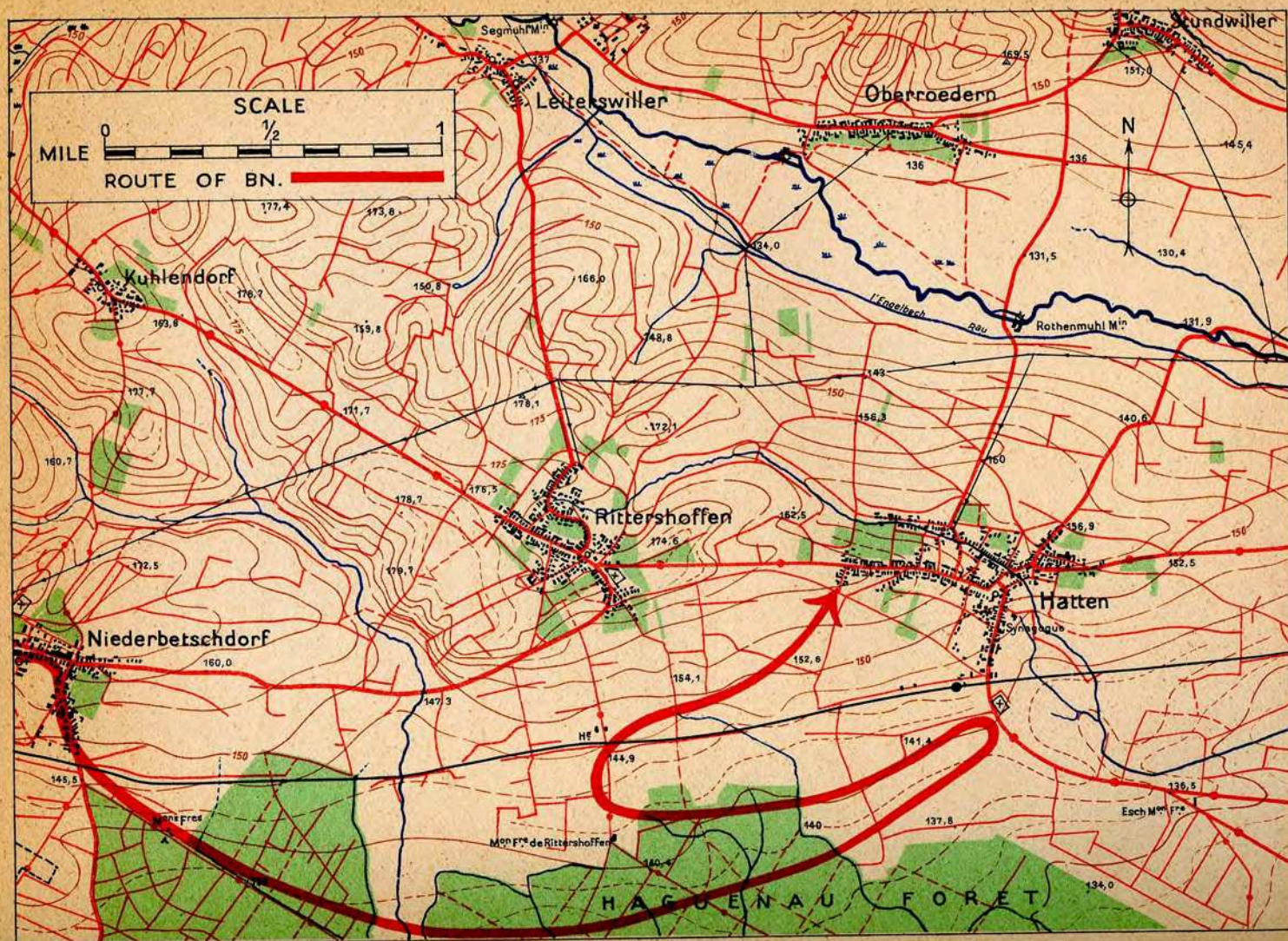
sector, where tanks and infantry continually attacked. The front lines for all was either the next house or right out of the window.

Throughout the day of 15 January, a great amount of mortar and artillery was fired by both sides, causing buildings to crumble one after the other. Civilians, by the hundreds, were in the basements of houses, with little or no food. It was no place for a human being to be walking around. Our "B" Co. replaced "F" Company of the 2nd Bn.; and companies were reorganized, with positions developed to afford better coverage of the surrounding terrain. By now, enemy troops opposing us had been identified as being from the 125th Panzer Grenadier Regt. and the 22nd Panzer Regt., both units of the 21st Panzer Division. It was learned that companies opposing us were changed daily in order that the troops would be fresh. It was as much a benefit to us as a hindrance, for the fresh troops not knowing the situation well enough could be caught off guard.

During the afternoon of 15 January, the battalion received an order to launch an attack on the main street, moving to the eastern end of town, and make a junction with elements of the 47th Tank Battalion, which was to come into town from the south. "C" Company was designated to attack. Two medium tanks from the 47th Tank Bn. were in support of "C". As "C" assembled for the attack, a terrific mortar barrage was laid on the area by the Germans, breaking up the assembly three times before the attack finally got under way in darkness. As the men moved onto the main street, the tank with the leading element also moved out, but mortar fire on the street junction completely scattered the infantry. As the infantry was reorganizing, the tank was accidentally knocked out by another American tank, so the infantry went on down the street with no tank support, as the crippled, burning tank completely blocked the street. The company moved on down the street to the first road junction, when the 3rd Platoon ran into heavy fire from the enemy, who had worked around to the platoon's flank. The intense fire was so heavy that the platoon had to give up the foremost house and move back to the next one where the 2nd platoon was located. It was suicide to try to move any further that night, so the company stayed in place, reorganized, and outposted positions.

During the night of 15 January, "A" Troop of the 94th Rcn. was also sent into Hatten, dismounted, to reinforce us. They were used as infantry, and caught the brunt of one of the most deadly German counter-attacks, suffering very heavy casualties. Attached from the 94th was their 81mm Mortars, which were also of great assistance with their highly accurate fire.

On 16 January, "C" Company continued its attack, mouseholing, using bazookas, and every means available to make progress through the battered houses, in the face of direct tank fire, automatic weapons, small arms, bazookas, and sniper fire. By 1300, however, the fire power of the enemy was so great that the company could go no farther. More houses were demolished by direct tank and artillery fire; hence the company was compelled to withdraw from several more houses, moving two platoons into a barn that was the only thing left to get into, not already overcrowded. All did



their share in helping carry the many wounded back to the aid station. A German was spotted in the rubble near the barn. An attempt was made to fire on him with a BAR, but the BAR failed to fire. Every weapon in the barn was then cleaned and test fired, the noise arousing a German tank, which pulled up close-by and fired point blank into the barn, killing two men and wounding several as the platoons withdrew from the barn. The proposed attack by the 47th Tank Battalion into the southern part of Hatten was also stopped flat.

In the afternoon, one platoon of "A" Company, commanded by Lt. Joe Osborne, jumped off to attack the north street, and entered the first house after a short fight capturing two Germans. Starting into the next house, the platoon became surrounded on three sides and was caught in a heavy crossfire of small arms. The situation was desperate, for there was too much opposition along the street for the platoon to handle. Lt. Jack R. DeWitt and his platoon hurriedly went forward to give assistance to Lt. Osborne's platoon; both platoons then pulled back into their previous positions under cover of smoke. The remainder of the day and night was spent in reorganizing our units, while the usual mortar and artillery fire fell in the area. During the night, an enemy force consisting of one Mark IV and a squad of infantrymen moved to a position 100 yards from Company "C's" eastern position on the main street. "Five Zero Nan" moved them back a little and dispersed them for the time. Probably the greatest morale builder came during the night as mail and doughnuts were brought in, to the joy of all.

One T.D. had been knocked out at the busy and dangerous intersection in the eastern part of our sector some time before we had moved into Hatten. Though the tank had been knocked out, the gun was apparently in good condition and in a perfect position to fire to the east, down the main street. It was decided to try to put the Negro crew back in the T.D. under cover of darkness, which they had consented to do. T/Sgt. John J. Conroy of "B" Company accompanied the crew down the street giving them instructions, when one of the crew asked what his chances were of coming out in one piece. "Oh, you've got a 50-50 chance", replied Conroy. "Lawd, 50-50, dat ain't enough for me", said the scared Negro, and dropping the ammunition, he turned around and took off up the road. The gun was never fired.

At 0800, 17 January, Company "A" received heavy small-arms fire from the east, and by 0850 the fire had become a full attack, with troops moving in against "C" Company. "C" was forced to fall back two houses in the face of direct tank fire from the main street. Artillery, mortar, small arms, and bazooka fire soon brought the attack to a halt. By 2200 the sector was very quiet, with only occasional mortar rounds falling instead of the usual, constant drumming. However, a new type of shell came in and burst with a time-fuse arrangement, emitting a shower of sparks, but no loud explosion or fragmentation. Next morning we discovered propaganda leaflets, so believed they had come from those shells. "B" Company replaced "C" Company on the eastern perimeter of defense during the night. "C" Company took up positions on the southern flank. At 0530 an enemy tank moved up along the

main street until it was within 150 yards of "B" Company's outpost. Artillery was adjusted on it; hence the tank moved back and fired three rounds into one of the houses occupied by our troops; eight-inch heavy artillery was then adjusted on it, within 200 yards of friendly troops, whereupon it withdrew completely.

That evening a bitter loss was suffered when Capt. Thomas E. Conboy, C.O. of "B" Company, was instantly killed by mortar fire, returning from the Battalion C.P. Lt. Russell T. Blair took charge of "B" Company in place of Capt. Conboy. Much of the credit for "B" Company's successful defense of heavily, besieged position must go to the vigorous and able leadership of Capt. Conboy.

The 18th was the most quiet day we had in Hatten, and except for the usual mortar and artillery fire, our positions were not molested until 1820, when a sudden burst of small arms fire hit "B" Company's outpost. The enemy tank returned to its position on the main street, fired once against "B" Company's positions, but "Five Zero Nan" ran it off again. Although it was comparatively quiet, it was still unsafe to even step outside a house, as a sniper would take a shot from nearby positions, or the uncanny mortar fire would pick off anything that moved. There was rubble everywhere and always more houses burning. The supply dump had to be moved to a better spot and better organized, so T/Sgt. Joe Levine, Battalion Operations Sergeant, voluntarily, with the aid of several other men, moved the dump to a barn behind the C.P. and organized an efficient supply system. An attempt was made to lay a telephone line back to the O.P., but before the crew went 200 yards the line had been hit a dozen times with mortar fire. With the peep almost wrecked, the crew had to give it up and return. A better system was organized for evacuating all the wounded in Hatten to a house that had been selected in "A" Company's area. From here they were to be taken by half-track back to the aid station in Niederbetschdorf; this system worked very efficiently.

Things were comparatively quiet in Hatten that day, but at the rear Battalion C.P. in Niederbetschdorf it was a little different. Shelling in the town had been rather intermittent and everything comparatively quiet until a heavy round came into the building and detonated. Miraculously none were killed, but three officers and five enlisted men had to be evacuated due to injuries. During the day a German jet-propelled plane bombed and strafed Niederbetschdorf, causing considerable damage. The aid station was also a busy place, with the ever-increasing number of wounded being brought in. An average of 40 to 50 men a day were treated for wounds, necessitating a day and night watch to care for and evacuate the injured. The aid station was evacuating wounded for the 19th, 94th Rcn. 47th Tank Bn., elements of the 315th Inf. Regt. of the 79th Div., and men from the 42nd Inf. Div. During the first day of attack, a total of nine ambulances were in continuous use, evacuating casualties.

In the late afternoon of the 18th, "A" Company on the north spotted the enemy trying to infiltrate so attempted to adjust mortar fire on them. When this was found ineffective, they adjusted artillery, forcing the patrol to withdraw. Things remained

rather quiet after that except for a few brief skirmishes. They were too quiet, in fact. We felt there must be something up—and there was. At 0720 on 19 January a sudden barrage of mortar, artillery, and direct tank fire hit our positions. 120 and 85 mm mortar shells, and some with delayed fuses, started falling in such profusion that it was impossible to even attempt to count them or make a close estimation. They kept falling just like a hail storm, for our area was small and their fire could be concentrated. Untouched, not even a small bird would have had much chance of flying through such deadly hail; in fact, on all sides birds, cows, dogs, horses, and chickens were to be found lying. Buildings were crumbling everywhere, but there wasn't a thing anyone could do but take as good cover as possible and wait. The Battalion C.P. received eight direct hits. Casualties among the guards at the windows and doors were high, even though this was one of the best protected buildings in our area. The terrific barrage lifted at about 0915. At the peak of this uncanny barrage, we were receiving direct fire from the ridge directly to our north as well as along the main street and from the southern end of Hatten. The aid station was hit three times, wounding Capt. Charles Hawkins and killing two other aid men, and setting the building on fire, so that the aid station had to be moved to the rear of the Battalion C.P. The 94th Rcn. started an ambulance into Hatten that morning but it was knocked out. T/5 Tate and Pfc. Joseph O'Conner then drove our own ambulance into Hatten through the barrage and evacuated 27 casualties. These were the first casualties evacuated from Hatten by daylight, and although it drew a little enemy fire, it was in more danger of being accidentally hit by one of our own tanks. The C.P. of the 2nd Bn., 315th Inf. was also hit, forcing them to move into the basement of a house across the street.

While this tremendous enemy barrage was going on at an estimated 3000 rounds per hour, we called for all the artillery support we could get, and we got it. There were seventeen battalions of artillery, who gave us supporting fire. With both the enemy's and our own artillery fire pouring into Hatten, words could never describe the sound or effect of those fires. Not a single building in Hatten had remained untouched, and all there was left anywhere was just a battered house or two or a wall ready to collapse at any time.

When the enemy barrage lifted at 0915, enemy personnel moved in against both the northern and eastern defenses, apparently expecting little opposition after their barrage; but they were wrong again, for our small arms and artillery scattered and broke up the attack. As they were trying to assemble in a draw in the woods to "A" Company's front, artillery was thrown in on them, inflicting heavy casualties, so they failed to attack again. Over in "B" Company's area the Jerries had brought up tanks and infantry. Mortar fire fell in one of the houses, sealing up temporarily their escape route through the wreckage of buildings. Shrapnel knocked out their radio, but they managed to get out and withdraw down the street. Three or four houses back a line was formed by the AT Platoon, and facing the Krauts with rifles, carbines, bazookas, and hand grenades they made a heroic stand, inflicting heavy

casualties, and forcing the enemy to withdraw and reorganize. The rest of the company formed another line and outposted the barns, but the enemy never got past the first line. A German, white, camouflaged tank was brought up in the field to the south of the houses, blasting into houses and barns, inflicting heavy casualties until one of our medium tanks was brought up into position, forcing it to withdraw. Pfc. Joseph Lowinger was all over Hatten that day with a bazooka, looking for any German tank. His search was rewarded when he found one. He fired a round into the turret, but didn't stay around to see the results.

The night of 18-19 January was exceptionally quiet—even the ever present mortars were not firing into our positions, except with sporadic fire. We're still holding on to what we had left, but our casualties had been great and our effective strength very low. We were anxiously awaiting reinforcements, because the men were physically and mentally exhausted and very badly in need of a rest.

January 20 was another rather quiet day, but there was some enemy activity in the southern part of Hatten taking place. Capt. Guy A. Pederzani and Lt. Grainger went to the barn on the side of the area over-looking the entire southern part of Hatten and started firing mortar and artillery at personnel and gun emplacements spotted there. Krauts were scrambling everywhere as they continued to fire; but shortly the Germans started firing at our positions. It was not only difficult to pick up and adjust rounds, but the barn was getting a little too hot. We ceased firing and evacuated the barn just in time.

The unusual quiet extended throughout the day and even 50 mm mortar fire had replaced the 120 mm stuff, to which we had become accustomed. At 1600 we received orders to pull out of Hatten and fall back to positions near Haguenau to straighten out the line, as we were sticking way out in front.

The news that we were to withdraw was taken several ways; we were glad to get a chance to get out from under this "tight" spot, and yet we had effectively withstood everything they could throw at us and felt that we should have the chance to continue the attack and take Hatten with a little more help. There was the dread, too, of having to move out on foot, back across the open, flat field along the railroad to Niederbetschdorf, which was under continual small arms, artillery, and tank fire.

Detailed Plans were made for the withdrawal, for there was ammunition, weapons, knocked-out tanks, rations, and unmovable AT guns that could not be carried back and it was going to be a difficult task to break contact with the enemy, who was still right in the back yard. God was with us that day, for it was snowing hard enough to obscure enemy observation. Just as it began to get dark at 1800, the wounded and a few vehicles, heavily laden with all equipment possible piled on them, started back across the field to Niederbetschdorf. Outposts of the companies, with a rear guard, were to remain in place until the last elements withdrew, and then under command of Lt. Jack R. DeWitt, withdraw with the tanks, T.D.'s, and demolition squad, who were to blow up all equipment left. After the vehicles and

wounded moved out, the rest, at fifteen minute intervals, started marching back in order of A-94, G-315 (—), A-19 (—), C-19 (—), E-315 (—), F-315 (—), B-19 (—), outposts, rear guards, and demolition, with tanks and T.D.'s. As the remainder of Bn. Hq. started moving out, right after "B" Company passed by, a half-track, from our battalion, loaded with every kind of equipment, went dead from a piece of shrapnel that had cut the gas line; therefore, it had to be abandoned. The outposts and rear guards had quite a little fire fight as they began to pull out of their positions, but managed effectively to break off contact with the enemy. They marched part of the way back across the field, then mounted tanks and T.D.'s moving on into Niederbetschdorf, where the battalion quickly reorganized, mounted on vehicles, and started in convoy to Freidolsheim, France. Men virtually collapsed in their vehicles, unmindful of the jolting and uncomfortable half-tracks; most slept for the first time in over a week as the column slowly moved along. The roads, jammed with traffic that night, were very slick. Other units were also moving back to straighten their lines, adding to the road congestion. It wasn't until 0930, 21 January, that the battalion closed into Friedolsheim.

When the wounded had come back to the aid station in Niederbetschdorf from Hatten their faces were all smiles, if they were able to smile, for they knew they were safe, safe from an unbelieving "Hell". During the eight days battle in Hatten, our battalion had suffered 194 casualties. True, we had paid dearly, and though we had never taken the town, we had inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, had again stopped the nose of the threatened German breakthrough, and delayed their drive until positions farther back could be consolidated and the line straightened out. We, who were there, will never forget, as we had inflicted extremely heavy casualties on the enemy. Just how many casualties we inflicted on them we will never know, but civilians later told us there were daily streams of Jerry casualties evacuated through town, behind the lines and the dead were never buried together, so we could never find out just how many casualties they had suffered in Hatten.

CHAPTER V

REORGANIZATION AND DEFENSE OF ALSACE

Upon closing in on our new area in Freidolsheim, everyone was interested first in getting a rest and cleaning up. The town was exceptionally nice, though too small, and the people very friendly, especially at the Catholic School, where we were allowed to use the auditorium and other facilities. It didn't take but a few days for everyone to get back to normalcy, for we were some ten miles behind the lines, and the only disturbance was the distant roar and flash of guns that we were well accustomed to by now. There was the usual job of establishing road blocks and outposts as a precaution, but these were easy posts compared to the ones we had just come away from. Duffle bags were brought up and clean clothes obtained, along with personal items.

On 24 January, Capt. William F. George became commanding officer of Headquarters Company, and on the same date Lt. Gray Thoron became commanding officer of "B" Company.

Lt. Jack R. DeWitt was assigned to, and became commanding officer of "C" Company, 25 January, receiving his Captaincy, 1 February. On 8 February, "C" Company was moved to the next village of Landersheim, France.

During the period 21 January to 17 February, while the battalion was stationed in Freidolsheim and Landersheim, France, our activities were more or less limited to rehabilitation of personnel, receipt of reinforcements, resupply of equipment, maintenance, scheduled training, and Special Service functions. During this period the battalion received ninety-nine new reinforcements in addition to the lightly wounded, who returned to us after short periods of medical care.

All entertainment possible was conducted. There were a number of movies shown, a stage show by the 68th A.I.B., and our own show that received good publicity and was well received. Pfc. LeLand Anderson of the Medical Detachment, who directed the show, also wrote a battalion song that was accepted as such.

While in Freidolsheim, passes became available to us for the first time, allowing an officer and a few enlisted men at a time to take trips to Paris, Brussels, and Nancy. It was always a scramble to see who would or could go, but rosters were kept.

The new reinforcements were given special training, and shortly blended in with the general battalion training, including the basic subjects of firing of small arms, heavy weapons, road marches, combat experiences, and practical exercises. The exercises were of two types: (1) the attack of a ridge-line by a rifle company,

HAIL!! THE 19TH A.I.B.

LYRIC BY—PFC LELAND D. ANDERSON

TUNE: "CHICAGO U"

WE'RE THE TOUGH GUYS OF THE AR—MY THE
NINE TEENTH A. I. B. WE DON'T FIGHT FOR FAME AND GLO-RY 'TIS TO
SET THE WHOLE WORLD FREE OURS THE TASK OF SPEED-ING FOR-WARD KNIF-ING
THRU THE ENE—MY GUYS OF GUTS UN-DY-ING COURAGE THE 19TH
ARMORED IN—FAN-TRY.

The musical score is handwritten on five staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written on the upper line, while the accompaniment is written in block chords on the lower lines. The lyrics are written above the notes. The second staff continues the melody and accompaniment. The third staff also continues the melody and accompaniment. The fourth staff continues the melody and accompaniment. The fifth staff begins with the lyrics 'ARMORED IN—FAN-TRY.' and shows the beginning of a new musical phrase, but it is cut off by a double bar line.

2ND CHORUS:

THRU BLASTING SHELLS WE NEVER FALTER
THE 19TH A.I.B.
NO ODDS TOO GREAT FOR US TO CONQUER
OUR CAUSE IS LIBERTY
LIVE ON, BRAVE SONS WHO DIED AMONG US
YOURS IS THE VICTORY
ALL HAIL!! A BAND OF LOYAL BROTHERS
THE 19TH ARMORED INFANTRY.

supported by tanks, and (2) the attack of a village by a rifle company, reinforced by a tank platoon and artillery. The first exercise was participated in by each company, with one platoon from one of the other companies acting as defense. The second exercise was participated in by each company twice, one exercise involving the attack of Freidolsheim from the north, the other attacking Freidolsheim from the south. One company acted as defender of the town on each attack. Various platoons of tanks from the 47th Tank Battalion were alternated on these problems to the mutual benefit of ourselves and the tankers. It was here we ironed out many of the problems confronting tank-infantry coordination, which proved very beneficial in the months to come.

Time was sufficient for all to catch up on belated letter writing and the war news in general, which we were so far behind on, except in our own small sector. News looked good and we were hoping and dimly expecting the European War to end before we were again committed. This was too good to be true, though, and we shortly learned there was a long way to go yet.

On 18 February, the battalion was detached from CCR and attached to CCB, receiving as an attachment the 2nd Platoon of Company "C", 25th Tank Bn. At 2030, 18 February, orders were received from CCB directing the battalion to relieve elements of the 409th Infantry Regt., 103rd Inf. Div., in Ettendorf, Pfaffenhoffen, and La Walck, France, and assume responsibility for that sector. Company Commanders were given warning orders and instructed to contact elements they were to relieve by 0800, 19 February. At 1400 that afternoon, company and detachment commanders were assembled and issued orders for the move to the assigned area. Billeting parties went forward to select locations for housing of personnel.

The battalion started the mounted march at once by company infiltration, and by midnight had closed in to their assigned areas, starting relief of elements of the 409th Infantry immediately. The enemy occupied the line running generally north, bordering on the Moder River, though Pfaffenhoffen and La Walck were in friendly hands. Across the Moder River Valley, the enemy had perfect observation, so it was not safe to take vehicles north of the ridgeline, running generally east from Schalkendorf to Ringeldorf. Both "A" and "B" Companies, with time interval between, moved up mounted as far as Schalkendorf and Ringeldorf, respectively, dismounted, and went on foot to their positions, while vehicles moved back just south of Ettendorf in a battalion pool where vehicles were dispersed. The other companies and detachments were able to move mounted to positions.

Company "A" occupied the O.P.L.R. in La Walck and Pfaffenhoffen. Company "B" completed the relief of the 2nd Platoon, "G" Company, 409th Inf. at 2245 and occupied the M.L.R. on the high ground south of Pfaffenhoffen, France. "C" Company occupied positions in Ettendorf, France, and constituted battalion reserve. Headquarters Company attached the Machine-Gun Platoon to "B" Company; the 81mm Mortar Platoon went into positions, with two squads directly behind the two squads on the extreme left flank of "B" Company, whose mission was to provide

general support for the battalion; the Assault Gun Platoon with its new 105 Howitzers went into positions near Ettendorf, tied in with the 501st AFA F.D.C. for direct support of the battalion; and the Reconnaissance Platoon was used to operate two observation posts twenty-four hours daily, in addition to maintaining a mounted patrol to contact the C.P. of the unit on our left. The 68th A.I.B. initially occupied positions on our right, and elements of the 409th Inf. Regt. were on the left. Battalion Headquarters was located in Ettendorf, as were Hq. Co. C.P., the Medical Detachment Base Aid Station, and Battalion Maintenance. Service Company remained in Freidolsheim and transported supplies and ammunition to the battalion by truck.

At 0100, 20 February, Patrol No. 1, consisting of S/Sgt. Clinton H. Hildabrand and four other men from "C" Company, left the O.P.L.R. at La Walck with a mission of reconnoitering the high ground north of La Walck to determine whether the enemy were occupying the position. The patrol reached its objective without drawing any enemy fire and found the positions unoccupied at the time.

"A" Company on the O.P.L.R. continued to organize its positions, making a solid front to prevent German patrols slipping through. Surveys of the area were made and plans drawn up to construct additional concertina wire, trip flares, and anti-tank mines along the O.P.L.R. A forward aid station was set up in Pfaffenhoffen, with Capt. George A. Hager, Jr. in charge. All outlying houses on the northern perimeter, as well as the flanks, had to be occupied and outposted, for it was too easy for enemy patrols at night to slip over the ridge and infiltrate up to positions.

"B" Company on the M.L.R. along the high ground south of Pfaffenhoffen made surveys of its positions, drawing up plans to construct such additional wire entanglements, gun emplacements, trip flares, and foxholes required to make the line impregnable. The AT Platoon initially occupied positions on the left flank of the M.L.R. to give protection against possible tank attack. All positions were dug in on the forward slope of the high ground as there were only two buildings in the sector, with one used for the company C.P. No movement could be made around the positions during daylight, because the enemy had perfect observation. When daily reliefs were made they were made only at night to deny observation and giving away of positions.

"C" Company, in battalion reserve, occupied positions in, and outposted Ettendorf, with prepared positions around the perimeter of town for its defense. In addition, the company was used to make practically all patrols and raids as long as they were in reserve.

Artillery observers had excellent O.P.'s in both "A" and "B" Company sectors, were able to pick out anything that moved, and they usually fired at everything that moved. It was an artilleryman's paradise. The enemy did shell our positions, but most of the fire was intermittent mortar and artillery fire, for they knew well what they would receive in return if they did any extensive shelling. Everyone walked around down the road into Pfaffenhoffen and La Walck with but little danger of being fired on, except when occasional small barrages were thrown in. Moving north

from La Walck, however, was impractical because of small arms fire. Since vehicles could not go all the way into "A" and "B" Company's positions during daylight, it was necessary to carry supplies in during the night or drive up just so far, dismount, and go on foot the rest of the way. A complicated telephone wire system was instigated so practically everyone had contact; and at night in the isolated outposts so frequently subjected to enemy patrols, it felt good to be able to talk to someone. Reports of any activity were reported—it was a constant job to write down the many happenings that took place, but the actions were well rewarded, as everyone knew what was going on, at least as much as possible.

The open area from the O.P.L.R. in La Walck, north for some 700 yards was a gradually-sloping field toward an east-west ridge line that started sloping down again beyond the ridge. The field was heavily mined, with shu mines everywhere, making it difficult and dangerous to move across. It wasn't advisable, but numerous times men walked during daylight up to the ridge without being fired on, as the enemy normally occupied it only during the night to avoid our penetration.

At 0200, 20 February, Lt. Joseph Osborne and seven men of "C" Company formed reconnaissance patrol No. 2, reconnoitering the high ground just south of Bitschoffen. At the edge of Bitschoffen they located a three-man, machine-gun outpost that fired at them and then ran off into town. The patrol returned to La Walck intact.

Again on 22 February, at 0200, Lt. Osborne, with a raiding party of twenty men from "C" Company, started out from La Walck with the mission of capturing the machine-gun outpost located by the reconnaissance they had made two days previously. The party assaulted the position but discovered it was not occupied. They then reconnoitered all of the surrounding area, locating many positions, all of which were empty.

The battalion had instigated a system of calling in the photo-interpreter from division, who furnished recent and old aerial photos of our front for comparison, whereby changes in enemy positions or movements could easily be detected. The patrols were briefed on their mission previous to the time they started out so each man would know just what to do; and each man was allowed to observe the photos. It proved to be a very satisfactory method, and also before the men went on the patrols they were well acquainted with what they were to do and what to expect.

There was an enemy horse and wagon, thought to be a chow wagon making the rounds of the guards, which was out every night. When this wagon was reported by any of the outposts, several barrages of artillery would be brought in on the suspected place. The forward observer, Lt. John Meyer, zeroed in artillery concentrations for the use of the outposts when he was not on the spot. The Second Platoon Mortar Squad of Company "A" discovered that the Germans at a certain outpost pulled back just as daylight broke each morning. One day they waited for them to leave their post and then laid in a perfect barrage on the Jerries.

A well-hidden enemy observer was discovered by the Second Platoon Mortar and Machine-Gun Squads, so they prepared to get him. S/Sgt. William Johnson, Machine-Gun Squad leader, set up two light guns. S/Sgt. Weldon Schickel, Mortar Squad leader, set up the mortar and prepared his ammunition. The forward observer brought both the machine-gun and mortar in on the target, after laying in a little artillery. With Pfc.'s Elmer Hornback, Robert Holyoke, and Earl Duncan on the mortar and Pfc.'s Howard Wruck, Eelmus Brooks, Kenneth Barrett, and S/Sgt. Erwin Eisle and William Johnson on the machine-guns, the enemy observer had no chance. Soon a group of German medics came out and carried the wounded away. They were allowed to complete their mission unharmed. No more observers were seen in that particular spot.

One night the Second Platoon Mortar Squad discovered a German patrol of seven men moving past the outpost. Pfc.'s Wruck and Brooks quickly ran upstairs to man the machine-gun, while the rest of the squad fired at the patrol with their personal weapons. The patrol sent up a red flare that was a signal for their artillery to give them support. The men realized what the flare meant, so they all took cover. The enemy artillery came in, one shell landing about five feet to the left of the machine-gun, knocking down a corner of the building, allowing the German patrol to escape.

At 1930, 22 February, S/Sgt. Knud V. A. Jensen of "C" Company led a patrol of four men, whose mission was to determine the condition of the bridge north of Bitschoffen. The patrol reached the Kindwiller-Bitschoffen road, were challenged by a German guard, and fired upon as they withdrew. They continued farther to the east but were finally forced to withdraw completely when fired upon from Bitschoffen.

S/Sgt. Steven L. Zabloudil of "B" Company led a nine-man patrol on 24 February, starting at 0100, with a mission of ambushing German patrols. The patrol reached the crossroads between Kindwiller and Bitschoffen, and lay in ambush until time to return to its own lines without seeing any Germans. Though no Germans were contacted, the patrol brought back two Teller Mines from a mine field found on the crossroads.

At 2000, 24 February, Lt. Joe Levine of "B" Company led a four-man patrol towards the western edge of Bitschoffen, with the sole mission of capturing a P.W. They heard many sounds made by enemy personnel, but could not locate any, so finally withdrew without completing the mission, but with much information of mine fields and emplacements unoccupied. At 1100, 25 February, Lt. Mike Auer of Company "A" led a four-man patrol to the ridge north of La Walck also with the mission of taking a P.W. The patrol moved boldly across the open, sloping terrain, reached its limit of patrol route, located enemy emplacements, a mine field, and barbed wire entanglements, but contacted no enemy troops. The patrol returned intact at 1300.

Higher headquarters at this time had been continually after us to capture prisoners, or even just one. They were so anxious to obtain a P.W. that almost anything would be granted to the man who brought one in. Loud speaker systems were used trying to encourage the Germans to give up and come in and propaganda leaflets were used, but still little results. The main reason they didn't surrender was because they couldn't. It was reported that in each German company there was a rabid SS'er who would kill anyone attempting to give up, and they were also threatened that if they did surrender their folks at home would be killed. Some wanted to give up and did surrender in the wooded areas on our flanks, where they could take cover; however, our front was wide open, and not only were they afraid we would shoot them but there was the danger of their own troops shooting them for trying to give up.

At 2200, 25 February, Lt. Robert Lingle led a 10-man patrol from "C" Company up to the sunken road just south of Bitschoffen. They were to set up an ambush to capture a P.W. They heard a group of Germans some distance north of their positions and saw two Germans on the sunken road. As the ambush party spread out to cover the area through which the Germans would walk, a machine-gun opened up on Lt. Lingle's party from a position east of the La Walck-Bitschoffen road. Warned by the fire, the two Germans ducked into hiding beyond the crest of the ridge. The patrol eventually withdrew under intermittent small arms fire and returned to our lines.

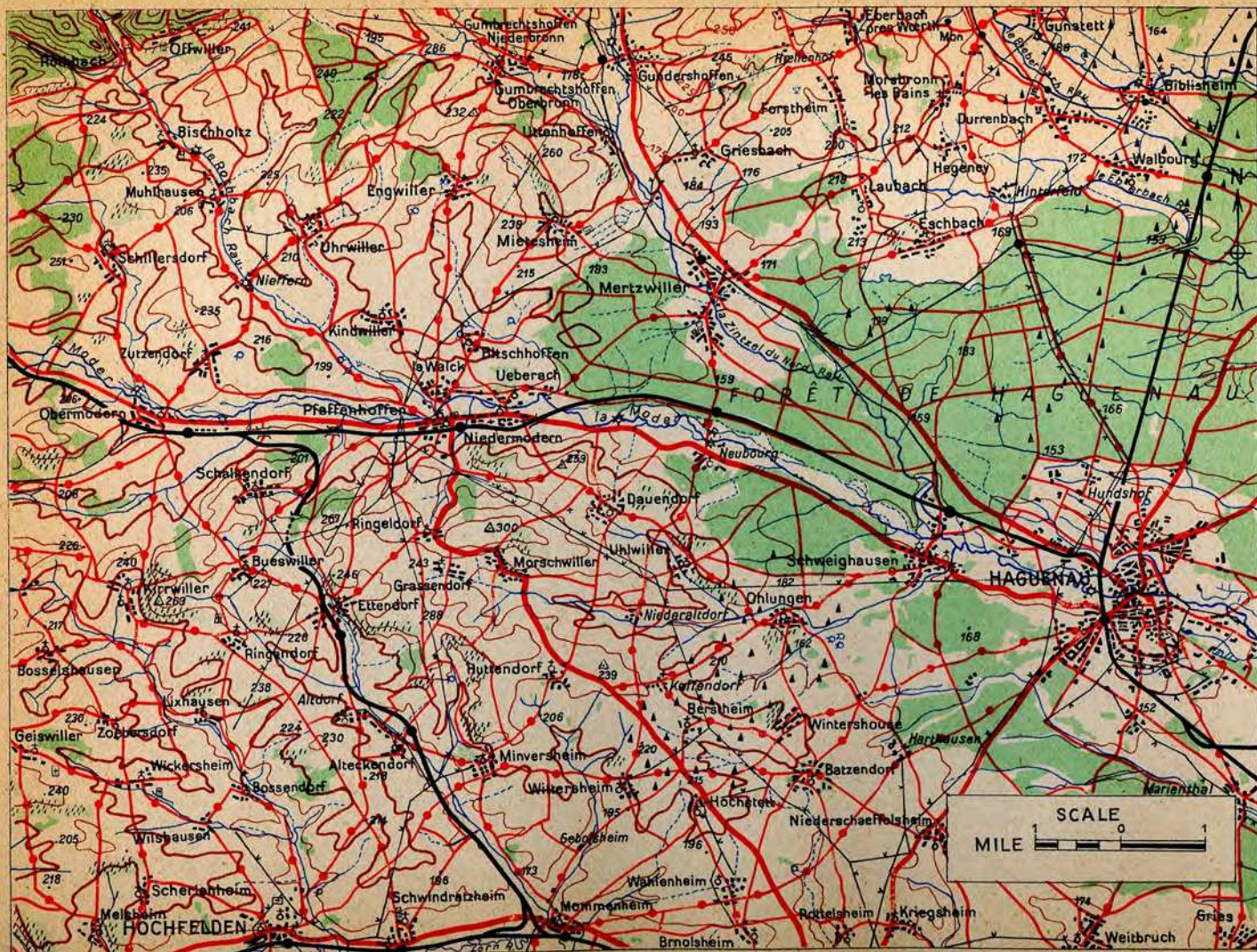
During the 25th of February plans were made for a company raid on Bitschoffen, so Capt. Jack R. DeWitt of "C" Company was briefed on the plans. Preparation for artillery and small arms, supporting fires, was completed, whereby "C" Company made its plans, briefing its personnel. The next day also was spent in completing the study of plans for the raid. All non-commissioned officers were shown the ground over which the raid would move. Aerial photos were studied carefully and all information previously obtained regarding the area was carefully studied.

During the night of 26-27 February, "C" Company moved from Ettendorf to Ringeldorf by truck, then on foot to La Walck ready to make the attack. A Battalion O.P. was set up in the last house in La Walck on the eastern road to Bitschoffen, with an emergency aid station close by. The night was clear and bright, with nearly a full moon shining as the company moved down the road to the L.D. They jumped off quietly as the two flank security detachments moved out, traveling diagonally to the flanks; one to the east and one to the west, to set up machine-guns on terrain giving them observation and grazing fire along the flanks of the company. The First Platoon under Lt. Osborne moved along the west side of the La Walck-Bitschoffen road and Lt. Robert Lingle, with the 2nd Platoon, moved along the east side of the road toward the sand-pit. The 3rd Platoon remained in support in the orchard just on the west side of the road along with Company Hq. The AT Platoon was split, with the 1st squad having the mission of moving to the right of the road toward the sandpit and knocking out one of the machine-guns just short of the pit, while the 2nd and 3rd squads moved to the left of the road.

There was no artillery firing, for the raid was to be a surprise. The platoons moved slowly and cautiously along, as the field was filled with shu mines and booby traps. The 2nd squad of the AT Platoon swung around to hit the machine-gun nest, but found it unoccupied, so continued on toward the sand-pit. Suddenly they and the whole 2nd Platoon were fired upon by machine-gun fire from the sand-pit and pinned to the ground. Everything cut loose then. The 1st Platoon had succeeded in getting all the way to the road intersection in the edge of town when, they, too, came under heavy small-arms and mortar fire, which killed one man. Lt. Lingle lost contact with his right flank security, so went over to find where it was. While he was gone, the heavy fire had caused confusion and disorganization in the platoon, so they had started to pull back before support could be sent forward. Meantime, the 1st Platoon was getting anxious to make the assault on the town to get out from under the heavy fire, but with the right flank unprotected, it was useless to try to make the assault. Medium, trajectory, 75mm fire was also being received directly by the 2nd platoon from the woods east of Bitschoffen; the situation looked bad until the company could pull back to reorganize. It was too near dawn to go any farther so orders were given for the whole company to pull back into La Walck. As the 1st Platoon was pulling back, they were receiving machine-gun fire from the sand-pit to the east across the road. Cpl. Gordon Johnson from the 3rd AT squad set up a machine-gun firing at the enemy machine-gun, keeping them down as the platoon pulled back to safety. The company finally managed to pull back, a count revealing three men killed and two wounded. After pulling back into La Walck, the company marched on foot to Ringeldorf, where they loaded on trucks and went back to Ettendorf; here the men were given hot coffee and food.

Around 1100 that morning, Sgt. William Johnson of Company "A" led an eight-man patrol over the area "C" Company had attacked the night before, with the mission of recovering the body of one of the men who had been killed. The mission was accomplished with no difficulty.

The days spent in our sector were considered quite a rest and it almost seemed like civilian life, since everyone, including civilians, moved around in Pfaffenhoffen as though nothing was wrong except for a few incoming shells and a shattered building here and there; yet the enemy was only about a half mile away in the next town, watching every move we made but no one paid any attention. Plenty of wine and food was had by all and it was rather a joyous "vacation". Nights were completely different, though, as everyone was on the alert for attacks or patrols, and the men in the houses on outposts were plenty nervous. No outposts were relieved unless warned first by phone that someone friendly was on the way, for everything that moved was fired on, or a flare was fired to determine what was coming off. Innumerable flares were fired and there was hardly ever a period of over thirty minutes when some flare was not fired. Sleeping at night in or near the houses on outpost just couldn't be done, so sleep had to be obtained during the day.



Company "A", which had been enjoying its stay in La Walck, reluctantly gave up their positions and on 28 February, after an order, "A" and "C" Companies exchanged positions, with "C" occupying the O.P.L.R. in La Walck and "A" taking over positions back in Ettendorf. The AT Platoon of "A" Company was attached to "C" Company and remained in position in Pfaffenhoffen, for the AT Platoon of "C" was acting as security guard at CCB. "B" Company still remained in its original position on the M.L.R.

At 0300, the morning of 28 February, patrol number nine, consisting of ten men, went out with the mission of taking a P.W. The patrol went to the crest of the ridge south of Bitschoffen, waiting in ambush for fifty minutes, patrolled farther north, then returned to our lines at 0518 with information on new but unoccupied enemy positions along the ridge.

At 0300 on March 1st, a raiding party of 55 men led by Lt. Mike Auer of "A" Company started on a mission of hitting the southern end of Bitschoffen to take prisoners. It was pitch dark when the party slowly made its way through the mine field toward the ridge to the north, where they were to cut east and enter the town. It was very quiet, nothing at all happening to the raiding party, when an outpost of the 2nd Platoon suddenly broke in on the phone announcing that there was an enemy patrol just outside their house, and that they were going to shoot a flare to see what was there. They were immediately told to hold up for a second as a flare would have exposed the raiding party out on the ridge. The raiding party was notified that a flare was about to be fired and to take cover, which they did, but there was nothing there but the bare ground to hug. The flare was fired. A burst of fire was heard around the house, but it was our men on the outpost doing the firing; no enemy had been seen. The enemy had evidently disappeared or someone was just a little too jumpy. At any rate, the flare had disclosed Lt. Auer's position, so his raiding party suddenly became engaged in a hot fire-fight. The surprise element was lost and, dawn not being long away, the party withdrew back into our lines. Although the mission of taking P.W.'s was not accomplished, they did bring back much valuable information on the disposition of enemy troops, mines, and new defensive works.

During the next two days, the battalion sector was rather quiet, with a little exchange of mortar and artillery fire. We sent out a reconnaissance patrol that was fired on through error by friendly troops on the flanks and forced to return. The matter was taken up through regular military channels and cleared up.

During the 3rd of March, tentative arrangements for the relief of the battalion by the 68th were made with representatives of CCA. The usual contact patrols with adjacent units were maintained, and at 1700 a coordinated fire plan, resulting in the employment of all available weapons, covered the wooded area east of Bitschoffen with concentrated fire.

March 4th was spent in routine patrolling and improvement of defensive position. We were notified that several of the gun positions the Reconnaissance Platoon

and other outposts had taken bearings on had been very accurate; hence, counter-battery fire had eliminated several of the positions. At 1900, memorandum was received directing the relief of CCA. The relief became effective at 2000. Patrolling and improvement of positions continued until 1800, 5 March, when another coordinated fire plan was conducted, with all weapons again firing into Bitschoffen and the wooded area east of it. Immediately after this firing, a propaganda broadcast was directed through the public address system to the enemy.

The next day an order was issued, which was to become effective upon completion of relief of the Battalion by the 68th A.I.B. A skeleton staff from Hq. and companies of the 68th had come down during the day to get information on our defenses in order to make quick effective relief. By 2400 the entire battalion was on the road back to our new area some ten miles away. By 0110 that night we had closed into our new area, with "A" Company in Ingenheim and the rest of the battalion in Saessolsheim, France.

We remained here for the next few days, resupplying, cleaning up, training, and did a little practice firing with the 57mm AT guns and 50 cal. machine-guns. Again there were the usual outposts for security. One day it was necessary to set up road blocks to try to locate a 2 1/2 ton truck that had been stolen somewhere and contained top secret classification.

An order was received from CCB at 1037 on March 10 directing that all staff officers and company commanders be prepared to make a route reconnaissance to an area we were to take over, so at 1430 the group left to make this reconnaissance. At 1645 all platoon leaders left the battalion area also to reconnoiter the positions we were to take over from elements of the 2nd and 3rd Bn., 142nd Infantry, 36th Inf. Division.

The battalion started moving by vehicle at noon on the 11th, with Bn. Hq., Hq. Co., and Medical Detachment in Ohlungen. "A" moved into Uhlwiller as battalion reserve. "B" Company moved mounted as far as Ohlungen, where vehicles were parked and men and equipment moved by foot and peep under cover of darkness to their position on the Moder River to constitute the left front of the battalion. "B" Company's front at this time was approximately 2500 yards. "C" Company also moved as far as Ohlungen mounted, then parked their vehicles and under cover of darkness marched by foot and with peeps to their area. Their area was along the Moder River, extending from "B"'s right flank at the west edge of Schweighausen, through and including Schweighausen east to tie in with the 141st Inf. Regt. on the western edge of Haguenau. "C" Company's front at this time was some 1500 yards wide and included the town of Schweighausen. Our battalion had completed relief of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 142nd Infantry by 2215.

Our mission here was to defend the area assigned along the Moder River; it was somewhat like the area of La Walck just to the west, which we had been occupying just a few days previously. It was a little rougher here, though, especially

for "B" Company, which had to stay in dugouts in the woods. On our left flank was an element of the 94th Rcn. and on the right in Haguenau, the 141st Inf. Regt. It was just a stone's throw across the Moder River from our positions to enemy territory and even closer then that at times, because the dense woods made it possible for enemy patrols to come into our thinly occupied area.

The Assault Gun Platoon was in position near Ohlungen, supporting the battalion; the Mortar Platoon was split in two sections, with one section being attached and set up behind "C" Company in Schweighausen, and the other behind "B" Company in direct support. The Reconnaissance Platoon was held in Ohlungen for battalion use, with the exception of the men who were used to man O.P.'s in Schweighausen. The platoon of medium tanks attached to us from the 25th Tank Battalion was placed in Schweighausen also in support of "C" Company. A rifle platoon from "A" Company was detached and sent to provide security for CCB Headquarters.

Hardly had we gotten settled the first morning when a German deserter walked into "C" Company's sector and gave himself up. He claimed to be an Alsatian and provided us with much valuable information regarding enemy dispositions. A patrol, led by Lt. Joe Levine of "B" Company, boldly moved into the German lines through the woods to the railroad, where the patrol ran into a friendly patrol from the unit on the right, almost getting into a fire fight before recognizing that they were friendly troops. The patrol continued on for a short distance, then ran into enemy outposts, and after a brief fire fight withdrew into our lines without losses.

Positions were continually improved. "B" Company in the woods, of necessity, had to dig in well and put logs on top of their dugouts, for there was a good bit of artillery and mortar dropping into their positions day and night, and the "tree bursts" were a little too much for open foxholes. "C" Company was having trouble just across the Moder River to their north from a factory where German observers poured artillery and mortar fire into their positions. It was a funny feeling to take a look out the windows across the small river and see Germans looking right back at you. Numerous artillery duels and some small arms fights were had, and the stairs leading from the top stories of our buildings to the basements showed signs of use, for, as you could hear the rounds coming in, the top floors weren't the place to be. The 1st and 2nd Platoons of "C" outposted and occupied the town, while the 3rd set up and outposted the woods to the east of Schweighausen along the southern bank of the Moder. The AT Platoon of "C" was used as support in the town and to dig emplacements. The artillery had placed observers in Schweighausen and on "B" Company's left flank, and although they did a good bit of firing, the range of their observation was extremely short, with most fires placed close to our positions as defensive fires, and harrassing fires placed and adjusted at noises in the woods.

The tanks were mostly held to keep off any tank or mass attacks, and fired but very little. On one occasion, however, a tank pulled up along side one of the houses occupied by our troops and fired across the river into the factory, then immediately

pulled away to take cover. Nice firing, but shortly after the tank pulled away artillery was adjusted on where it "was", so we had to take to the basement until the shelling was over. The 94th Rcn. on one occasion sent a patrol across the open ground north of Schweighausen, but before they could get across they came under heavy small-arms and mortar fire, suffering the loss of two men and several wounded before they were able to withdraw.

Though "A" Company in Uhlwiller was in reserve, they were outposting the town and running patrols. Lt. Mike Auer led a patrol of eight men into the woods north of the Moder, with a mission of capturing a P. W. Two men were left a short way from the battalion lines with a telephone by which they could call for help if needed. The rest of the patrol continued on its mission. The patrol had to crawl a hundred yards through water, staying in it for some time, despite the uncomfortably cold air. The patrol advanced on a machine-gun nest in hopes of capturing gunners. After being very careful not to let the enemy realize what was going on, they advanced only to find the position unoccupied. The patrol returned then to friendly lines, but the two men who were left with the telephone spotted two German soldiers working around behind the patrol. The Germans disappeared, however, without causing any trouble.

On 13 March, approximately 25 rounds of heavy artillery, estimated to be 150mm, fell into Ohlungen, and more of the same, in addition of 120mm mortar, fell in Schweighausen. No casualties were inflicted by this fire, although some vehicular damage was sustained. The battalion in the afternoon engaged in a coordinated fire plan to harass German troops in the woods to our front.

Positions were continually improved and men made themselves as comfortable as possible. Little movement was made during the day because of perfect enemy observation. Vehicles other than peeps were not brought up to positions during the day. The majority of supplies were brought up at night.

We knew something big was in the air when we received news that the whole 7th Army was on a big push, starting from the north and extending on down to our positions, which were still the farthest east of any troops, as we were but a short distance from the Rhine. On the 15th of March, from 0645 to 0745, the battalion engaged in a big, coordinated, fire plan to create a diversion to our front and flanks. The Assault Guns, mortars, machine-guns, artillery, and even the rocket tank, with its 60 rounds, fired into the woods north of our positions, while fake smoke screens were put down. The 94th Rcn. was pulled out of position, leaving our left flank position wide open. The situation was further complicated by an order to assemble the battalion and put it on an one hour alert. It wouldn't be easy to maintain our positions and assemble the battalion all at the same time, with time having to be allowed for companies to gather up equipment on positions and march back to their vehicles, mount up, and move to an assembly area. To comply with the order, "C" Company was left in position to protect the left flank of the 141st Inf. Regt. "B" Company was assembled, less security patrols and a skeleton outpost on the M.L.R.

The AT Platoon of "B" Company relieved the rifle platoon of "A" at CCB Headquarters. Our orders were received from CCB at 1800. "A" Company was attached to the 47th Tank Battalion and moved out of Uhlwiller to join them at 2000. By 2200 we had received our attachments, which were: "C" Company, 47th Tanks; 2-B, 94th Rcn.; and 1-B, 125th Engineers.

The big drive we had waited for so long was on now as the 36th Infantry Division, with elements on both our left and right flanks, jumped off, attacking to the north in the direction of Soultz-Sous-Forêts and Wissembourg in the Siegfried Line. Elements of the French Army were to attack along the Rhine on the right flank of the 36th Div. until they were pinched out. We were to remain in position until the attack got under way, then pull out and pass through the regular infantry units.

The fight for the northern part of Haguenau had gone slower than anticipated, so we did not move as quickly as expected; we remained in position. A unit commanders' meeting was held, and all commanders were briefed on the probable employment of the Combat Command. Plans were made for organization of the battalion and attachments, with a combat patrol of reinforced company strength to act as advance party of the battalion. Probable routes to be followed were discussed, probable enemy strong-points, and the manner and necessity of by-passing these points.

The battalion alert was changed to a two-hour status, with "B" Company continuing to screen the battalion front with active patrols and skeleton outposts. These activities continued throughout 17 March, and on the 18th, the battalion patrol, consisting of C-19, 1-C-47, 2-B-94, 1-B-125, the Tank Dozer of the 47th Tk. Bn., and Battery "A", 499th AFA Bn., was alerted and assembled at Schweighausen. All other units in the battalion were placed on a one-hour alert as of 0855.

CHAPTER VI

SECOND DRIVE INTO GERMANY AND THE RHINE

We had finished our little "rest" period, and though minds were somewhat filled with skepticism, there were now but few men ready and eager to put the finishing touches on the war. It was going to be even longer than we had anticipated, for there were still many rough days ahead. The men who had been with us on the first drive to the German border had known those lost to the enemy; then participated in the battle for Hatten and adjacent towns; were eager and anxious to strike back again, for we were to move over almost exactly the same route originally taken. We were coming back this time, a more experienced, better organized, and a more sober outfit, determined to hit them hard, kick them out forever, and square a few little items. Memories of previous actions in this area were still fresh and will be forever—and there was no doubt we meant business this time.

At 1425 on the 18th of March, orders were received directing us to move out at 1525. We then moved out on what was to be a long, hard, grinding task. We proceeded through Haguenau, then north through the Haguenau Forest, which had already been cleared by elements of the 36th Infantry Division now moving fast northward, with little or no resistance. The battalion was ordered to hold up at Schwabwiller, where all vehicles pulled into town by 1800. A Battalion C.P. was set up and the town completely outposted by 1900. Here we spent the night peacefully, learning that the 36th Inf. Div. had already advanced to Wissembourg with no resistance. The Germans were in full flight, moving back behind the Siegfried Line and even the Rhine, as the whole front was pushing them swiftly backward. The 47th Tank Battalion, 499th Armored Field Battalion, and the remainder of CCB had followed us in column and set up in Surbourg.

We maintained a state of readiness. The next morning at 0940 we were placed on an hour alert, with the Combat Patrol on a 30 minute alert. We were close to Hatten, so several men took quick trips over to see what the place looked like. There just wasn't any Hatten left. No house, outhouse, or a single building was worth occupying, and there were few civilians around, for there was no place to stay. The town was flat; there was no question about it. Tanks, both ours and the enemy's, were strewn all over the fields, so dozers had to be used to clear the streets for traffic. Strangely, though, the small section of town on the western edge, the part of which we had occupied, was still about the best part of town, if you could call it a town. You could then see that the Krauts were not the only ones who had been busy there. Lumps came in our throats as we visited the small cemetery where some

of our boys had been placed, though we knew not who. There, too, were a corresponding number of German graves, and they had taken care not to bury any more of their own troops here than ours. We already knew, however, that they had terrific losses and had taken the bulk back farther for disposal.

A warning order was issued by CCB at 1830 that afternoon, directing movement of the battalion sometime that night; hence, the Reconnaissance Platoon moved out to reconnoiter the bridge between Hatten and Buhl. They returned shortly with information that the bridge had been completed at 1900. The battalion billeting party left at 2000 that night, and the next morning at 0710 the battalion moved out in column through Hatten, Buhl, Siegan, Salmbach, to Schleithal without any action. We came into Schleithal at 0915, with the remainder of CCB pulling partially into town, part in the fields, and some remaining in Salmbach; but there was little room here, since the French had practically taken possession of the whole town.

We were placed on a forty-five minute alert upon arrival. We then outposted the town and immediate vicinity, relieving Task Force Blue of the 68th Inf. Bn. Contact with the 1st French Army on the right was made and maintained. Liaison was established with CCA of the 14th A.D., now on our left in Wissembourg, probing at the Siegfried Line. Routes to Schaidt, Freckenfeld, and through the forest north of Schleithal were reconnoitered, as we didn't know just which direction we might be called on to go.

For the most part, we spent two peaceful days in Schleithal although we were right at the Siegfried Line. Our big guns right in the backyard were continually blasting away and we received intermittent artillery fire in return. The battalion even had a picture-show while we were here, with little attention paid to shelling, as we were used to such, at least about as used to it as you ever get. One platoon of "B" Company was used to screen our front just south of the Lauter River, as it was exposed. Numerous patrols were made all through the woods to gain information about the enemy, friendly troops, and to act as a buffer for the screening platoon. CCA on the left was having plenty of trouble but making steady progress in breaching the Siegfried Line.

The AT Platoon of "C" Company went on a patrol into the woods, where they came upon a road block. Ten men went forward to investigate and were fired on. One man was wounded and, while the rest of the platoon gave supporting fire, the ten men withdrew to safety. Two other patrols from "C" Company were sent into the woods to gain information of the enemy and, though picking up information of positions, they encountered no resistance. Another small patrol was sent from "C" Company into the woods north of the Lauter to keep in contact with the French, who were attacking north through the woods. After having great difficulty in getting the French to decide just where they were to attack, the information was brought back to us by our patrol, so plans could be made accordingly.

The battalion alert was changed to a 90 minute alert on the morning of the 22nd until 1630, when it was changed to an instant alert, so all vehicles were com-

pletely loaded, even the personnel being ready to move immediately. At 1830, the alert was changed again and the march order and objective given. The objective, Gernersheim on the Rhine River, was a long way off.

The morning of 23 March at 0507 the battalion moved out, mounted, with "C" Company's combat patrol still as advance party, followed by the remainder of the battalion and the rest of CCB. We moved through Wissembourg, then west and north through the mountains, crossing the German border at 0700 and entering the assembly area at Silz, Germany, at 0815. As we were coming down the valley, we came upon elements of the 103rd Inf. Div., whom we were supposed to pass through. About the time we came in contact with them, we observed an enemy train, mostly horse drawn, all along the side of the road, which their column had caught and completely destroyed. There were hundreds of horses, wagons, and all kinds of equipment strewn everywhere and prisoners were coming out of the woods from all directions.

We rolled along with little opposition, while the Krauts were pulling back as fast as possible, but as we approached Rohrback, the head of the column was fired on by an 88 AT gun. "C" Company immediately dismounted for the attack with the 2nd Platoon on the left of the road and the 3rd on the right. Three of our tanks out of the advance party pulled up the road and knocked out the AT gun with the second round. By the time the gun was knocked out, the platoons had moved forward into position and rushed 200 yards across the open field into town, as small arms fire was raging. Three of our men were wounded by the small arms fire, but the enemy fell back fast, leaving about twenty men as rear guard, all of whom surrendered very shortly as we raced through the town. "C" Company again mounted up, and the march was immediately resumed toward Herxheim.

Just as the head of the column slid down the ridge leading into Herxheim the enemy opened up with 88's, flak guns, and automatic weapons. The fire forced the advance party to hastily move back with their vehicles out of the deadly anti-tank fire, coming from the pillboxes to the front and flanks. "C" Company pulled back to Rohrback to reorganize. It was evident that the position was too strong to bypass or run through, so plans were quickly made for a coordinated attack. Mortar, AT, and flak-gun fire was beginning to pour in heavily, so tanks were brought up to blast away at the pillboxes and strong positions. After all, this was the impregnable Siegfried Line we had bumped into, with its dragon teeth and immense pillboxes that normally require weeks and months of special preparation, with all types of equipment to penetrate. True, they were lightly defended and the whole Siegfried outflanked, but it was still a formidable barrier.

At 1530, a coordinated tank-infantry attack was launched; as the tanks pulled up on the ridge overlooking town, they laid down a base of fire while "B" Company on the right side of the road jumped off, following a tree line leading into town. Before the troops could get up to the tanks, two were knocked out by 88's and there along the road were two of "C" Company's half-tracks that had been previously

knocked out. The flak, mortar, AT, and small arms fire was heavy as "B" Company made its first assault with the tanks towards the dragon teeth intermingled with barbed wire. The fire was too heavy, so the company pulled back as casualties began to mount rapidly. Two men had been killed and fourteen wounded, including the Company Commander, Lt. Gray Thoron. The medics were busily running back and forth in peeps, dismounted with litters, and using the Weasel or any other available means of transportation to evacuate the wounded. Capt. John E. Donahey, Executive Officer, who had been commanding the advance party task force, was also wounded in the leg and had to be evacuated. Lt. John Conroy took command of "B" Company and hurriedly reorganized the company to continue the attack. The west end of town was thoroughly shelled by our artillery and tanks as "B" Company attacked again. This time a reconnaissance car from the 94th Rcn. went along as the company advanced, firing as it moved; hence the first few houses in town were taken, with 26 prisoners. The tanks were forced to withdraw, after losing a house within the dragon's teeth, but the 2nd Platoon held the houses taken, and the 3rd and 1st Platoons came in from positions in the field to help. In taking the first few houses, S/Sgt. Jack Crider and Pvt. Donald L. Stamps had courageously rushed the houses and so confused the enemy that they were unable to deliver effective fire on the rest of the platoon. S/Sgt. Willard S. Elliott, himself wounded, voluntarily stayed with his platoon and helped evacuate the wounded under fire. The 1st and 2nd Platoons of "C" Company moved on the right flank of "B", for the attack on the town was made to give flank protection. Then, as "B" Company started into town, the two platoons also swung into the buildings to assist in clearing the town. A 60mm mortar had been set up at the edge of town and, with perfect observation, was catching the enemy every time he moved, inflicting heavy casualties.

It was dark as "B" Company and two platoons of "C" took the first few houses, and laid down a base of fire, so tanks and the rest of the battalion could move through the dragon's teeth into town and assist in clearing it of enemy troops, who were withdrawing rapidly. The impregnable Siegfried had been cracked at this point in one afternoon by one armored infantry company reinforced with two more infantry platoons, and a company of medium tanks, with no special preparation whatsoever.

As most of the enemy troops had surrendered or withdrawn rapidly, the rest of the town, and it was no small town, was very shortly cleared. A hasty reorganization was made and the column resupplied with gas and ammunition ready to continue the march. "A" Company in its entirety was released back to our control around midnight, giving us our complete battalion of infantry plus the same company of 47th Tanks and elements of the engineers and reconnaissance. The battalion, reinforced, moved out of Herxheim that same morning at 0230, with "A" Company now constituting the advance party, moving through Herxheimweyher and on into Rulzheim at 0400, where elements of the 36th Inf. Div. had already moved in from the south, without a fight. The friendly troops were contacted, so we immediately assumed responsibility of outposting the town, for their unit was to move out shortly.

At 0700, 24 March, CCB ordered our Combat Patrol, now consisting of A-19, 1-B-47, 1-B-125, and 2-B-94, commanded by Capt. Ernest M. Spokes, and supported by one battery of field artillery, to move to Germersheim. The mission was to contact a friendly unit that was supposed to be attacking the town or, if no friendly unit was there, to attack and seize the bridge over the Rhine at that city, holding it until properly relieved. The rest of the battalion was alerted to the possibility of assisting in this operation. This was a wild chance for us to seize a bridge across the Rhine, as the air O.P. said the bridges looked intact.

The combat patrol moved out, but ran into a blown bridge. A short reconnaissance revealed a bypass, so very soon they were back on the main road. As they entered the wooded area southwest of town, they received scattered small arms fire. Fighting on through this opposition, the leading elements reached the clearing at the edge of the woods overlooking the flat open terrain some 1000 yards from town. After preparations for the attack on the town were made, a huge cloud of smoke arose from the site of the Rhine bridge. When the attack started, they began to receive heavy, direct 77, 88, mortar, artillery, and small arms fire. One of our attached medium tanks was knocked out, but not until it had destroyed a German self-propelled gun, attempting to move from the woods into town.

Germersheim is a good sized town, on flat terrain that extended for an easy 2500 yards in all directions west of the Rhine. The open flat country gave no protection whatsoever against flat trajectory weapons and not only were they facing fire from Germersheim but well-prepared positions across the Rhine. The town itself was an old German Garrison, with many strong buildings and well defended by many troops, who were in pillboxes and dugouts. It was obvious that there were no other friendly troops attacking the town, so it looked like a good battle.

The remainder of the battalion was ordered into the engagement, arriving at the spot to find the little task force reorganizing and suffering a few casualties from artillery and mortar fire in the woods it had withdrawn to. After a short reconnaissance, the remainder of the 47th Tank Battalion was brought up to assist and plans were made for the attack. The decision arrived at was to attack across the open terrain, frontally, with tank and infantry teams on both sides of the road, following an artillery preparation. The road leading into town from the southwest was to be the axis of advance; the line of departure the edge of the woods. "A" Company, with a company of tanks, moved to the L.D. on the north side of the road, and "B" Company, with a company of tanks, moved to the L.D. on the south side of the road. "C" Company remained in reserve ready to assist or break through.

The artillery preparation was fired as the tanks and infantry moved forward, tanks engaging enemy positions by fire and infantry moving along with them. Slow progress was made at first; then the attack was completely stopped by a tremendous barrage of artillery, flak, AT, and automatic-weapons fire. They were firing AP that would hit the trees and clip them off like toothpicks. Our infantry started taking all cover possible to get out from under the terrific fire and were suffering



many casualties, but even digging in would not have helped against the tree-bursting artillery and mortar shells falling everywhere. The tanks would attempt to move out of the trees into the open to fire and then pull back into cover, but every-time they pulled back they only drew the enemy fire right on top of the infantry. The tanks were then ordered to move on into town so the infantry could follow close by. An ammunition dump right in the path of the 1st Platoon of "A" Company was hit, blowing up right in their faces. Four men were instantly killed and nineteen were wounded as a result of the terrific blast. There were a number of enemy ammunition dumps and mines in the field, and great care had to be taken to avoid them.

The tanks proceeded to move on, firing with all they had and doing a wonderful job of gaining the edge of town at 1530, at which time the infantry caught up with them to continue the attack. There were many wounded men in the field; hence, the medics unhesitatingly went forward, exposed to the heavy fire, giving first aid and evacuating them as fast as possible.

On reaching the edge of town, "B" Company was caught in a crossfire of small arms, but the tanks soon eliminated that. Lt. Joe Levine, platoon leader of the 3rd Platoon, was seriously wounded while leading his platoon in an attack on a dugout. After moving into the first houses and clearing them, as well as the numerous foxholes around them, the company, instead of going straight on into town, swung to the south and east skirting the edge to flank the town, heading for the bridgesite. Fighting through the houses, a group of Germans were spotted in a house nearby, so T/Sgt. Ronald C. Henwood of the 2nd Platoon took two men and went to investigate. From that and the next house these men took 250 prisoners.

"A" Company entered town on about the same line as "B" Company and also swung around to skirt the edge and flank the town from the south and east. Tanks were unable to go through the center of town because of road blocks, but were able to skirt around the edge with the infantry. The tanks had given excellent support and at times were even out in front of foot troops, holding up so they could catch up. Sniper and small arms fire were deadly, but the drive continued around to the east of town to the initial objective. To the dismay of all, it was found that both highway and railroad bridges across the Rhine had been blown. One of the bridges had apparently been blown only that morning.

Shortly after the leading elements had entered the edge of town, "C" Company moved into the town mounted on their half tracks to speed the operation. As "B" and "A" Companies had swung to the right around the edge of town, "C" Company headed for the center of town to cut it in two. They also were met immediately by a hail of sniper and small arms fire. Slow progress in clearing the town was made because of the many snipers and the ever increasing amount of mortar, artillery, and direct fire from across the river. Although the far side of the river was previously bombed and strafed at 1500 to reduce the enemy fire power, there was still plenty of it left.

Bn. Hq., Hq. Co., and parts of the Medical Detachment moved into town right behind "C" Company, with the Bn. C.P. set up in the edge of town. Companies continued clearing the town until dark, when the P.W.'s started coming in by droves. At dark the companies halted and set up outposts around the areas they occupied and around the tanks. There was little activity during the night, except for the heavy barrages of artillery, mortar, and direct fire that were thrown in. No one moved around much, for snipers were still numerous and alert for any movement that could be easily picked up in the bright light of the burning buildings.

Next morning at 0800, 25 March, the companies continued mopping-up operations, still clearing the town house by house and taking more prisoners. A German officer and medic came out of a large building across the square from "C" Company's 2nd Platoon waving a white flag. Pfc. Henry Ferry went out to accept the surrender, but the officer said he wished to speak to an American officer. He was taken to Lt. Robert E. Lingle, to whom he surrendered his company of 54 men and 4 officers, turning over his sword in true military fashion. Early in the morning, "B" Company had captured a wet, naked German officer who had swam across the Rhine from the east side into Germersheim; for what we were never able to find out. Elements of the 12th Armored Division started moving into Germersheim after it had been almost completely cleared, but were directed to pull out as the situation was well in hand.

The town was completely cleared by 1400 that afternoon. "B" Company then occupied positions on the bank of the Rhine to deny the enemy a crossing into Germersheim. "A", "C", and Hq. Companies outposted the town, as resupply and reorganization of the battalion was instigated. We had received word that we would be on the move again just as soon as relief by elements of the 36th Division could be effected. The road leading into Germersheim was ever a sore spot to all vehicles moving in and out of town, for it was under perfect observation and almost continuous fire. It was dangerous moving gasoline and ammunition trucks by this spot, as well as trying to evacuate wounded or making any other movements. Several vehicles and trucks were hit and badly damaged on the hot crossroads right at the edge of town.

You could hardly tell there was a war going on, because everyone had picked up a bicycle or motorcycle and was riding around town with the greatest of ease, paying no attention to the incoming shells that were ever present. The fight that day and the several days previous had been anything but easy, for we had suffered 141 casualties and the men were weary from constant moving and lack of sleep and food. We had captured well over 1000 prisoners, though, and the enemy was now pushed back to the east of the Rhine, not only along our front but everywhere. There were no enemy troops at all now west of the River along the Allied Front except in isolated places where there were small pockets.

During the night of March 25th, the relief of the battalion began, as we were ordered to move out whether proper relief had been made or not, due to the fact

that the other unit had accepted responsibility of the area after 0530. That night, however, as we were moving, a tremendous artillery and smoke barrage was fired on the German positions just east of the river. This was done purely as a diversionary action in order that a bridge could be put across the River at another spot by a friendly unit.

Relief still did not come, but, as ordered, we mounted vehicles (many trailers, cars, bicycles, and motorcycles now were part of the column) and started the long motor march to Oberhausen and Berbelroth, Germany. We dreaded moving on the southwestern road out of town, as it had been under constant artillery and flak fire and the enemy had zeroed in on it perfectly from across the river. We managed to make it across the open ground with no casualties; however, while in the open, three planes flying low from east to west passed right over. It looked like an aerial attack, since warning of enemy aircraft in the area had been sent out. As luck would have it, they were friendly planes, so we settled down for a peaceful and uninterrupted ride to our new area.

The battalion closed in on its new area in Oberhausen and Berbelroth, Germany, at 0915, 25 March. Men were quickly put in billets, such as they were, and began cleaning up and trying to catch up on their sleep. The control of civilians was instituted, for we were now in Germany; hence, a thorough, systematic search of the area was made. We were right in the middle of the Siegfried Line and were compelled to clean out the many pillboxes and forts that were in our area. All trucks in Service Company's Transportation Platoon, less the few trucks absolutely necessary for battalion supply, were sent to the 3rd Army to haul infantry personnel and equipment across the Rhine. They barely made it back before we moved out. These next few days were spent peacefully, resupplying and getting our equipment back in shape. Everyone was enjoying his acquired motorcycle, car, or bicycle, and it looked like a Sunday afternoon in the park. It soon came to a stop though, when orders were issued that all such vehicles and equipment would have to be discarded. Lt. Evan Jones was assigned as Commanding Officer of "B" Company.

We were placed on a two hour and forty-five minute alert at 0600, 30 March, and given orders for an expected move. Overlays showing the route of march were issued. Next morning the billeting party reported to CCB to precede us to our new assembly area. Preparations were made for the move and everything was loaded, with the men trying to get a little sleep when possible.

CHAPTER VII

FIGHT FOR LOHR AND GEMUNDEN AND DASH FOR HAMMELBURG

Oberhausen, Germany, had given us a nice rest of a few days, but it had hardly been enough. In fact, no amount of rest could have been enough to suffice for the coming weeks of hard continuous moving and fighting that we were unknowingly about to participate in. It was not only Easter but "April Fool's Day" when the Battalion started on its long road march moving towards the I.P. at Kappelan, Germany, which we crossed at 0425. About the most anyone knew was that we were moving to the north to make a crossing of the Rhine into Germany, where a bridgehead had already been established.

The day was perfect for a road march, clear and cool. We rolled along through Bergzabern, Landau, Kinnweiler, Geinsheim, Meckenheim, Niederkirchen, Weisenheim, Frankenthal, Pfeddersheim, and then on across the Rhine River at 1130, a short distance east of Worms, where engineers had built a pontoon bridge. Cameras snapped as the crossing was made, and a quick glance up and down the river revealed bridges blown everywhere (a sight we were now to see at every crossing of each stream or gully). The Germans left no bridges intact unless by accident or surprise attacks caught them before blowing. It was a peculiar feeling crossing that river. We had been in Germany before, but somehow it really felt more like we were really in enemy territory now, and we were, for civilians were as much our enemy as were the German troops.

After crossing the Rhine, the column continued moving on through Biblishausen and Darmstadt along the famous Reich-Autobahn to our assembly area in Habitzheim, Germany. Here the battalion closed in at 1600 that same day. Troops were billeted, but just about the time everyone had cleaned up after the long dusty ride, gotten a bite to eat, and crawled into bed-rolls for a little rest, the battalion was alerted for an immediate move. Company Commanders were called together and orders for the alert move were given, as everyone set his watch ahead one hour. We were now in time zone "B" and moving ever eastward. At 0345, 2nd April, orders were received directing an immediate move across the Main River to exploit a breakthrough of German defense lines accomplished by the 3rd U.S. Infantry Division.

We moved out of Habitzheim at 0357 followed by the 47th Tank Bn. and the remainder of CCB, supported by the 499th AFA Bn. Crossing the I.P. at Lengfeld, Germany, at 0418, we continued on to the Main River to Worth, Germany, where we crossed on a pontoon treadway bridge. Moving through rear elements of the

3rd Inf. Div. and following a route through Erlinbach, Mechenhard, Sheit, Eschau, Winterbach, Krausenbach, northeast of Bischborneshaf, and on east to Rechenback, we ran into the advance elements of the 3rd Inf. Div., who were supposed to be clearing the remaining rear guard elements of the enemy from the high ground east of town. Shortly, we learned that there was much more than a rear guard left behind by the enemy. We had no more than passed through the 3rd Inf. Div. and started down through the valley when we hit a roadblock approximately a mile out from Rechenback. Tanks quickly demolished the roadblock and the column continued on toward Lohr. The column had hardly started moving when heavy sniper fire was received from the wooded hills rising on both sides of the road. Tanks, half tracks, and everyone opened up with all they had, spraying the woods; the noise through the valleys sounded like a major battle. The sniper fire continued, however, as did our own fire, but the column continued on toward Lohr, where it again ran into heavy small-arms and sniper fire at the western edge of town. The whole column along the road was an easy target for snipers in the hills; and it was unsafe to ride along the road in an unprotected vehicle. We received numerous casualties along the road, including Capt. Ernest M. Spokes of Company "A", who was evacuated. Lt. Francis X. Bingham then assumed command of the company.

"C" Company was at the head of the column when Lohr was reached, with two men from each squad of the 2nd Platoon assigned to ride on the three tanks that comprised the leading elements. When heavy small-arms fire stopped the column, the men riding on the tanks were the first to suffer casualties. The heavy fire finally forced the remaining men to leave their guns. The entire company was under fire, and many men were hit in the half-tracks when attempting to dismount. The 3rd Platoon, mounted, then bypassed the 2nd Platoon that had dismounted and engaged the enemy with fire. The three tanks still in front of the 3rd Platoon succeeded in knocking out a German tank at a road block and gained the edge of town. Two of our tanks, however, took the wrong road, ran into AT fire, and were knocked out after having first eliminated several of the enemy guns. The crews of the two tanks, under cover of supporting fire, managed to abandon the tanks and join the 3rd Platoon moving into the edge of town. The one remaining tank was reinforced by two other mediums, and together with the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st Platoons of "C" Company, swung to the left and continued the attack. At the crossroads, stood a German Mark IV tank, abandoned and destroyed by its crew when caught by our column. The 3rd Platoon was on the side of the street where there were buildings, so escaped the bazooka fire; however, the 2nd Platoon lost three of its tracks from bazooka fire coming down the main street. By this time, the 1st Platoon had managed to get its tracks behind the comparative safety of the buildings, along with the remaining tracks of the 2nd Platoon. The Company C.P. was set up just around the corner to the left, while the remainder of the company reorganized and continued down the street with two tanks. Several more prisoners were taken before reaching a

clearing at the northwest edge of town. The lead tank was knocked out by bazooka fire from behind a log pile along the road. The company by-passed the log pile and secured a factory on the left and a mill on the right of the road. The company was then held up by darkness and a blown bridge at the edge of town. Outposts were immediately put out and another tank came in to reinforce the remaining tank, as the company sat tight for the night.

Hq., Hq. Co., and part of the Medical Detachment in column had followed "C" Company into town, where a Battalion C.P. and an aid station were set up. The Assault Gun and Mortar and Machine-Gun Platoons immediately occupied the high commanding ground to the north of the main street. "B" Company, immediately behind Hq. Co., had been ordered to attack the southern end of town, as "C" Company was moving to the north. They were then to swing around to the east to cut off the town. Dismounted, "B" Company started with its attached tanks to clear the houses and move on toward their first objective, two large hospital dormitories on a hill, more or less isolated from the rest of town. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Platoons, with tanks in support, assaulted the buildings frontally and received a little sniper fire. The 1st Platoon with its tanks, flanked the position from the east and suffered three casualties from sniper and bazooka fire that also knocked out one medium tank. By dark the buildings had been taken and the company ordered to hold up and secure positions for the night. T/5 A. J. Thompson voluntarily used his half-track as an ambulance to evacuate wounded.

It was evident the enemy intended to defend the town, and stubbornly, too. Night had overtaken our attack, and, as the companies stood fast and secured their positions for the night, plans were made for a coordinated attack the following morning. Enemy artillery and mortar fire harassed our positions all night. Plans were for the attack to jump off at 0700 the following morning, with "A" Company and a platoon of medium tanks from "C"-47 to attack straight east through the main street of town. "C" Company, with its attached tanks, and "B" Company, now attached to the 47th Tank Bn., continued to hold the flanks. When "A" Company reached a point approximately half-way through the town, "C" Company was to attack east through the northern sector of town. Simultaneously, the 47th Tank Bn., with our "B" Company attached, would launch an attack around the south and then slice through the eastern edge. Artillery, mortars, and assault guns had a perfect O.P. on top the high hill just on the north edge of the main street and were ready to fire on any targets.

Company "A" jumped off at 0700 on the 3rd of April and fiercely fought its way slowly through the heavy sniper, bazooka, and machine-gun fire. Upon reaching the center of town, the company held up for the other companies to attack.

"C" Company started their attack toward the east and, though met by small arms and sniper fire, succeeded in reaching its objective in short order.

"B" Company jumped off at the same time as "C" Company, its 1st Platoon and seven tanks going on a separate mission, pushing toward a knocked out bridge



over the Main River in the northern part of town. They met intense sniper and bazooka fire, losing one tank and several men killed or wounded. Lt. Robert Slaper retrieved a tank that had been knocked out in the attack the night before. The objective reached and the enemy cleared out, this small force held positions for the time being. Meanwhile, the balance of the company had continued on toward the center of town, where they split again. The 4th Platoon went to the right toward the river, while the 2nd and 3rd Platoons continued on toward the extreme southern end of town, then back north toward the center of town, where they contacted "A" Company. The 4th Platoon in its drive had lost one tank and one man hurt due to direct artillery fire from the east across the river. Taking several houses, the platoon soon had the bank of the river cleared, though still under fire from across the river. Lt. Evan Jones was wounded by enemy fire and had to be evacuated. Lt. John Conroy then assumed command of the company.

Caught by the sudden attacks on all his flanks, the enemy attempted to withdraw his troops, but our mortars, assault guns, artillery, and heavy machine-guns, from positions on commanding ground, cut them down viciously as they moved towards Sackebach. Enemy casualties were heavy, and the defensive position into which the German troops were moving became untenable, so the badly disorganized troops spread out with little semblance of a defensive line.

When "B" Company, with the attached tanks, reached the bridge at the northeastern edge of town, they found it completely destroyed. A hasty reconnaissance revealed a small bridge that had been overlooked by the retreating enemy. Seizing the opportunity to strike a decisive blow, the infantry-tank team dashed into Sackebach and engaged the disorganized enemy in a heavy, swiftly-moving, fire fight that completed the demoralization and defeat of the German troops, inflicting severe casualties on the badly battered defenders.

This was no time to let up the attack, though, as they were on the run and we were determined to exploit the real breakthrough we had fought for and made. "A" Company immediately scrambled on its attached tanks, passed through "B" Company, and swiftly moved into Sackebach.

As the company was entering the town, its column of tanks was cut when heavy mortar fire forced the rear third of the company to leave its tanks. The bulk of the column rolled through Sackebach toward Nantenbach. About halfway between these two villages, Krauts suddenly rose from foxholes in the low ground to the right and on the high bank to the left of the road. They opened fire on the middle of the column with panzerfausts, grenades, and machine-pistols from about twenty yards range. Those on the bank were shooting down on the tanks, knocking out two mediums. A terrific hand-to-hand battle resulted, leaving six Americans and about thirty Krauts dead. T/Sgt. Herbert J. Leese, platoon sergeant of the 1st Platoon, was found with his fingers locked about the throat of a German T/Sgt., who held a bayonet in his right hand. Sgt. George W. Bennett and Pvt. Henry Bochner died coming to his aid. Pvt. Aubry W. Finley was found with four Germans, including the crew of a machine-gun, all of them apparently killed by him.

The forward group then moved into Nantenbach, where they were joined by the rear group shortly after dark, and the company spent the night there.

"B", 19th and "B", 47th Tank Bn. occupied Sackenbach. "A", 19th, with an attached platoon of tanks from "B", 47th Tank Bn., remained in Nantenbach. The remainder of our battalion, as well as the 47th Tank Bn., remained in Lohr. The prisoners taken during the fight for Lohr was more than three hundred and fifty, with a battalion staff included. Casualties inflicted on the enemy were heavy but undetermined. Three tanks and several trucks and horse-drawn vehicles were destroyed. Our casualties suffered consisted of fifteen killed and forty wounded, some of which were caused accidentally by our artillery falling short.

The first day of the attack on Lohr, T/5 Robert E. Tate and Pfc. William J. Rudometkin from the Medical Detachment took a peep forward to recover wounded men of the attached platoon of the 94th Rcn., whose armored car had been knocked out by bazooka fire. They were captured and, when they failed to return, T/3 Robert S. Munson went out to find them, and was captured himself. The next day, when the town was cleared, all three were recovered, reporting they experienced excellent treatment while in the hands of the enemy. They were never even searched, and the peep with Munson was used to evacuate a German officer casualty to a hospital some distance behind the lines, while the other two were used to administer first aid to wounded Germans in a hospital.

Preparations were made to continue the attack next morning, so at 0700, 4 April, with "C" Company still at the head of the column, the battalion moved out of Lohr, picking up our other elements in Sackenbach and Nantenbach, with the 47th Tank Battalion and the remainder of CCB following.

To support our column, there was a squadron of P-47's overhead and on call, as we moved along the road to Langenprozelten. Just as the head of the column reached the town, however, it was fired on by numerous snipers and automatic weapons from the houses and the hill just behind. There were also snipers firing into the column from across the river. A light tank at the head of the column was hit by a panzerfaust, bursting into flames. "C" Company immediately dismounted and started to clear the first houses in the edge of town, but the intense fire from the hill made it impossible to get across the railroad and highway. Tanks began firing into the center of town to demoralize the enemy, and the planes strafed the town. This support was too far off to do any good, though, and artillery was adjusted on the hill right behind "C" Company's positions. It was perfect firing by the artillery on the hill that knocked out and completely disorganized the enemy forces there. A small arms fire fight was engaged in as the enemy began to shake loose from their dug-in emplacements, but shortly those who were not killed began to surrender, and when they found we would not shoot them upon surrender, the entire group gave up. "A" Company had dismounted and moved up with "C" Company to help. By the time they arrived, "C" Company had started its attack again, clearing the houses as they went, with "A" Company following. It became apparent there

was no determined resistance beyond the edge of town, so tanks were brought up, with "A" Company placed on the left and "C" Company on the right of the main street. They moved quickly through the town to the far end across an overpass on the railroad, where vehicles were to be brought up. Troops mounted, and the march to Gemunden continued. The town had been cleared by 1400.

Before the vehicles could be ordered to the front, however, enemy mortar fire started falling near the bridge, where our troops were, so it was evident that Gemunden was well defended. Tanks immediately pulled up on the ridge to fire into town and artillery was also shelling it. An air mission was called for; and the town bounced up and down as bombs hit all over it; then the planes gave it a good strafing. It was a good town to defend, though, with a high hill rising behind the north edge, where an old castle stood. The river flowed all along the edge of town on the south side, leaving but one entrance for use, and that an open rolling field, with little protection.

"C" Company, dismounted, attacked the town, moving along the railroad tracks, to take what cover could be had, but were held up at a railroad junction just at the western edge of town. Murderous, automatic, weapons' fire pinned them down, as mortar fire started falling all around their positions. The tanks started moving down the main road into town to give them support, but as the lead tank attempted to go through the underpass into town, it was hit by a panzerfaust and burst into flames. The two tanks following it were thereby blocked. One was later disabled by a panzerfaust and the other got stuck in the mud as it left the road. With "C" Company pinned down, "A" Company was sent forward, dismounted, to follow along the main road on the left of "C" Company, giving close support to the tanks. Lt. Francis X. Bingham, then acting Company Commander of "A" Company, had to be evacuated because of an injury, so Lt. William N. Driscoll assumed command of the company. "A" Company advanced along the road as heavy mortar concentrations started falling in their positions also. They continued on, however, until reaching the railroad alongside "C" Company, where they were also pinned to the ground by small arms fire.

Artillery fire poured into Gemunden, knocking out the enemy positions around the castle. Tanks, T.D.'s, and the rocket-tank were pulled up and fixed into town. The air mission called for came at the same time as our other heavy weapons were firing, causing the town to literally bounce up and down under the heavy impact. Fires were burning all over town and it looked as though nothing could have remained, but still the enemy kept defending stubbornly. It was growing dark and the mortar fire the companies were receiving made it impossible to stay in the open fields. They had to, and did, get into the edge of town to take cover. The 2nd Platoon of "A" Company got into the railroad station. They then covered, while the 1st and 3rd Platoons of "C" scrambled into the first two houses by the railroad, where they found three men from the tank that was knocked out. The 2nd Platoon from "A" and the 2nd Platoon from "C" by-passed the houses just taken and ran into the

next few houses. The 1st and 3rd of "C" followed in these houses, then continued under cover of the fire from along the bank, through the railroad underpass into the next few houses. They continued clearing houses until reaching the river, where it was discovered that the bridge had been blown and there was no way to get across. The companies outposted their positions and held up for the night.

Early the next morning, a squad from "B" Company, 125th Engineers, put assault boats on the river and ferried the 1st Platoon of "C" and the 2nd Platoon of "A" across under cover of protective fire from the other platoons. A creek was the next obstacle to be crossed, but the men ran into a house right up against the bridge, jumped out of the attic onto the bridge, and crossed the creek on the second span, which was still intact. The sniper fire was still savage as the men cleared the next few houses. Lt. Joe Osborne, along with a medic and his platoon runner, was captured in one of the houses. Three of the enemy were guarding the group when S/Sgt. Joe Antolik came up and was shot by one of the guards. The three men were liberated about three hours later when Pfc. Dahl, with several men, crossed from house to house into the upstairs room of the house where the three men were held. As Dahl was coming down the stairs one of the guards tried to shoot, but Dahl shot his hand with a BAR and the other two surrendered.

The 2nd Platoon of "C" Crossed the river in assault boats and joined the 1st, but received considerable sniper fire from the boxcars along the railroad tracks on either side of the river. Tanks fired into the boxcars, setting several afire. Both "A" and "C" Companies then assembled quickly, with "A" on the left and "C" on the right side of the main street, attacked east through town, clearing it house by house. Fires from the burning buildings were causing so much smoke that it was difficult to see and hard to breathe. The wrecked, burning buildings were dangerous to move about in, for they were continually crumbling. The companies had moved about two blocks east in the town when they contacted elements of the 3rd Inf. Div. coming in from the other direction. These troops had met no opposition in the east end of town. There were still numerous snipers in town, so the Machine-Gun Platoon from Hq. Co. was brought up into town to fire at them. The town was completely cleared by 1800 at which time elements of the 62nd A.I.B., 14th A.D. moved into town to assist in outposting. There was joy in the ranks as rumors of relief spread, but that rumor was quickly put down when news of a continued attack early next morning was received. With the town outposted, the men tried to get something to eat and as much sleep as possible, for they were worn out and heavy-eyed from lack of sleep.

Late that night under cover of darkness, the engineers built a bridge across the river and a tank dozer came up to clean the debris from the streets, for there was so much rubble in the streets a peep couldn't even pass.

A new mission was given Combat Command "B" that night. It was directed that the Command move to the large German prisoner-of-war camp near Hammelburg, Germany, seize the military establishment there, and liberate the estimated fifteen-thousand Allied prisoners who the Germans had in the huge prisoner-of-war stockade there. As our part of the mission, we were to proceed at the head of the column along

a route through Hessdorf, Bonnland, Hundsfeld, and then north toward the objective, with a mission of seizing all roads to the south and east of the objective, preventing evacuation of the camp by the Germans.

The 47th Tank Battalion, to which "B", 19th was attached, was to follow us in column to Hessdorf, then proceed along a route parallel to us on the left, approach the camp from the east and north, and destroy the fences of the camp to liberate the prisoners.

"A" and "C" Companies had remained in Gemunden that night after it had been taken and the remainder of the battalion was in Langenprozelten, where the vehicles of both "A" and "C" had been kept. At 0500 the morning of 6 April, the vehicles were lined up, with "A" Company's in the lead, and started to Gemunden, where troops mounted in order. By 0610 the column was on the move to Hammelburg. The column comprised the following in order of march: 1-"B"-94th, "A"-19th, 1-"A"-47th, 1-"B"-125th (all as the leading combat element under command of the C.O. "A"-19th), Hq. and Hq. Co. of the 19th, A 47th (—), C-19th, Med. Det.-19th, Trains-19th, Bn. Maint.-19th, with the 47th Tank Battalion and the remainder of CCB following.

The head of the column hit a roadblock about two miles out of Gemunden. One platoon from "A" dismounted to inspect the block and were fired on by a group defending the block. One squad was sent up on the ridge to the left of the road to cover it and then come behind the block. In short order the group holding the roadblock was overpowered and captured. After having been inspected for booby-traps, the tank dozer was brought up and the road block removed.

The column continued its march without incident until reaching Hessdorf, where the head of the column missed the turn and continued to Hollrich. There it ran into anti-tank fire as it turned back east to get on the right. The two leading tanks were hit, but, although they had bad holes through their front armor, neither was completely disabled. Heavy mortar and artillery fire fell all along the road near the column, causing a few casualties. "A" Company dismounted and started to move into the edge of Hollrich to eliminate the enemy activity that was holding the column up, but before they made the attack, they were ordered to return to their vehicles, turn around, and go back to Hessdorf to get back on the right road. Intermittent mortar and direct tank fire from the ridge to our east was giving us trouble; this, too, was the ridge we were about to cross.

In an attempt to get the column moving again, a heavy mortar, artillery, tank, and tank destroyer fire was placed on the ridge, while "C" Company dismounted and moved up the sharp slope to seize the wooded area on top the ridge. At the same time "A" Company had mounted their vehicles, turned around, and the column started moving up the ridge where "C" Company had moved on foot. As "A" reached the woods, they were stopped, for tanks had been spotted on the hill overlooking our route of march.

As our column had been halted, the 47th Tank Bn., with "B"-19th attached, by-passed our column, where we had turned off the main road at Hessdorf, and

proceeded on their mission. Within an hour of the time they had by-passed our column, we received word that the 47th and "B" Company had met but slight opposition, and had reached and liberated the camp.

Meanwhile, we were still halted by the enemy tanks to our front. They were identified as American tanks that had been captured, but were still in good shape and were the tanks that had just been firing on our column. The T.D.'s were brought into position on the hill as artillery was adjusted on the tanks. It was remarkable firing, for the artillery converged squarely on the tanks. As the dust cleared, the T.D.'s fired directly, knocking out all the tanks before they could move or maneuver. These American tanks we were compelled to knock out were identified as tanks from the 4th Armored Division, who just a short while previous had attempted to liberate the camp.

When the tanks had been knocked out, we mounted again and continued on our route through the wooded area across the open, rolling terrain, studded with pillboxes and half-completed dragon's teeth tank defenses. Our tanks and T.D.'s demolished each pillbox as the column moved along. One German soldier came staggering out of a pillbox that had received two or three direct hits, and surrendered. The rest of the pillboxes were undefended. It was getting dark as we neared Bonnland, where the column was subjected to scattered mortar fire. One squad from "A" Company was dismounted to check the town, but was recalled immediately. The column continued on its march, moving through Hundsfield and into the prisoner-of-war camp, where the battalion closed in around 2200. A quick search for billets was made and the men who were not used to outpost our sector of the camp dropped into their bedrolls for some much needed, much deserved, rest.

Next morning, after a fair night's rest, everyone took a quick look about the portion of camp where we were billeted. It was an amazing sight to see the conglomeration of Allied P.W.'s. The bulk of them seemed to be Serbians, but there were many Americans and other nationalities. It was a good feeling to see the joy and appreciation shown by all these men, who could not be grateful enough. We fed a lot of them with the food we had to spare—they were humble with their thanks. Some of them had been prisoners for as long as five years.

This had been a long, continuous drive since it had started on the west side of the Rhine near the German border in Oberhausen, Germany. We had made excellent progress, but as always we had paid dearly. Since our drive started from Oberhausen, we had suffered 114 casualties. Our compensation was the tremendous territory gained and the many casualties we had inflicted on the enemy. We now had the enemy disorganized and withdrawing on every hand, and we were learning to fight better every day.

Our stop in the prison camp was short lived, for we soon received orders from CCB to get ready to move out at 1200. The order gave us but a very few minutes to load and line up our vehicles, which had been parked during the night as best as we could, and they were badly mixed up.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "MASTER RACE" IN HAND

Somewhat rested, we piled into our vehicles to continue the attack, still wondering why the Germans didn't give up, and when they would. They were completely on the run all along the front, but stubbornly resisting at many strong points. We shortly learned, though, that there was still lots of fighting to be done. At 1300 that afternoon, 7 April, we again were the leading element of the Combat Command as we moved out of the prison camp in the order of: "C"-19th, with its attachments of 1"A"-47th, 1"D"-47th, 1"B"-125th, 1"B"-94th, comprising the lead combat elements; Hq. and Hq. Co., with 1"B"-636th T.D.'s attached; "A"-47th(—), "A"-19, 19th trains, Med. Det., Bn. Maint., followed by the rest of the 47th Tank Battalion, with our "B" Company attached and the remainder of CCB still supported by the 499th AFA Battalion.

The column continued without incident until reaching Fuchstadt, where it ran into a road block. The road block was quickly eliminated and the column continued. Just east of Fuchstadt the road, or better identified as a trail, led into a heavily wooded area, in which there were many conflict-trails not even shown on the map, so it was necessary to halt frequently to check the roads. The column had gone but a short distance, when it got well off the assigned route and was some time before proper orientation could be made. The column finally got back on the proper road at Wasserlosen, after passing through Gressthal. Here in Gressthal the Combat Command was ordered to split into two columns, with the 47th Tank Battalion moving along to the left flank on a route parallel to ours.

The column had received spasmodic, time-fire artillery as it passed through Gressthal, the fire becoming so heavy for a few minutes that it was necessary to disperse the vehicles in the fields. Everything was rather confused for a few minutes, for we could see friendly vehicles moving down the road on our right flank and knew that the 47th Tankers were on our left. It looked as though we were receiving fire from friendly units, but it was finally determined to be enemy fire. Moving into Gressthal, we made contact with and found out that the unit moving along the road on our right flank was the 62nd A.I.B., then a part of CCR. From them information was gained that the next town to our front, Wasserlosen, was defended by the enemy.

Hasty plans were made and after a five minute artillery preparation on the town, "C" Company, with its attached tanks moved boldly down the road. Entering

the southern edge of town, an American tank with German markings was spotted in the edge of the woods. The German crew was napping, so our tanks immediately knocked it out as the crew scrambled out of the disabled vehicle and disappeared into the woods. The artillery preparation was very effective and had set fire to many of the buildings. The infantry-tank team then moved on into town, mounted-up, and proceeded through town without meeting any enemy opposition. While the head of the column had halted in Wasserlosen, the part of the column around "A" Company's vehicles were receiving time-fire and several casualties were suffered.

The column picked up speed and moved along east then north towards Orlenbach, but the map again did not indicate roads properly, and it was necessary to strike out cross-country, making our own roads and using compasses and our sense of direction. It was getting dark as we approached the edge of Orlenbach, where the head of the column ran into a German oil storage plant, well fenced off. A quick investigation revealed the gate was not booby-trapped nor the road mined, so one of our medium tanks crashed the gate into the plant's grounds, where fire that had destroyed two of the buildings was still raging. The place looked deserted, but as the head of the column approached the eastern gate of the enclosure, a number of civilians were observed running towards shelter. The action indicated that enemy troops were evidently present and that a fight would shortly take place. We had learned previously, that actions of the civilians as we approached towns would indicate whether to expect a fight or not. Orders by SHAEF had been given all Germans to have town officials, upon hearing our columns approach, to come out with a white flag waving, indicating surrender, and that the town was undefended; otherwise, it would be assumed that the town was defended and it would suffer the consequences of our blasting it off the map. We were moving fast and had the fire power to back up our speed and they knew it. Most towns did want to surrender, as they knew it was a hopeless situation for them; but, where the German soldiers were, they had no choice. They still were all enemy to us though, and were treated as such.

Upon observing the civilians fleeing to our front, "C" Company immediately dismounted a platoon and deployed it as security for the leading tank, for it continued moving towards the town. After reaching the road junction west of town, a column of about 45 soldiers was observed standing in formation at the road junction. It was rather dark and, as we were moving along fairly fast, it was impossible to determine whether they were prisoners-of-war or not, but because of the peculiar situation, they were assumed, at first, to be prisoners-of-war and we did not fire on them. The group finally spotted our column coming; they broke and ran as all our weapons opened up on them. Severe casualties were inflicted as they scattered wildly into the woods. A few dashed into the town of Orlenbach and returned our fire from behind houses. Tanks and 50 cal. machine-guns fired into the town, setting fire to a few buildings; but the fight soon ended when six of them were captured in the town and the rest, who were not killed, ran into the woods.

Our route did not take us through Orlenbach, so one platoon of "C"-19th, with two tanks, were left at the road junction and western edge of town as security against any enemy attempt to attack the column at that point, and the rest of the column continued towards Eltinghausen. It was, also, dangerous to be moving a column that could so easily be attacked successfully with bazookas and panzerfausts. Everyone was on the alert; alert for the enemy and alert to the fact that the vehicle in front could pull away without being detected and the column split. When the head of the column reached the center of town at 2200, a German soldier, running across the street was captured. Another German was seen standing in a doorway, and was quickly seized as he tried to slip back through the door. He was an officer. From him we learned that there were a considerable number of troops in the town and that the town had not been outposted, due to the fact that our presence was not anticipated for three or four more days. An attempt was made to get the officer to have all the troops in town surrender, but it was useless. He was reluctant to do so because of his "honor" and, having no time to waste, he was passed down the column as we started advancing through the town.

Enemy mortar and artillery shells began falling in the town and small arms fire was spreading on the streets along our column. The majority of firing by the enemy was from small disorganized groups, most of whom were trying to get out of town. Though there was still some small arms firing still going on, we decided to run through the remainder of the resistance and continue on our mission. The head of the column then passed on through the town, with numerous buildings ablaze, and on along our route. We had hardly started moving when it was learned that the column had split in two places and at one place had gone a short distance on the wrong road, where it was now halted and waiting for guides. The Rcn. Platoon sent a couple of peeps out to act as guides. As they went back through town they got into a fire fight, but managed to break away and continue on to bring the remainder back again into their proper places in column.

With the column back together again, the battalion continued its way along the route without incident other than having difficulty in maintaining the proper route in the darkness. Just before daylight an order was received to pull all vehicles over to the side and off of the road, as the 3rd U.S. Infantry Division had priority on all roads in that sector at 0600. We pulled off of the roads into the fields and wooded areas and remained there until 1325. It was a nice warm day and the break was appreciated by all, as everyone stretched out to get a fast wink of sleep, only to be interrupted every once in awhile by an incoming artillery shell.

We were then ordered to move out and lead the Combat Command to the vicinity of Munnerstadt. The route took us through Bad Kissingen, Nordlingen, and Munnerstadt, while the battalion itself moved on to occupy the next towns of Burglauer and Niederlauer. Placed on a two hour alert, we outposted the towns, organized contact patrols, and dispatched reconnaissance elements to perform route reconnaissance to a new I.P., that we were given at a crossroads northwest of Rannungen.

At 0300, 9 April, we received orders to move and were on the road at 0415, crossing the designated I.P. at 0610. The column moved along with little opposition until reaching Hoppachsdorf. We had, however, by-passed many enemy troops in the woods and taken a number of prisoners, with very little fire fighting. Our trains at the end of the column had even taken several prisoners and had been compelled to defend itself against small groups, who did not readily surrender. As our column had pulled out in the morning, a combat patrol of one rifle platoon, one section of medium tanks, a section of reconnaissance platoon, and a medical peep had been dispatched to provide flank protection on our right and was moving along parallel to the column.

Upon reaching Hoppachsdorf orders were received to halt before going on to Hesselbach, which we did, dispersing all vehicles in the fields. The next order received directed us to launch an attack against Hesselbach. Some artillery began to fall around our positions from the direction of Schweinfurt, but no damage was done. Hasty plans were made as "C" Company dismounted and moved east toward the town for the attack. The tanks and T.D.'s pulled up on the ridge giving supporting fire. As the tanks and T.D.'s moved up, they spotted several horse drawn and mortar vehicles leaving town and fired at them. Hits were scored and all but six vehicles were destroyed, which escaped to the southwest, but were caught by our flank patrol and destroyed. "C" Company with its attached tanks swept right through Hesselbach, with very little resistance and taking several prisoners. The town was soon cleared, and "A" Company passed through "C", picked up a section of medium tanks from them, and attacked east to seize the town of Otterhausen and the high ground south and east. The mission was accomplished with no resistance and the company outposted the high ground around the town. "C"-19, Hq. Co., "A"-47(—), Service Co., Med. Det., and the Battalion C.P. were located in Hesselbach. The town was outposted and patrols sent out on regular schedule to keep contact with adjacent units. One patrol attempting to contact friendly units in Uchtelhausen ran into enemy outposts and snipers, suffered two casualties, and returned after a spirited fire fight, during which they inflicted several casualties on the enemy.

The next several days were spent in these locations, as we were resupplied, cleaned equipment, and performed rigid maintenance on all vehicles. There was little activity during our stay here, although intermittent rounds of artillery fell in the town and the road over which our supplies came into town came under increasingly accurate and heavy fire from guns to the south. It was dangerous to pass over this road, trucks being compelled to come in at night or infiltrate through in the daytime. Several casualties were suffered as a result of this continual fire. At 0600, 13 April, our previous movement orders were changed, although our billeting party had already been sent some distance to the southwest. A new billeting party had to be sent to CCB immediately, so after a hasty meeting of company commanders, giving the change in route and plans, the column moved out of Hesselbach at 0700, with

the exception of "A"-19 and "A"-47, both of which assembled in Buchenrod. We were replaced on an immediate alert and moved out at 2000.

Combat Command "B", of which we were still a part, reverted to Division Reserve during this movement. We followed CCA throughout the night, passing through Grossheirath, south-east to the vicinity of Ranz, across the Main River to Staffelstein, Kleukheim, and Schweisdorf to Schesslitz, where the column halted. Patrols were then sent out to reconnoiter the route ahead and to contact adjacent units. The march was resumed at 1340, 14 April, and we reached Trausnitz at 1500, where the Battalion C.P. was established. "C"-19 and "A"-47 continued to Wiesenfeld and occupied that town, while "A"-19, with its tanks, moved to Konigsfeld, with the mission of clearing the town of any enemy troops before it could be occupied by CCB Reserve. A combat patrol of a light tank, a half-track with one squad of infantry, and two peeps preceded "A"-19th to the town. As the patrol approached the town from the west, an enemy anti-tank gun fired on the leading tank at a range of 75 yards, penetrating the hull at the left front, and killing the driver instantly, and fatally wounding all the other members of the crew. With the disabled tank burning and its ammunition exploding, the rest of the patrol dismounted and moved forward on foot, while one peep went back to "A" Company to relay the information of the anti-tank gun.

"A" Company guided by the peep, moved toward the town, with its attached tanks, dismounted, and launched a vicious coordinated attack on the town. Machine-guns from the company were trained on the anti-tank gun to keep the crew from manning it, while a medium tank moved up knocking it out with one shot. Many enemy troops were discovered dug in on the high ground east of town. Artillery, mortar, and tank fire was placed on the entire area, while the six machine-guns emplaced on the high ground west of town swept the area with fire. The nature of the terrain provided excellent opportunity for our troops to advance while receiving supporting fires, as the town was located in a valley between the two high ridges. Two platoons of "A"-19th, with a platoon of the medium tanks, moved boldly into town, and as one platoon cleared the town house by house, the other swept through the streets and assaulted the ridge east of town. Hopelessly trapped, many of the enemy surrendered, while those that fought back were quickly spotted and destroyed. The very few who did try to escape by running away were either hit by the accurate machine-gun fire or captured by the 47th Tank Battalion, which was moving into the rear of town from the south.

"A"-19, with all its attachments, then occupied Kotzendorf, and the remainder of the battalion outposted respective areas. Hq., Hq. Co., Med. Det., and Bn. Maint. occupied Treunitz. "C" Co. occupied Weisenfels and the customary contact patrols were maintained between units. Our "B" Company still remained attached to the 47th Tank Battalion.

Another overlay showing the route of advance to the next assembly area was received at 1530, 15 April, and at 1700 we moved out to Treunitz through Kotzen-

dorf, Dresdendorf, Sachsenhof, Tiefenlesau, Hachstal, Waischenfeld, Kirchahorn, and into Weiher, where we closed in at 2045. Once again the customary contact patrols to CCB, 47th Tank Bn., and 499th AFA Bn. were dispatched to the Recon. Platoon and the town was outposted. Remaining in Weiher throughout the 16th of April, the 1st Platoon of "C"-19th, with its one section of light tanks from "D"-47, were used to screen Weiher on the east. This screening force captured a total of thirty-five enemy troops during its operation. New instructions gave a new route and placed us on a 45 minute alert. At 0837 on the 17th we moved out, with Bronn as our immediate objective. The 47th Tank Bn. was now moving along a parallel route on our right flank, with our "B" Company still attached. During this march an order changed our destination to Ezelsdorf, and with the order came information indicating that CCA, which was to change its route, was to swing further to the east and squeeze out CCR, which was also to change its route and revert to Division Reserve, allowing CCB to move up on the west and abreast of CCA to become an attacking unit.

The march was uneventful until the Autobahn was reached when a combat patrol of one rifle platoon, a section of medium tanks, and a section of the 94th Reconnaissance was sent across it to provide flank security along a route parallel to the Autobahn. The patrol ran into small isolated groups of enemy and routed them. An order was soon received to clear the entire wooded area from the Autobahn all the way east to the railroad that ran parallel to the road, an area approximately six kilometers wide and eight kilometers long. Sniper fire was received by the column all along the Autobahn, and frequently out of the woods would come, with a little persuasion, one or two prisoners.

An immediate attack was launched in the woods, with "C" Company on the left and "A" on the right, each with its attached tanks. There was a considerable distance between the companies as they jumped off, but they were to attack straight toward the railroad, then turn to meet each other and cut the enemy off, "A" Company made good progress, for they were able to follow a road through the thick woods, but they did meet some resistance. "C" Company made slow, but sure progress. The undergrowth was so thick that it was a slow process, and a great deal of caution had to be taken to keep from getting right on an enemy machine-gun nest before it could be seen; and there were plenty of them. It was gradually getting dark, but the companies had made progress in clearing the woods. Some 85 prisoners were taken, with an estimated 50 killed, and only two casualties were suffered by our troops. In addition, three 77 mm anti-tank guns were destroyed and valuable information regarding enemy troops in the nearby area gained, including information that a tank-infantry attack was to be made against the Autobahn near our area shortly after dark.

At 1900, when it was almost dark, we received our orders, mounted-up, and moved out to continue the march. It was pitch dark as we moved on down the Autobahn, with every man alert for the enemy and keeping a continuous watch on the

vehicle ahead to prevent splitting the column. We were meeting no resistance, but it was difficult to maintain the correct direction after leaving the Autobahn. Roads were confusing, bridges blown, and routes to be used in by-passing had to be reconnoitered. On several occasions Major Forest T. Green, the Commanding Officer, personally went ahead of the column to reconnoiter routes. It was dangerous moving along in column, for we were at a complete disadvantage in case of attack. Strict blackout was maintained as protection against the usual night Luftwaffe prowlers; but sure enough one did pick up the column by the light of a burning building alongside of the road. He did a bit of ineffective strafing and dropped one bomb, without damage. The column continued moving on through the night at a very low rate of speed in order to keep the column intact, but with still no resistance. At daylight we were still moving without resistance, across open fields, down trails onto fairly good roads, picking up speed as it became lighter. No resistance was hit until we reached the town of Hagerhausen, where we received a little small arms and artillery fire. The town was hit hard with our artillery, tanks, and small arms fire, resistance quickly overcome, and the column continued on its march.

We found now that our immediate mission was to cut off the roads from Nurnberg to the east, denying German troops there a route of escape, for the city was being attacked and the enemy falling back. Everywhere indications that the enemy was weakening daily were growing more and more. He wanted to quit, but couldn't unless he had a good chance. Our combined penetrations had so disorganized him that he couldn't make a good defensive stand, except at strategic points, but we seemed to hit most of these. He was falling as fast as he could, and our speed was too much for his setting up many defenses.

Upon reaching the ridge just west of Peunfing, the column was fired on by an anti-tank gun in the woods. The column halted, for a few enemy artillery rounds landed nearby and suddenly a battery of "screaming meemies" opened up, falling near the tail end of the column, but fortunately no damage was done. At about this time several fighter-planes flew over, strafing the ridge nearby. A few nervous fingers did fire at them before learning they were friendly. Artillery and tank fire was directed on the anti-tank gun in short order, destroying it. A short round from our artillery landed among a group of "A" Company men, but luckily only minor burns were sustained. We mounted our vehicles again and continued on to the next town of Ezelsdorf, where scattered resistance was met. "A" Company pushed on through, with its attached tanks, until reaching the far side of town along the railroad, where it held up, after taking the few houses immediately on the opposite side of the tracks. Here on the railroad was a complete supply and passenger train, with full steam up ready to go, but the column had caught it before it could get out of town. "A" Company, at this time, was receiving a good bit of sniper fire from the town of Oberferrieden, which they returned as Headquarters Company moved on into Ezelsdorf and assisted clearing all the houses in town. The Battalion C.P. was set up in town and the town divided between Hq. Co. and "A" Co. in order to be

outposted, as we had received an order to hold up here for the time being. Meanwhile "C" Company was sent to clear the town of Derbach so that CCB could use the town for a C.P. CCB actually established their C.P. in Rasch, and the 1st Platoon of "B"-125th Engineers, who were attached to us, was sent to the underpass just at the edge of Dorlbach to outpost and secure the underpass that was the only suitable crossing of the canal. "C"-19 and "A"-47 then moved on into Peunfing, where they were billeted. Service Co. was, also, billeted in Peunfing, while the Med. Det. and Bn. Maint. moved into Ezelsdorf.

Stringent security measures were taken to outpost each town and all units were warned to be on the alert for enemy groups known to be active in the area. We, as well as the 47th Tank Battalion, were now outposting an extremely large area and able to occupy a small percentage of the towns in the area. The total area occupied by our Combat Command was some five miles square, and it was fairly simple for the enemy to pass into towns in our area between other towns which we actually occupied. To add to the touchy position that we were in, we were way out in front of all other troops, who had not caught up with us after our continuous drive of the past few days. Also, we were east and slightly south of Nurnberg in the path of troops withdrawing from that city, for it was being attacked from the west.

On April 19 a reinforced rifle platoon was sent to CCB to provide further security for the town of Rasch. A combat team made up of "C"-19 and "A"-47 were sent to Grunsberg to clear the town of a reported group of sixty "SS" troops, as well as the wooded area, which required considerable shelling to reduce. However, after a stiff fight the enemy groups were disposed of and the entire area cleared by 2200. The combat team occupied and outposted this location for the night.

At 2230 that night an enemy patrol of approximately fifty men attacked the underpass at Dorlbach; they killed one and captured nineteen of the twenty-one men engineer platoon that was guarding the underpass. One man escaped and returned to the Battalion C.P. with full details of the short-lived fight. His story indicated that the enemy patrol's mission was to blow the underpass and also seize the bridge close by, which was the only other crossing on the canal open to traffic, thus cutting off our battalion from the rest of the Combat Command. Immediate steps were taken to provide further security for that vital bridge and tanks moved from Peunfing to oppose the enemy patrol. The enemy attack on the bridge, however, did not materialize, and at 1000 the next morning "C"-19 and "A"-47 (—) withdrew from Grunsberg and attacked Dorlbach to clear it of enemy troops. The enemy was caught in their fox-holes and the entire force of some twenty-five men were completely annihilated. Because of increased activity and aggressiveness on the part of the enemy, security around the town of Ezelsdorf was doubled, with every available man, including the Battalion Maintenance personnel, on guard. The extra measures were profitable, because two attacks of combat patrol strength hit the town at 0030 and 0300, but were quickly driven off.

At dawn on 20 April, "A" Company, with an attached platoon of tanks, launched an attack on Oberferrieden, with the mission of seizing the town and cutting the main highway. Half of the 1st Platoon and all of the 2nd Platoon were on duty elsewhere and were unable to join in the attack. Hq. Co.'s Machine-Gun, Mortar, and Assault-Gun Platoons were to give supporting fires, while working with the attacking force. After working up through the small town on the opposite side of the railroad tracks, from which sniper fire was received, the company assembled for the advance across an open field into Oberferrieden. After a short artillery and mortar barrage the company started moving into town, with the Machine-Gun Platoon supporting and following. There was scattered resistance at the first and the attack progressed well until it reached the church, where a panzerfaust was fired at one of the tanks, missing it, but exploding and injuring several men. The tank backed up and fired several rounds of 76mm, while it peppered away with its machine-gun. Sniper fire became increasingly heavier from both the town and hill to the south, and, with no flank protection, casualties increased. The company was ordered to withdraw after four men had been killed and six wounded, three being from the Machine-Gun Platoon.

Plans were then made for a reinforced, coordinated attack, for it looked like the enemy intended holding the town. "C" Company was brought up and given the mission of moving around the flank and seizing the high ground south of town, while "A" Company launched an assault against the town itself. During the early morning, the town was pounded and pounded with medium and heavy artillery. The rocket tank was brought up and fired into town, as the Assault Gun Platoon poured its 105mm shells in and the Mortar Platoon cut loose with its deadly 81's. The town rocked from the shelling, and nearly every house was ablaze as the attack jumped off shortly after at 0630. "C" Company, without difficulty, moved quickly around to occupy the high ground designated, while "A" Company moved through the town meeting very little resistance. Most of the enemy troops and civilians had vacated the town after the shelling, since it was ablaze and there was no place to stay. The town was completely cleared by 0930; we suffered only two casualties.

A reconnaissance patrol, of the Reconnaissance Platoon, was sent to Unterferrieden to determine whether the town was occupied—it was found to be empty. At 1400 the battalion was alerted to the possibility of relieving the 47th Tank Bn., which was alerted to move to CCR. The order was received and carried out as "A" Company moved into and occupied the area that the 47th had occupied.

Word was received that Nurnberg had fallen and the 99th U.S. Infantry Division was to pass through and relieve us of our area. We were to continue our march southward, but they never did come as had been anticipated. Over to our east CCA was having a heavy fight in Neumarkt, which was finally taken after heavy concentrations and bombing by the artillery and Air Corp, respectively.

The balance of the 21st was spent in reorganizing the defensive sectors of each unit, and tying in with patrols of the widely-dispersed units of the battalion. The

disposition of our battalion and attachments was: Hq. and Hq. Co. (less the Machine-Gun Platoon and one squad of the 81 mm Mortar), with 1-"B"-636 T.D.'s attached in Ezelsdorf; "C"-19 (—), with 1-"A"-47 and the Machine-Gun Platoon in Oberferrieden; "A"-19th, with 2-"A"-47th in Ochenbruch; 1-"C"-19th in Pfeifferhutte, and one rifle squad of 2-"C"-19, with one squad of the 81 mm Mortars outposting the bridge near Dorlbach; 3-"C"-19th in Schwarzenbach, guarding the underpass; and 4-"C"-19 attached to CCB in Rasch. "B" Company was still attached to the 47th Tank Battalion.

Orders were received to attack to the south, with the mission of seizing Pyrbaum and Rengersricht, where enemy troops had been reported entering. "C" Company, with its attached tanks, launched the drive by moving through Unterferrieden, then towards Pyrbaum. The remainder of the battalion followed in column, with the exception of "A" Company, which was assembling from its scattered positions to join us. As "C" Company entered the wooded area they encountered a long road-block, consisting of trees cut so that they had fallen all across the road. Immediately dismounting, the infantrymen moved around the road-block and established a bridge-head to protect the men clearing the block. At 1700, the rain, which had been threatening all day, came. It rained throughout the night. The result was a complete drenching of the terrain and restricting the heavy vehicles to roads; also denying all vehicles any cross-country maneuvering.

The roadblock was finally cleared and "C" Company and its attached tanks approached Pyrbaum, taking up positions overlooking the town. A combat tank-infantry team, consisting of one tank and a squad of infantry, led by Lt. Robert Lingle of "C" Company, moved boldly into town, reaching the first houses unmolested. Immediately German troops began to close in on the team, which was hopelessly out-numbered. The team coolly broke out of the ring of Germans, who had formed around them, and withdrew. As the tank swung around on the muddy terrain, it became mired and eventually was abandoned, the crew returning with the infantrymen.

The rain had made all roads muddy and slippery, many of them becoming impassable. Under these conditions, "A" Company, after assembling with its attached tanks, had great difficulty in getting on the move to join us, for nearly every vehicle got stuck at one time or another. As a result it was 0500 the next morning, April 23, when they finally reached the rear of the column in Unterferrieden. A coordinated attack on Pyrbaum was planned to begin at dawn that morning, with "A" Company leading, while "C" and Headquarters Companies supported them with fire; then "C" Company was to assist in the final mopping-up operations.

At 0700 that morning the artillery laid a heavy, five-minute concentration on the town, after it had been shelled intermittently during the night. At 0705 "A" Company jumped off, leaving the southern edge of the woods north of Pyrbaum and sweeping into town in two columns. No resistance was encountered, so by 0930 the town was completely cleared and outposted. At 1030 the battalion left Pyrbaum for Jarsdorf on an administrative march, where we closed in at 2030.

On this date, 23 April, the Division was detached from the Seventh U.S. Army and attached to the Third U.S. Army.

Orders were received at 0100 the next morning for the Combat Command to continue the attack to the southeast, with a mission of seizing a crossing of the Altmuth River at Beilngries. The 19th was to move on the left, with the 47th Tank Battalion following a parallel route on the right. "C" Company was still at the head of the column as we moved out of Jarsdorf at 0630.

The battalion proceeded without incident until it reached Obermassing, where it was halted by a blown bridge across a stream too deep to ford. The attached engineers, utilizing materials found in the town, with a good many civilians, soon built a bridge of telephone poles and heavy two and three inch planking, which got the battalion across the stream by 1400. With the greater majority of the battalion across the stream, the bridge broke, so those elements of the battalion that had gotten across before the bridge had broken, continued the attack. Our right flank combat patrol of one rifle squad, two medium tanks, a section of the 94th Rcn., and two Medical peeps, again moved along a route parallel to our own. Nearly every town we were going through now had its white flags of surrender waving briskly, and the civilians actually waving and cheering at us as we went through. Some thought, and most of them hoped, that the war was over, and it was for those whom we passed. The section of the 94th Reconnaissance, that was at the head of the column picking our route was under command of Sgt. Bernard Schmaltz, who spoke German fairly well. As the column approached the towns, innumerable times he would proceed to the edge of it and threaten destruction of the town if the Germans there didn't surrender without a fight. It worked well, for the Germans would usually come walking out of the houses and foxholes with their hands over their heads. Little attention was paid to them other than itchy hands looking for a "P-38". They were motioned toward the rear of the column to be picked up by elements responsible there.

The column proceeded on to Herrnsberg, then on the road to Littershofen, where a road block and mine field forced us to stop. The engineers started work on the block and mine field immediately, for it could not be by-passed, and by 1730 we were again on the move. Proceeding on through Littershofen, the column ran into another mine field, but, after a quick reconnaissance, it was by-passed and we moved on to Hirschberg, where we met and picked up our right flank patrol. From Hirschberg the road started going down into the river valley to Beilngries, located at the bottom of the valley on the river-bank. We had erroneously been notified, some time previous, that the 48th Tank Battalion had already reached and cleared the town; however, as our column was moving down into the valley, a few artillery shells landed along it, and a truck with Germans in uniform was seen on one of the streets. No fire was delivered on them, for we thought there were friendly troops in town, but the artillery landing along the column and the Germans seen in town made it a little confusing. About this time, however, a friendly column

was seen at the northeastern edge of town. Contact was made with the unit and it was found to be the 48th Tankers, who had just reached the town. Hasty coordinated plans were made for taking the town. We moved right on in with no resistance at all from within the town. We were now, however, receiving ever increasing mortar, artillery, and direct tank fire from all along the ridge to our front.

Reconnaissance was made immediately and it was learned that the bridges all around the town were blown, with the exception of the two on the south. These two were of no immediate value, as there was a third just beyond and on the same road that had been blown. "A" Company immediately sent out a platoon to secure the two bridges and very shortly another platoon was sent along as plans were made to build a pontoon bridge, where the third had been blown. The remainder of the battalion moved on into town as it was getting dark. The town was soon outposted, with "A" Company moving on down to secure the bridge. We then learned that there was no equipment immediately available and it would be some time late in the night or early morning before any could be obtained. The equipment failed to come during the night; but, the Germans began to increase their tempo of fire around the bridgesite so much, that it would have been almost impossible to build one anyway.

"A" Company was out in the open exposed to the cold, damp weather and suffering casualties from exposure and exhaustion, as well as the enemy fire that kept pouring in. It was obvious that the ridge to the south would have to be taken to reduce the fire that was being brought on the bridge. Orders were received the next morning from CCB directing that "A" Company cross the river and continue along the road to Paulushofen; "C" Company was to move to the northeast to Kottingworth, cross the river there, and on up the hill to seize Paulushofen, continuing on after contact was made with "A" Company in Amtsmannsdorf.

The town of Beilngries was right on the Eltmuhl River in a valley, with high ridges all around. To the south, in the direction of the proposed attack, the ground began to rise steadily across open fields until it reached a heavily wooded area extending to the top and beyond the ridge. It was as perfect a defensive position as could ever be hoped for, with either direct, front grazing or flanking fires for a great distance. A determined enemy with proper equipment could hold the position easily for a long time and at a high cost to any attacker.

Without having time to wait for an air support mission already on the way or proper artillery preparation, we were ordered to get the attack under way. At 0900 the two companies jumped off to cross the river, but had hardly started when automatic weapons, small arms, mortar, and direct anti-tank fire pinned them to the ground. Tanks and Assault Guns were brought up to fire into the enemy positions and the 81mm Mortars were firing with all they had. Since the enemy was too well dug-in and the resistance failed to weaken, our companies suffered casualties. "A" Company was suffering the most casualties, for the heaviest defense was along the main road, where they were attacking. They had passed the river and were at the edge of the woods, but could move no farther. Vehicles could not come across



the river at all, as the bridge still had not been built. There was no way to evacuate the wounded, except by litter, but the enemy fire would not permit that. Pvt. Joe Bienlein, an aid man, was killed by a sniper, while giving aid to one of the wounded men. T/3 Munson and T/4 LaForge, of the Medics, attempted to cross the river with the "WEASEL", but it became flooded and was stalled. LaForge worked on it for three hours, finally started it, and managed to cross this time. They proceeded to the company attack area and on up the ridge to where the casualties were reported, but failed to hear the lead scout of "A" Company yell at them to stop. They had gone but a short distance beyond, when they were captured and taken back by the Krauts.

"C" Company was also under heavy fire and receiving casualties. There was no way to evacuate their wounded back across the river except by rubber boat, but this was under fire. T/5 Sperberg stood on part of a blown bridge holding a large red cross flag, while Cpl. Guenette brought the wounded over in a boat. Enemy fire ceased when the flag was up and as soon as the peep with the wounded departed and the flag lowered, the fight would start again.

Pfc. Scala of "A" Company risked his life several times as he tried to keep the communication line between Lt. Mike Auer and the mortars, whose fire he was adjusting. The situation was desperate, so smoke was called for in order that the company could pull back a little to take better cover and evacuate the wounded up front. The artillery kept throwing in smoke and HE instead of just plain smoke, needed to screen the withdrawal. Sgt. Hanover ran back through the fire to inform the artillery of the situation; hence, after a while sufficient smoke was put down to effect withdrawal.

"C" Company, though still under heavy fire, battled its way to the woods as the enemy fell back to the top of the ridge. With machine-guns, bazookas, and hand grenades they managed to drive the enemy from the ridge and back into the town. While attempting to reach the ridge, Lt. Joe Osborn was hit by small arms fire and mortally wounded. Evacuation was difficult, so it was some time before he got back to the aid station. He was evacuated on back to another station and we learned shortly that he died of his wounds.

After gaining the top of the ridge, it was getting dark. A short reconnaissance revealed that there were tanks and a good many enemy troops in the town. As it was impossible to get any of their own tanks up to engage the enemy tanks, the company pulled back along the edge of the ridge and called for all the artillery that they could get on the town. They got it, for the whole town went up in flames. When the barrage lifted, the company pushed vigorously into town and in very short order cleared it of all enemy troops. With "C" Company in town, the pressure was lifted from "A" Company; therefore, they proceeded right through the woods along the road into Paulushofen, meeting little resistance. Both companies outposted the town for the remainder of the night, awaiting construction of the bridge, and also the battalion to meet them the next morning. The "WEASEL", which T/3

Munson and T/4 LaForge had been captured in, was retaken by "A" Company that night as it moved up the hill. The two men, themselves, were liberated some time later by CCA.

Just before daylight the next morning, the engineers had the bridge completed, and with "C" Company's vehicles in the lead, the battalion moved across the bridge. The column started up the ridge, when it ran into a log road-block, which was quickly disposed of as we proceeded on into Paulushofen. "C" Company mounted up as its vehicles came by and the column continued, with "A" Company mounting their vehicles also as they came by. Elements of the 99th Infantry Division had caught up with us during the night, so we felt a little more secure on our flanks, as we continued the drive.

Our objective was to make a run for the Danube River and seize a bridge that the air O.P. said was still intact. We increased our speed and continued the march south without opposition until the head of the column reached a low ridge in front of Forchheim, where mortar fire forced the column to halt. "C" Company immediately dismounted and, after a short artillery preparation, started to attack the town, while tanks fired at anti-tank weapons at the edge of it. There was a brisk fire fight as the company, with the attached tanks, moved right on into town, taking it in a very short time. Numerous prisoners were taken, when the town was completely cleared. As the attack began, German soldiers were seen walking and riding bicycles back and forth between two little villages a few thousand yards away on our right flank. All vehicular machine-guns opened up, and the Assault Guns and several tanks also opened fire; several of the enemy were killed and the rest disappeared. About this time friendly planes were circling overhead, ready to bomb targets, when all of a sudden two German planes flying at tree-top level flew right by the column, strafed with a short ineffective burst and made a fast trip to get out of the way of our own planes near-by.

Just as "C" Company had cleared the town of Forchheim, "A" Company mounted, passed through, and made a dash for Pforring toward the bridge. No resistance was met as they raced through the town toward the bridge, but the lead tank was no more than 100 yards away, when the bridge went up in a puff of smoke. The demolition squad, who had just destroyed it, was captured and found to be just young kids. It was a let-down feeling to have come so close and just missed capturing a bridge. Feelings would have been worse had not the Air Corps just at that time put on a grand demonstration of bombing and strafing in the town just across the river.

The remainder of the battalion pulled on into Pforring and set up for the night. "A" Company outposted the bridgesite and the southern part of the town, while the remainder of the battalion, after clearing the town, outposted and settled down in billets, so everyone enjoyed a much needed night's rest. It wasn't all rest though, for the Krauts threw mortar, artillery, and even "Nebelwerfers" into the town all night. Some of the incoming shells were very heavy and did damage, especially

around Hq. Co.'s kitchen and C.P., where a three-quarter ton truck was damaged as well as a good bit of the kitchen equipment. One of the heavy rounds hit the C.P. of "A"-47th Tank Bn., penetrating the roof and killing Capt. Thorpe, who, with his company, had worked with us so diligently all during the long drive.

During the night our Assault Guns and Mortar Platoon supplemented the artillery fire, as we harassed enemy positions across the river. The next day numerous exchanges of troops were made. "B"-19 returned to us from its attachment to the 47th Tank Bn., "A"-47 returned to its parent unit, "A"-19 was attached to the 48th Tank Battalion, and "C"-48 was received by us as an attachment. 4-"A"-19 replaced 4-"C"-19 at CCB Reserve, while all other attachments remained as they were. The rest of our stay in Pforring was spent in organizing our replacements and preparing our vehicles and equipment for coming attacks.

We received an order to attack at the Isar River, so the column moved out of Pforring at 1545, 28 April. We moved northwest to Ettling and Dolling, south-west to Thoisting, Demling, and Grossklein, and west to Ingolstadt, where we crossed the Danube River on a pontoon bridge at 1725. Proceeding south, then east, the column moved without interruption to Ernsgaden, where the battalion billeted for the night. Another overlay came down from CCB indicating a new route of march to the Isar River. A billeting party was sent to our assigned area, which included a number of small villages just off of the main road. A total of sixty-eight prisoners were taken by this party, most of them between the ages of twelve and fourteen. The battalion followed shortly afterward and closed in on the area at 1500, with Hq. and Hq. Co., Med. Det., and Bn. Maint. and "B"-19 in Ziegebrouth, "C"-19 in Katharinazell, each unit outposting its own area. Our stay in this area was short, but good for another night's rest, anyway. We were ordered to continue on our route to the Isar River and at 1630 we moved out, closing into another forward assembly area in the vicinity of Kirchamper at 1900. Another order came down immediately from CCB, and at 2130 we were again on the road. The Isar River was crossed at 2400. We continued our route through Moos, Pfrombach, Kirchberg, and Schrodung. Our combat patrol of two medium tanks from "C"-48, one rifle squad from "B"-19, and a reconnaissance squad section from 1-"B"-94, protected our right flank and followed a road paralleling our route.

The column continued until one of our medium tanks fell through a broken bridge. Here the column was held up for two hours, while recon patrols dashed along the stream, trying to find an alternate route. When a suitable crossing was found, the column was compelled to travel cross-country over the wet, soggy ground caused by the recent rains. Upon reaching Erdmansdorf, we ran into a self-propelled anti-tank gun and small arms fire. "B" Company dismounted, and after a short artillery preparation, moved against the town with its supporting tanks. On our left flank we heard artillery fire and enemy troops were observed moving south across our front at quite some distance. Shortly after, an anti-tank gun began firing on our

column from the edge of the woods on our flank, but the attached tanks as well as our own Assault Guns soon silenced that.

"B" Company, after a very short fire fight, proceeded on through the town, with little resistance, and about thirty-seven prisoners were taken as well as two self-propelled guns. After the company mounted up in their vehicles, the column continued its march over the muddy, soggy roads, and across swollen streams, over which most bridges were destroyed. Numerous small groups of the enemy were observed hurrying to the south. Some enemy vehicles were engaged at extreme ranges by the attached tanks and Assault Guns, with some damage inflicted.

On our right flank, the combat patrol had run into well-emplaced, self-propelled, anti-tank guns and, in a brief but furious fire fight, lost both tanks, one jeep, and four men; forced to withdraw, the patrol returned to the column. The patrol had hit the tail end of a retreating enemy column at Taufkirchen, Germany.

We moved along our route until reaching the road junction at Hubenstein, where we were stopped by a blown bridge across the Gross Vils Creek at Moosen and Maiselsburg. We were ordered to move to Velden and follow the 48th Tank Bn. across the stream on the wooden bridge that they had installed there. By this time, night had fallen and with it snow, which was wet and heavy; it covered the ground and road, making cross-country movements an impossibility. In attempting to comply with orders to cross the bridge at Velden, the battalion discovered that the bridge at Bruck was half destroyed, usable only by jeeps. We were, therefore, delayed again, while a treadway section was brought up and emplaced. In the meantime, CCA had asked for and received permission to cross the bridge at Velden.

When we finally crossed the bridge at Bruck and reached the crossing at Velden, the approaches on both sides of the bridge were badly chewed up by the tremendous amount of traffic it had handled. A half-track of the 68th A.I.B. had tipped off the side of the small board bridge, and a great number of vehicles were mired in the wet, sticky mud on each side of the bridge. The 47th Tank Battalion was winching its vehicles through the mire, but further use of the crossing was impossible until extensive repairs were effected. A lumber yard in the vicinity yielded the necessary materials, so a complete, wooden, planking roadway of one-hundred yards was completed the next day at 1200.

The battalion pushed ahead; at approximately 1430 hours, they received instructions not to cross the Inn River unless a bridge could be seized intact. There were no bridges to be found intact; in fact, we hadn't seen but a few bridges that were intact for a long time. We held up at Aschau, Germany, at 1750, where the battalion and attachments were billeted. "B" Company, however, was sent on to occupy Gars, where it captured a small, German, guard company intact, without a fight, and liberated two-hundred and fifty American officers and fifty enlisted men.

Thousands of German soldiers were surrendering; thousands of liberated Allied soldiers and ex-prisoners of the Germans also added to the mass of humanity that poured into our area. The end of the war was very near and everyone sensed it.

We knew it had to be very close, for there wasn't very much of Germany left to fight over, and we, ourselves, were near the foot-hills of the Alps, as far south as we could go. Our "A" Company, now attached to the 48th Tank Battalion, had seized a bridge intact and crossed it to reach a concentration camp. They were compelled to ask for help to guard the camp, so it was sent to them. Aschau and Gars were outposted by "C" and "B", respectively, through the night, without any disturbances whatsoever. The next day at 1330 we were alerted for a possible move. This time, for a change, it would be to the rear; hence, we knew that our days on the front line in the ETO were now over. At 1600, a billeting party was sent to our new assigned area, while movement orders were sent down to the companies. At 0530, the morning of 4 May, we started our march to the rear, not far away, where we arrived at 1200. Bn. Hq. and Hq. Co., Med. Det., and Bn. Maint. were located in the village of Leiperstadt, "B"-19 was located in Gebensbach, and "C"-19 in Ober-Gebensbach, with "C"-48 in a tiny village near Leiperstadt. The battalion proceeded immediately to search the entire area, clearing it of all enemy troops and unauthorized personnel. Official notice was received on the 5th of May that all hostilities on the Western Front would cease at 1200, 6 May, and that no offensives of any kind would be made. Only defensive measures would be made for security.

At 2230, 6 May, the battalion was ordered to move to a new area generally in the vicinity of Straubing, Germany. We crossed the I.P. at Gruntegernbach the next morning at 0800 and moved but a short distance to our new area. Bn. Hq., Hq. Co., Med. Det., and Bn. Maint. were located in Straubing, with the C.P. of "A" Co. located in Rieding. The "B" Co. C.P. was in Wambach, "C" Co., intact, was placed in Taufkirchen, and Service Company moved into Hofstarring. "C" Company in its entirety was more or less detached from the battalion, for they were used to guard the Division P.W. cage that was located in Taufkirchen, and at times had as many as ten-thousand prisoners-of-war. "A", "B", and "Hq." Co.'s, though their C.P.'s were located in the larger towns, had to break their areas. It was an all day job to contact each squad in any company, due to the large area covered and wide dispersion of squads and platoons.

We had hardly settled in our new area on 7 May, when, at 1855, a letter from the Commanding General, 14th Armored Division was received, officially announcing that at 0001, 9 May, 1945 the war in the European Theater would be officially over. Needless to say, though the war for us was already over. There was joy in the hearts of all, as Lt. Col. Green read the message and informed all company commanders of its contents. Though the official hour of the end of the war was not known until the following night, those who were fortunate enough to have saved a "bottle" for the long awaited occasion did not wait to pass it around. Naturally, some of the "edge" had been taken off of the good news by previous word of the cessation of hostilities, but the official signing of the peace treaty just made the feeling a little more secure. The lights went on, not "All Over The World", but everywhere it was possible to get them in the European Theater.

There was joy and a few shouts, but even that was short lived. It was hard to explain our feelings—but they were not reckless feelings. It was a rather gay, sober feeling, for we knew this was not the complete end for all of us. There was another war still raging. It was not “their” war over there, it was still our war, and we knew full well that there would be many of us who would go soon, to again do our share to bring that one to a speedy end. It might even be months before some of us would or could go, but there would be time to think and “sweat out” the point system.

That night at 0001, 9 May 1945, there were probably millions celebrating a great hour, but if you had passed through the area of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion, you would have seen no one but essential guards on duty awake and moving about, for a weary group of 1080 Officers and Enlisted men were trying to catch up on a lot of much needed, much deserved rest.

CHAPTER IX

INVENTORY

For all activities man engages in, whether they be civil or military, he must at one time or another account for those actions to society and to God. Before society and God, we, of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion, are ready and willing to make this account, with a clear conscience and without expectation of praise, glory, or mercy. We know we have fulfilled a hard job, and believe we have done a good job; as good as it was humanly possible for us to do. There is believed to be a limit to what a human being can do and stand, and there is. We have been strained to the limit on several occasions, but through the Grace of God and the unbeatable spirit and valor of our men, we have pulled through those tight spots. We who have been fortunate enough to come through the battles in which the battalion has participated, are able to present our record and boast of our accomplishments. In boasting, we are not unmindful of those who gave their lives that these boasts and accomplishments might be possible, and for them we pass along our records. Victory most certainly was ours, but we paid, and paid well, though we expect and believe it not to be in vain.

Of the 221 days the battalion was overseas, from 29 October 1944 to 9 May 1945, the unit is officially credited with 103 days of combat. Company "A" was credited with 97 days; Company "B", 104 days; and company "C", 105 days. Supporting companies and detachments of the battalion are credited with the average of the three line companies.

The total number of officers who originally came overseas with the Battalion was 42. Of these, 18 were wounded or killed in action, with 8 of the wounded returning to duty with the unit. Four of the original officers were transferred to other units, with 26 of the original officers present for duty at the close of the war in the ETO.

There were ten battlefield-commissioned officers within the Battalion;

Lt. Auer, Michael J.	Company "A"
Lt. Conroy, John J.	Company "B"
Lt. Driscoll, William M.	Company "A"
Lt. Hudson, James T.	Hq. Company
Lt. Johnson, William V., Jr.	Company "A"
Lt. Levine, Joe	Hq. Det.
Lt. Lingle, Robert E.	Company "C"
Lt. Lynch, Eugene M.	Company "C"
Lt. Nelis, Joseph R.	Company "A"
Lt. Newman, Joe W., Jr.	Company "B"

	WOUNDED IN ACTION	DIED OF WOUNDS	KILLED IN ACTION	MISSING IN ACTION
Hq. Det.	7	0	1	0
Hq. Company	25	0	7	11
Company "A"	122	4	24	12
Company "B"	189	2	31	8
Company "C"	205	7	32	4
Service Company	5	0	0	0
Med. Det.	22	0	2	2
TOTAL BATTALION	575	13	97	37

Of the 575 wounded in action, 254 returned to duty with the battalion. Of the 37 missing in action, only 9 are still unaccounted for. Of the 97 killed in action, 42 were killed within the last month of combat. 197 were wounded in the last month of Combat. Total of all types of casualties by month within the battalion were: November, 1944, 6; December, 1944, 66; January, 1945, 309; February, 1945, 7; March, 1945, 146; April, 1945, 204; and May, 1945, 4.

The battalion was credited with 3,091 prisoners of war; however, in the closing days of operations, we were moving so fast and prisoners were coming to us in such large groups from houses, woods, and fields that the column passed by ignoring them, and no credit was received. It would not be inconsistent to assume that half-again this number of prisoners were taken.

A total of 824 new reinforcements were received within the battalion. Distribution of replacements was: Hq. C., 40; "A", 175; "B", 278; "C", 303; Med. Det., 23; and Service Co., 5.

The battalion suffered a total of 255 non-battle casualties, of whom two died of their injuries.

The exact number of awards received by, or to be awarded to, members of this battalion cannot be given, for there are many yet to be awarded. However, the following awards had been given shortly after the end of the war in the ETO:

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

DeWitt, Jack R.	Captain	Company "A"
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BRITISH MILITARY MEDAL

DeWitt, Jack R.	Captain	Company "A"
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SILVER STAR

Alspach, Forrest B.	Lt. Col.	Headquarters
Auer, Michael J.	2nd Lt.	Company "A"
Conroy, John J.	2nd Lt.	Company "B"
DeWitt, Jack R.	Captain	Company "A"
Green, Forest T.	Lt. Col.	Headquarters
Hager, George W.	Captain	Med. Det.
Pederzani, Guy A.	Major	Headquarters
Sweitzer, Alvin	1st Lt.	Hq. Company

Bartus, Leo J.	Sgt.	Hq. Company
Bullard, Edwin A.	T/5	Med. Det.
Einsweiller, John C.	Pfc.	Company "B"
Forsman, Herbert J.	S/Sgt.	Company "C"
Manley, Leonard	Pfc.	Med. Det.
Riccardi, Fred E.	Cpl.	Hq. Company
Shortt, Maurice E.	Sgt.	Company "A"
Smith, John W.	T/5	Med. Det.
Stamps, Donald L.	Sgt.	Company "B"
Tervo, Uho V.	Pfc.	Hq. Company
Wiederhorn, Charles B.	Pfc.	Company "C"
Woost, William H.	Pfc.	Company "C"

The total distance the Battalion C.P. traveled as measured by the Administrative Half-Track from the time the battalion left Marseilles, France, to the end of the war was 2205 miles.

The average mileage of all half-tracks that originally were issued to the battalion in Marseilles, France, and were with the column until the end of the war, was 4000 miles. The average of all two and one-half ton, six-by-six trucks was 7000 miles. The average mileage of all two and one-half ton trucks from the Transportation Platoon of Service Company was 9000 miles, with the highest mileage of any of these trucks, 14,000 miles. The average mileage of all peeps was 14,000 miles, with the Medical Detachment peep traveling some 20,000 miles. One ambulance traveled 7107 miles.

The greatest amount of artillery support given the battalion directly was on 19 January, 1945 in Hatten, France, when 17 battalions of artillery fired for the battalion; however, the 14th A.D. Artillery alone fired a total of 29,662 rounds of light, medium, and heavy artillery in our support in Hatten from 13 January, 1945 to 20 January, 1945. The total rounds fired on each of the eight days in Hatten was: 6142, 13 January; 4711, 14 January; 6247, 15 January; 1970, 16 January; 2379, 17 January; 2798, 18 January; 3652, 19 January; and 1403, 20 January.

Total consumption of gasoline and ammunition from 29 October, 1944 to 9 May, 1945:

Gasoline	300,000 Gallons
30 Caliber, Ball	75,000 Rounds
50 Caliber, M.G.	100,000 Rounds
75mm Howitzer	5,500 Rounds
105mm Howitzer	2,000 Rounds
81mm Mortar	15 000 Rounds
60mm Mortar	2,000 Rounds
30 Caliber, M.G.	500,000 Rounds
45 Caliber, SMG & Pistol	15,000 Rounds
Carbine	50,000 Rounds

These figures do not reflect the tremendous amount of ammunition picked up from other units and used.

Vehicles and major items of equipment lost as a result of enemy action:

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>HQ & HQ CO</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>SERV.</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Half-Tracks	1	5	9	3		18
Vehicle, Tank Recovery	1				1	2
Assault Gun, M-8	1					1
Carbine, Cal. 30 M1	16	28	10	43	1	98
Machine-Gun, Cal. 30 M1917A1		4	3	1		8
SMG, Cal. 45 M3		9	9	7		25
Rocket Launcher, M9A1	5	14	3	36		59
Grenade Launcher, M7		14	30	27		71
Rifle, Automatic M1918A2		5	5	7		17
Rifle, Cal. 30 M1		48	9	61		118
Rifle, Cal. 30 M1903A4		2	4			6
Machine-Gun, Cal. 50		3	3			6
Machine-Gun, Cal. 30 M1919A4		2	3	8		13
Grenade Launcher, M8		4	1	4		9
AT Gun, 57mm M1		2	1	3		6
Mortar, 60mm		1		1		2
Radios	7	1		2	2	12
Telephones, EE-8	4	2	3	4		13

Units with whom the battalion fought or were attached:

ARMIES:

7th U.S. Army

3rd U.S. Army

CORPS:

VI

XXII

XX

III

DIVISIONS AND OTHER UNITS:

44th AAA Brigade

117th Cavalry Rcn. Squadron, Mecz.

3rd U.S. Infantry Division

4th U.S. Infantry Division

36th U.S. Infantry Division

42nd U.S. Infantry Division

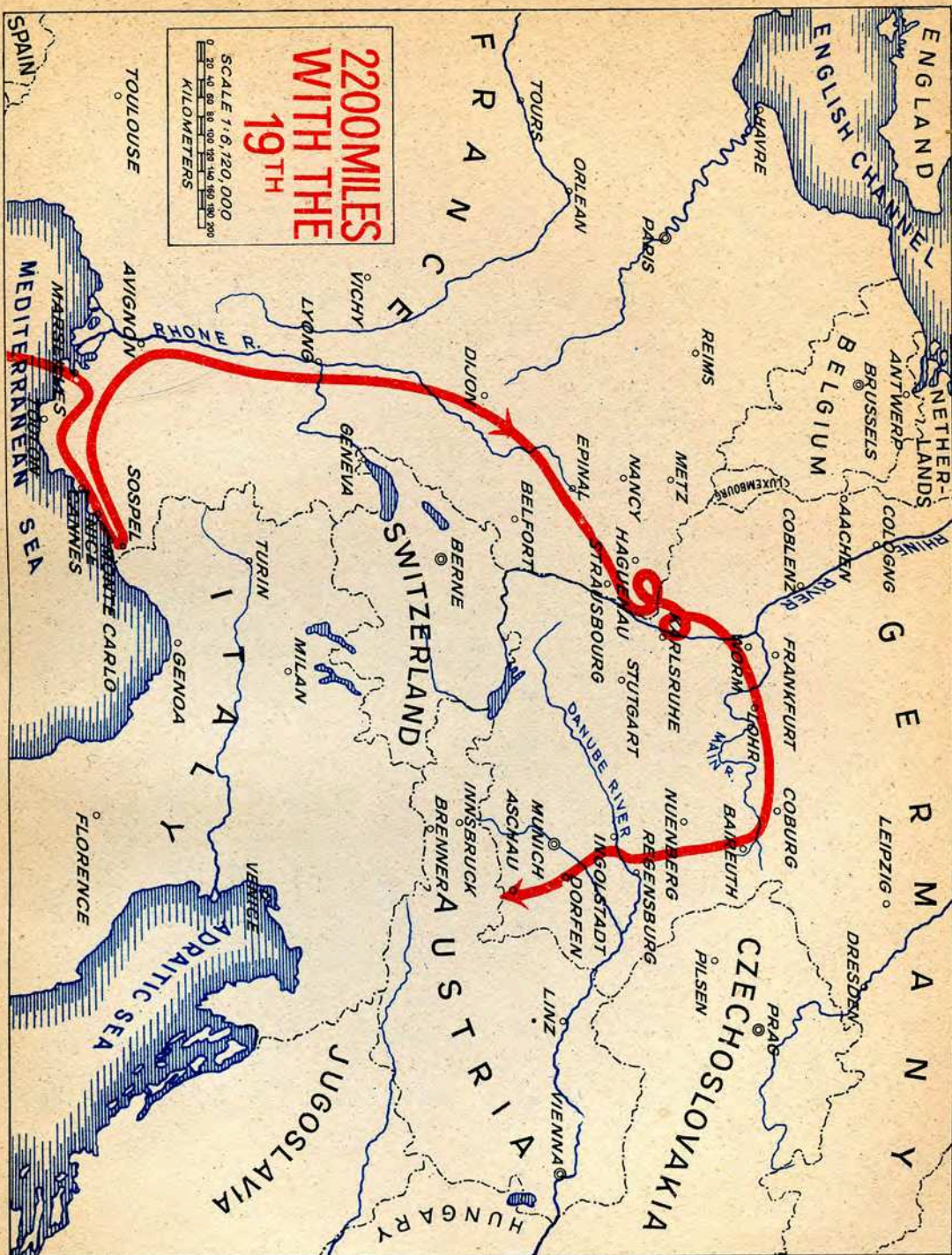
45th U.S. Infantry Division

79th U.S. Infantry Division

86th U.S. Infantry Division

99th U.S. Infantry Division

103rd U.S. Infantry Division



THE SEVENTH ARMY INFANTRY COMPANY

(Number 4, Provisional)

On the 27th day of March, 1945, the Seventh Army Infantry Company, No. 4 (Provisional) was assigned to the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion. This was a Negro company of 240 enlisted men formed originally at Altenstatt, France. The officers, as well as a few enlisted men, to command the company were taken from the 19th A.I.B., 62nd A.I.B., and the 68th A.I.B. The Commanding Officer of the company was Capt. Derl J. Hess of the 68th A.I.B. Other officers of the company were: 1st Lt. George A. Whiten of the 68th A.I.B., 1st Lt. George R. Irwin of the 19th A.I.B., 1st Lt. Bernard D. McNally of the 62nd A.I.B., 2nd Lt. Raymond Gravelle of the 62nd A.I.B., and 2nd Lt. Lee Ross of the 68th A.I.B. The enlisted personnel were: T/Sgt. Francis P. McGeehan of the 62nd A.I.B., T/Sgt. Ernest R. Bigger of the 68th A.I.B., S/Sgt. Joseph F. Long of the 68th A.I.B., S/Sgt. Herbert H. Elmore of the 19th A.I.B., Sgt. Robert F. Lavelle of the 62nd A.I.B., and Pfc. Charles J. Klein of the 19th A.I.B.

Though this company was assigned to the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion, it never actually fought as an integral part of the 19th. It was upon activation, placed on duty with Combat Command Reserve, where it was known as the CCR Rifle Company. The company, as nearly as possible, was equipped like an ordinary rifle company; however, due to the speed with which all units were moving and the short space of time at hand, it was impossible to completely organize the company, with all the equipment, but they were sufficiently organized to become a striking force.

The company remained in Altenstatt, France, with CCR until 0230 on the morning of 1 April, when it moved by motor convoy to Niederhausen, Germany. Here the company was used to outpost the town and run light patrols, capturing two enemy agents. The next several days were spent enroute, as the company moved along with the 25th Tank Battalion through Weibersbrunn, Lohr, Gossenheim, Neuendorf (three prisoners were taken enroute), Neu-Bessingen and on to Frickenhausen. At Frickenhausen the 2nd Platoon was committed in an attack on the town, resulting in two enemy killed, seven captured, and an unknown number wounded. While here, a road reconnaissance was made and the patrol became engaged in a fire fight, capturing seven more prisoners. The rest of the stay here found the company outposting the town as guards, where they captured three prisoners trying to slip through positions.

The company moved toward Lichtenfels, where the first real engagement was had. Lt. Irwin's and Lt. Gravelle's Platoons crossed the Main River and, after a

brisk fight, took the town. No casualties were suffered by the platoons, but several casualties were inflicted on the enemy as well as all prisoners taken. The town was outposted for the remainder of the day and that night.

The company left Lichtenfels, Germany, by motor convoy on 13 April and moved into Allendorf, where it outposted the town, ran light patrols, and took twelve prisoners. Next day the company moved to Haag, Germany. The 4th Platoon under Lt. Gravelle was attached to "B"-25th Tank Bn., with a mission of liberating members of the Division surrounded by the enemy in Gottsfeld. Tanks were reported in this locality, and without a doubt, that was a very accurate report, for "B"-25 lost three tanks, although eight German tanks were knocked out. The platoon was given the mission of crossing an open field about 900 yards long, with very little cover and no concealment. Through fire and movement, the platoon moved into town in the face of small arms fire, suffering only three casualties. The platoon in very short order had cleared the town. Sgt. Lavelle liberated a truck and made a trip back to take casualties to the rear as no aid men were available to the company. At the same time, he notified the tankers in regard to the tanks in the woods beyond Gottsfeld and immediately in rear of the town. One enemy tanker made a run for it, but a "B" Company tank knocked him out. The platoon then moved on into Greussen and helped hold the town for two days. On 18 April, the company moved to Litzlohe where it stayed until the 29th, moving on through Altenfelden down the Autobahn to Allersberg, Germany, before it really ran into trouble.

As the company, now working with the 25th Tank Battalion, was moving on the town, the 4th Platoon was hit by heavy small-arms and artillery fire, killing one man and causing five other casualties. The fire was so intense that the entire battalion was compelled to pull back about 1000 yards, where positions were consolidated for the night and plans made to continue the attack next day. Continuing the attack the next morning, the company ran into enemy, heavy tank and artillery fire, suffering several casualties and losing two vehicles. The attack, however, continued as the 1st Platoon, with a platoon of tanks, cleared the road junction. Just at this time, the 88's opened up and destroyed one tank and T.D. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Platoons then passed by the road junction, with their fingers crossed and praying that nothing would strike them. The company had only a few half-tracks. The remainder of the transportation was 2½ ton trucks, with 24 men to a truck. This was no spot for such transportation; however, the platoons did manage to get by the junction and proceeded on to Polsdorf, capturing several prisoners as they moved. About this time, a radio message came advising that the remainder of the battalion was being attacked from all sides, and to return to Altenfelden. A hasty reconnaissance was made, and one platoon of tanks and the 3rd Platoon finally made it to Altenfelden, where they reinforced the 25th Tank Battalion. The remainder of the company proceeded to set up a defense to protect itself against attack. The artillery observer called in for defensive fires.

At that time a call came for one platoon to go to Gogglesbuch to help "C"-25. Lt. Irwin, with the 2nd Platoon, then proceeded to that town, leaving only the 1st Platoon and Company Headquarters, which was down to four men. There were two Assault Guns and one T.D. also left, so a perimeter of defense was again constituted, making things more complicated. We were lucky and received no attack. At 2130 a call came to take the remainder of the company to Gogglesbuch to reinforce "C"-25 there. The move was made immediately and, upon arrival, a meeting was called to determine the strength of the task force. The total was three platoons from the colored company, three platoons from "A"-62nd, and eight tanks, two assault guns, and one T.D. An order then came for an attack to be made on the town of Allersberg to relieve the pressure on the 25th Tank Bn. there. Plans were made, with the colored company leading off through the woods south of town followed by "A"-62 and its tanks. Everything went well until reaching the edge of town, when two Tiger tanks were spotted and, in the excitement of being only fifty yards away, everyone started firing rifles and tommy-guns instead of holding fire. The bazooka men, however, were on hand, and several direct hits were made on the tanks, but they were not knocked out and still kept firing. The enemy tanks moved toward us and when they were only fifteen yards away, Pvt. Percy Smith of the 1st Platoon fired one round of bazooka fire and disabled the tank. He was later killed by fire from the same tank he had knocked out, when the members of the crew still in it traversed the turret and fired direct fire into the company's positions in the woods. There were several casualties and, without proper medical personnel to help, Lt. Whiten went forward and helped treat the injured and evacuate all of them. The company was forced to withdraw to Gogglesbuch to reorganize.

The company was ordered to move on to Untermassing on the 24th and then on to Schutendorf. Here the company was notified that a group of "SS" troops were at given coordinates, which was only about 800 yards away. Without waiting for further orders, strong patrols were sent from each platoon, with a mission of cleaning out the woods. A few men were kept on the alert in case anything developed, but that reserve was not needed. Within an hour, the patrols had come back with eight prisoners, and several of the enemy had been killed. The men felt sure there were more, so a volunteer patrol went out again to search the woods and found another group of "SS" troops. Very few, if any, escaped, and again four prisoners were brought back. The company remained and occupied this town until April 27th, when it moved on to Menning, then Pindhart, and on into Furth, Germany.

The next two days were spent outpostting the town and running patrols, which took some 42 prisoners. During the night of 29 April, plans were made for an attack of the town of Landshut. The attack jumped off at 0800, met heavy artillery and direct fire from across the Inn River. The company suffered twenty-one casualties before the town was taken. After the town was taken, the company pulled back to Furth and rejoined the 25th Tank Battalion.

On 1 May, the company moved on to Loiting; then on to Stephanskirchen on the 2nd, where some 110 prisoners were taken. On May 3rd, the company moved to Heistg, Germany, where it remained until the end of the war. The company remained assigned to the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion until June 4, 1945, at which time it was assigned to the 395th Quartermaster Truck Company, Headquarters, 14th Armored Division.

The total casualties suffered by the company during their active combat were 37 wounded, 6 killed, and one missing in action.

IN MEMORIAM

OFFICERS

Alspach, Forrest B.	Lt. Col.
Beine, George K.	1st. Lt.
Conboy, Thomas B.	Capt.
Conroy, John J.	2nd Lt.
Osborn, Joseph	1st. Lt.

ENLISTED PERSONNEL

Allison, John H. Jr.	Burger, Herschel H.
Anderson, Robert E.	Chandler, James R.
Allman, William E.	Christensen, Arvid E.
Antoine, Paul F.	Clong, Floyd O.
Antolik, Joseph A.	Colby, Adelbert E.
Araujo, Robert P.	Cooper, Frank P.
Backus, Lawrence D.	Darragh, Hugh
Bailey, Robert	Davidson, Ivan J.
Barnes, Raymond H.	Davis, John D.
Bartus, Leo J.	Denniacuo, Anthony F.
Bennett, George W. Jr.	Dill, Cecil E.
Benson, Lee L.	Divisano, Anthony C.
Bienlein, Joseph J.	Dunn, Dale D.
Bills, Grover J.	Dunn, Simen C.
Bochner, Henry	Emerick, Robert W.
Bohnsack, Robert L.	Engle, Emmett B.
Booher, Albert S.	Finley, Aubrey B.
Boring, Tall E.	Floyd, James H.
Bounds, Edward F.	Frazier, William B.
Bowlin, Clyde	Frugoli, John I.
Bradley, James C. Jr.	Garaci, Alfense J.
Brand, John B. Jr.	Garnstrom, Alrick P.
Bullard, Edwin A.	Gasik, Joseph I.

Gilbert, Marion C.
Gill, Donald F.
Gruezion, Chester J.
Hanback, Lloyd B.
Harley, Harlan P.
Harman, Fred P.
Harris, Frank M.
Heath, Robert R. Jr.
Herold, Carl
Holcombe, Lloyd V.
Holt, John M.
Kappes, Raymond C.
Kershinski, Francis J.
Kibler, Virgil D.
Koch, Irving A.
Larson, Einar E. Jr.
Leese, Herbert J.
Levesque, Alexander B.
Liles, George A. Jr.
Magnussen, Melvin J.
Margro, James
Martin, Leo D.
Mason, Jim E.
McNear, Lee
Michael, Robert W.
Moorefield, Walter K.
Morton, William M.
Muschelwicz, Albert A.
Nardi, Emil S.
Newman, Zolen N.
Olson, James E.

Pagels, Herman H.
Paluchsk, Gene J.
Phillips, John H. Jr.
Reaugh, Den H.
Ricardi, Fred E.
Rodehaver, Harold F.
Rudicel, Harold D.
Russell, Melvin
Selis, Richard R.
Shepard, Lee L.
Sherry, Arthur W.
Smith, Raymond L.
Steiner, Earl N.
Struble, Lawrence J.
Tice, Kenneth J.
Tidwell, Harold
Trent, Thomas A.
Turve, Une V.
Veigle, John M.
Viti, John J.
Vogt, Oscar L.
Wardlaw, Udell
Watson, Robert J.
Weiss, Marvin H.
Wiederhorn, Charles B.
Wood, Lyle J.
Woost, William H.
Zabloudil, Steven L.
Zdep, Joseph J.
Zybczynski, Joseph S.

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